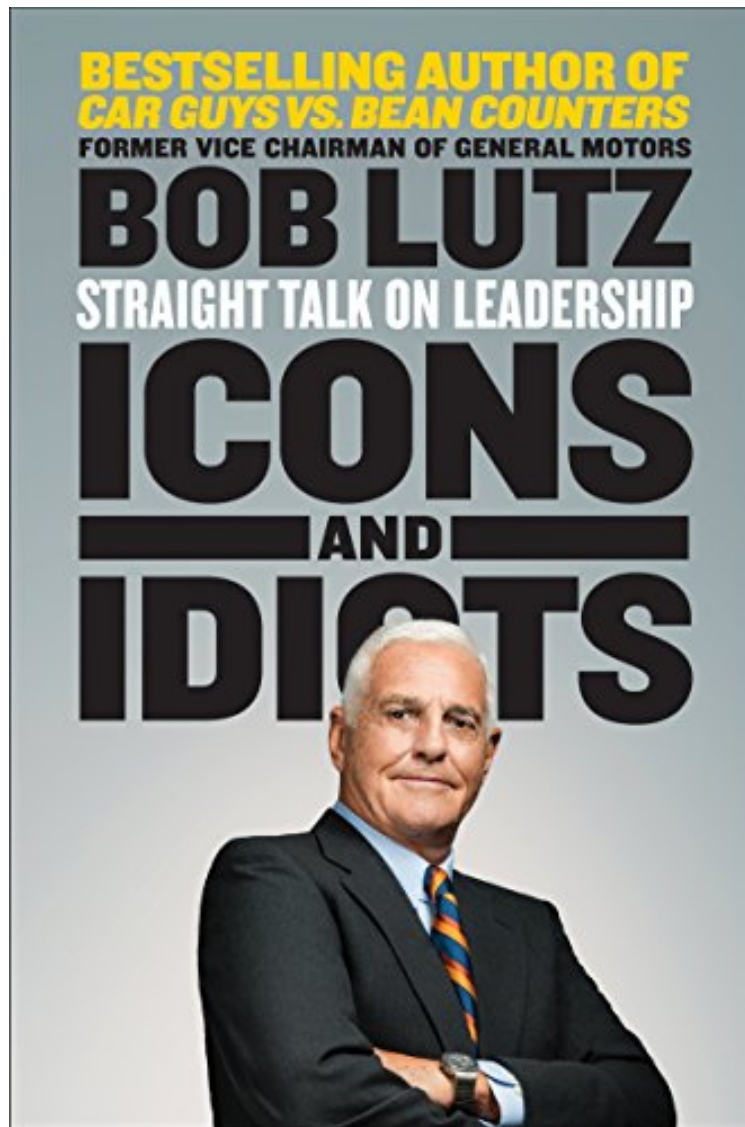


Icons and Idiots: Straight Talk on Leadership

Bob Lutz

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Bob Lutz : Icons and Idiots: Straight Talk on Leadership before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Icons and Idiots: Straight Talk on Leadership:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Leadership (sort of) in the auto industryBy NelsonI bought this book because I liked Bob Lutz's previous book "Car Guys vs Bean Counters" and it received a favorable review in the Wall Street Journal. The reviewer in the Journal had covered Detroit for years for the Journal and had known many of the people Lutz wrote about. He did not disagree with Lutz's assessment of them. The people Lutz writes about are people he worked for in his long career beginning with a teacher in Switzerland and followed by his Marine DI. He deeply admires both of them, but the rest of the people in the book don't quite make the grade. While working General Motors

in Germany he got a new boss as chairman of GM Germany who had come from Chevrolet. Since Opel was GM's second largest division the smart thing to do would have been to appoint one of the best men possible. In fact, he was sent to Germany to get him out of the way because he was a hopeless drunk. Lutz's experience with Lee Iacocca was somewhat strained. Iacocca had a difficult relationship with Henry Ford II because of their widely different backgrounds. Ford was the 3rd generation of one of the wealthiest and most prominent families in America and Iacocca's father had owned a hot dog stand. When Lutz worked for Iacocca at Chrysler, the same strain appeared because Lutz's background was more like Ford's than Iacocca's. Lutz is from a well off family. (Swiss banking) was educated in Switzerland, and speaks English, German, French fluently. What seemed to really tear it was in business trips to Italy, it turned out that Lutz could speak Italian better than Iacocca. Some of the men Lutz worked for did very well despite perceived flaws and some should never have been in the positions they were in. Bob Lutz doesn't think Bob Lutz is perfect. He writes well and doesn't bury the reader in excessive detail. This book is entertaining and informative and should leave readers somewhat skeptical (not cynical) of leadership, not just in the auto industry, but everywhere. 23 of 25 people found the following review helpful. Worthwhile gleanings on the essence of leadership

By Alan F. Sewell I read Mr. Lutz' previous book CAR GUYS AND BEAN COUNTERS. Like some other reviewers, I panned it --- not because Mr. Lutz is a bad writer, but because he told the story of our auto industry's demise like an autopsy. There was no way to sugarcoat the story of a failing industry in order to make it an exciting read. But I did enjoy Mr. Lutz' style of writing (plus his outspoken appearances on CNBC). I wondered if he had other, more positive stories to tell about his management of auto design in the U.S. and Europe. This book tells those positive and often amusing stories. Although the subject of leadership has been written about to the point of becoming hackneyed, Mr. Lutz does bring to the table a couple of interesting insights and anecdotes. Lutz explains his purpose at the beginning:=====THIS BOOK is about leaders and leadership. No "recipes" are offered; it's a compendium from my more than sixty years of observation while basking in the glow of inspirational leaders, trying my utmost to validate my employment to the tough, sometimes irrational ones, and marveling at the multifaceted, ever-shifting personalities of some of the quirky ones, wondering, at times, how they ever achieved their lofty positions. We'll examine past bosses who were profane, insensitive, totally politically incorrect, and who "appropriated" insignificant items from hotels or the company... We'll look at another boss who could analyze a highly complex profit-and-loss statement or a balance sheet at a glance, yet who, at times, failed to grasp the simplest financial mechanisms-- how things actually worked in practice to create the numbers in the real world.=====He profiles the eleven leaders who he says most shaped his life. My favorites are #1, #2, and #8 --- his flamboyant teacher at the Swiss boarding school for troubled students (MR. Lutz' early academics apparently left much to be desired), his Marine D.I., and his work for Chrysler's legendary Lee Iacocca. He says that his Swiss high school teacher set a new standard of academic excellence for the students like him who had flunked out of "regular" high school in the Germanized area of Switzerland:=====His presence instantly dominated the classroom; he was the epitome of what the U.S. Marine Corps, which I would be joining a few years hence, called "command presence," that indefinable quality that some people possess-- an aura of confidence, of knowledge, of unquestionable authority. "Welcome, ladies and gentlemen. I look forward to teaching you what you need to be taught. I'm good at it. I demand your attention at all times. I expect respect and will not tolerate talking in class, nor horseplay, nor sloppy work. Assignments will be completed on time and handed in neatly and legibly written. Tests will be both oral and written, announced and unannounced. I set the rules, and you just heard them. And one other thing: out of respect for my position and my considerable education, you will rise when I enter the classroom and be seated when I sit. Any questions? Now is the time to ask. I see there are none, so let's get down to business."=====The next chapter is about his enlistment in the Marines. His D.I. was the stereotypical old-school style who humiliated the "t--rds" with seeming brutality and senseless physical tasks. He made them exert themselves to the point of dropping of heat stroke and exhaustion. But of course his purpose was to mold weak lily-livered civilians into combat ready Marines capable of executing orders under the brutish conditions of combat. In that he succeeded perfectly. His 8th Chapter is about Lee Iacocca. I was in my early 20s just starting out in business when Mr. Iacocca came on the scene to save Chrysler Corporation and perhaps the American auto industry, which was being buried under Japanese imports. He did it by building the smaller, fuel-efficient cars the public wanted and allaying the public's quality concerns with the unprecedented 6-year, 60,000 mile warranty. Mr. Iacocca makes it plain in his own books that he's a thin-skinned insecure personality prone to holding intense personal grudges (primarily against Henry Ford III who he says done him wrong at Ford). Lutz says that in spite of these short-comings Mr. Iacocca had the INTUITION to make the important big decisions and the COURAGE to stick to his guns once the decision as made. Lutz tells how he made big bets on controversial decisions, like merging Chrysler with AMC and backing the SUV's and the Viper. Once Mr. Iacocca made his decision he ignored the second-guessers and got the job done. And he turned out to be right on everything that mattered.=====Mercurial, inconsistent, controversial, a little insecure, given to posturing and bluster, Iacocca nevertheless was the incarnation of the successful leader. Blunt and fearless in his public pronouncements ...with op-ed pieces or TV appearances. His was even one of the best-known faces on TV, and the public loved and admired him, saw him as the man who saved Chrysler against incredible odds. Iacocca did what leaders are supposed to do: pursue a

bold strategy and inspire subordinates, dealers, suppliers, and shareholders with the power of his spoken word. He made mistakes, acknowledged them, and moved on. He didn't mind being unfair or being accused of not listening enough. So what? The job got done! He has been called "the greatest American industrial CEO of all time." I'm not one to argue!=====These are the stories about the most successful leaders who influenced Lutz. Some of the other leaders Lutz profiles had serious flaws. One of them ---- the CEO of Exide Technologies whom Lutz replaced --- was an outright crook who employed bribery, phony accounting, price-fixing, fraud, racketeering, and EPA-defying manufacturing shortcuts to peddle his products. He ended up serving a 10-year sentence in the Federal Pen.Lutz explains how most of these leaders, even the flawed ones, still managed to call upon the power of their other positive leadership characteristics to succeed. He explains how GM's CEO Richard Wagoner realized his limitations and brought in additional staff to round out his views.He laces the narrative with plenty of sufficiently amusing off-color stories about those "old school" managers in pre-P.C. days --- an early sixties ultra-macho culture like the one popularized on Mad Men. "Bob Wachtler (Planning Director of GM's Overseas Division) was not without a sense of humor, however racist, sexist, homophobic, and species-ist it may have been. Let's remember that we're talking about a white, predominantly German-origin male in his early sixties, and the year was 1963. Different standards were in effect."In the Epilogue Lutz sums up the common denominators of these very different bosses he reported to during his schooling, military service, and executive career. It sums up the essence of leadership about as well as I have ever seen it summarized, probably better than in 99% of other business books. I particularly liked this insight into the leader's need to be flexible:=====Leadership style and method (not long-term goals or strategic priorities) need to be "situational." A good leader has a portfolio of styles at his or her command, as the situation may dictate. There are times when absolute command and control are essential: we call them "crises." ...There are leaders who know only this style. They are successful "crisis managers" who know how to cut, slash, and burn without remorse or hesitation.They are often near useless in non-crisis situations, where the thoughtful leader solicits input from others, thus drawing on the collective intelligence of the organization....Large corporations breed a lot of those; compromising, listening, sharing, avoiding mistakes is what got them to the top in the first place. The multistyle or multifaceted leader, like a good actor, can be participative, friendly, sharing, and humorous in the normal course of business. He or she can and must, however, be unflinching and stubborn if the situation calls for it. And anger, real or feigned, is an appropriate emotion when those accountable have failed. The good golfer has many clubs in his bag, and knows how to hit all of them, just as strong leaders have many styles to use as needed.=====Worthwhile gleanings for those interested in business leadership that includes colorful insights into the auto industry magnates whom Bob Lutz reported to.5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. I totally agree with Bob LutzBy robertsSo, having actually been an employee of Chevrolet Engineering Center, where Bob Lutz once roamed, I can attest to how accurate this book is. I know many of these people, both as bosses, and as parents of my friends in Detroit. (They were never my colleagues as I was both too junior (and too obviously female) to fit into the mold of the classic car guys. Now that's a big weakness. You couldn't be black or female or black and female and love cars enough to become a "car guy". I knew I would never fit in the right mold, so I went on to graduate school and became a banker (for a while, until I realized what a bloodsucking lot bankers can be).Having said that, I can also tell you that some of the finest engineers in the world at that time worked in the auto industry. (For example, there was this one guy who designed helical gears who used to do all of his calculations by hand, longhand.... engineers from Japanese auto companies used to come to our offices just to bask in the smarts they might catch from being in the same room with him.)Additionally, if one thinks about how the auto industry made the whole American middle class possible, and built wealth for a much broader slice of the population than say, our current bankers, investment bankers and hedge fund managers (and I belong to this group) than our current economy seems capable of doing, one develops a high degree of respect for that "greatest generation" of managers that Bob Lutz represents. We have a lot to learn from them and we should try to do that quickly before all the "investment banking" types of the 1% take all of the assets..However, these guys all forgot something very fundamental to the legacy of great leaders, which is the importance of building the next generation of great leaders, so while I think Bob Lutz has lots of insightful things to say, I gotta ask,why, Bob why did things turn out the way they did?

When Bob Lutz retired from General Motors in 2010, after an unparalleled forty-seven-year career in the auto industry, he was one of the most respected leaders in American business. He had survived all kinds of managers over those decades: tough and timid, analytical and irrational, charismatic and antisocial, and some who seemed to shift frequently among all those traits. His experiences made him an expert on leadership, every bit as much as he was an expert on cars and trucks. Now Lutz is revealing the leaders-good, bad, and ugly-who made the strongest impression on him throughout his career. Icons and Idiots is a collection of shocking and often hilarious true stories and the lessons Lutz drew from them. From enduring the sadism of a Marine Corps drill instructor, to working with a washed-up alcoholic, to taking over the reins from a convicted felon, he reflects on the complexities of all-too-human leaders. No textbook or business school course can fully capture their idiosyncrasies, foibles and weaknesses - which can make or break companies in the real world. Lutz shows that we can learn just as much from the most stubborn, stupid, and

corrupt leaders as we can from the inspiring geniuses. The result is a powerful and entertaining guide for any aspiring leader.

From Booklist Lutz (*Car Guys vs. Bean Counters*, 2011) spent 47 years in the car industry, working for iconic automakers GM, Ford, Chrysler, and BMW. In his career, he witnessed leadership personalities from the admirable to the buffoonish. But he goes beyond his car career to offer a disparate collection of portraits of leaders, from his high-school teacher and marine drill instructor to Lee Iacocca, CEO of Chrysler. Most leaders are mentally and emotionally askew, he asserts as he portrays the men (they're all men) he worked with or under as demanding, often offensive, brutally honest, and sometimes borderline cruel. He remembers Iacocca as an insecure man threatened by subordinates; another auto executive seems to fit the idiot portion of the title. Still, Lutz finds some leadership qualities, or at least cautionary examples of what not to do, in each of his subjects. And it seems to be the point of these entertaining, insightful behind-the-scenes tales of corporate culture that, while leadership can come in all kinds of quirky packages, the greatest benefit lies in the lasting impact it has on the people who work for him--or her. -- Vanessa Bush

About the Author Bob Lutz held senior leadership positions at GM, Ford, Chrysler, and BMW over the course of an unparalleled forty-seven-year career, culminating in his vice chairmanship of General Motors from 2011 to 2010. He is the bestselling author of *Guts: 8 Laws of Business from One of the Most Innovative Business Leaders of Our Time*.