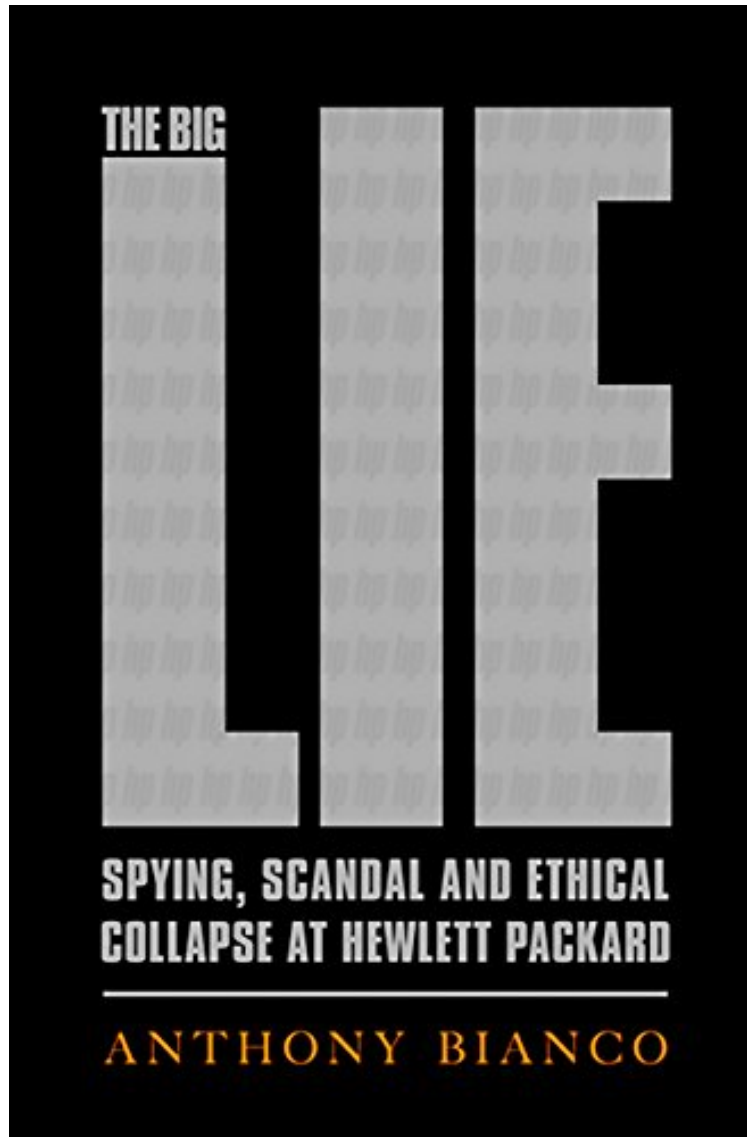


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# The Big Lie: Spying, Scandal, and Ethical Collapse at Hewlett Packard

*Anthony Bianco*

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**Anthony Bianco : The Big Lie: Spying, Scandal, and Ethical Collapse at Hewlett Packard** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Big Lie: Spying, Scandal, and Ethical Collapse at Hewlett Packard:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Excellent!By KASI've worked for HP for over 20 years, and have read much of what's been written about the company's ups and downs. I missed this book when it came out (I think

because that was around the time of Mark Hurd's ignominious departure). This is quite the tale of behind the scenes intrigue and posturing, egos and spin. I'm glad this book rehabilitates Patty Dunn's reputation. She definitely deserved better treatment than what she received from her fellow board members, and a CEO who wasted no time throwing her under the bus to protect himself. A lack of ethics appears to be his trademark, though. A good read for anyone familiar with the history of HP or simply interested in corporate intrigue and debacles. 24 of 25 people found the following review helpful. Truth can be stranger than fiction. By Charles H. House Hewlett-Packard was THE iconic American company for sixty years for (1) Innovative Products; (2) High-Quality Products; (3) Incredible Loyalty by employees for company leadership; and (4) Unshakeable Ethics and Integrity with customers, vendors, and employees. HP under two outsider CEOs for the past decade has seemingly erased each of these iconic qualities. Attenuation, even destruction, of the first three is evident if we believe customers, analysts, or employee feedback on blogs and even HP's Voice of the Workforce surveys. This at a time that HP has grown via acquisition to become the largest high-tech firm on the planet, 20% larger by revenue than IBM or Samsung -- larger than Apple, Intel, and Cisco put together. Carly Fiorina gets the blame in most circles -- photogenic, self-absorbed, aggrandizing -- she 'broke the HP Way' according to many, and vitriol still runs deep in Silicon Valley about her leadership. But the main charge was that she angered employees and damaged profits. Her replacement, Mark Hurd, is seldom seen or heard from, but gets much Wall Street credit now that the company has 'righted' itself (Wall Street may hardly be the best judge, we might say in these times!). Anthony Bianco offers a stunning, well-researched perspective that adds a dimension not discussed nearly enough -- the desecration of the company's ethical and moral code. With a deft analysis from ex-Board member interviews and HP-filed public documents, Bianco shifts focus to the current CEO, and his role in the spying scandal called pretexting. In the process, the book does a hard-hitting job of tackling the role, importance, and impact any CEO can have, whether on a company's ethics, innovation, or customer and employee satisfaction. The result could and should be a clarion call for the HP Board, but sadly, Bianco's focus suggests that the HP Board has been monumentally dysfunctional as well, tracing back ironically for two decades to the revered founders. Tragicomic in some dimensions, Bianco's account of a seriously under-reported set of events demonstrates clearly that The HP Way is moribund if not dead, with current leadership much more culpable than has been hitherto claimed. Anecdotal support for this view has been mounting for the past three years, but Bianco provides solid credence for these views. The book often has a journalistic feel, seeking the sensational story, the barbed quip, or the innuendo from inferred evidence. Moreover, it trades heavily on the aggrieved perspective of the excommunicated Chairman of the Board, Pattie Dunn, while caricaturizing ex-Board members George Keyworth and Tom Perkins who provided key interviews for Bianco. On the other hand, Bianco correctly assesses the situation as one that only a few people designed and defined -- so wider interviews, unless with those at HP disinclined to talk, would serve no useful purpose. When a company culture, established over decades, is abrogated by the errant leadership of a few, a question may be "is it retrievable?" The answer for HP according to Bianco lies well in the future, rather than with the present team. This is a courageous book, not likely to be endorsed by the HP team today. Time will tell whether this is a case of "where there's smoke, there's likely a fire". Unfortunately, from Tiger Woods and Enron and WorldCom leadership, to Lehman Brothers and other Wall Street 'leaders', as Bianco points out on page 2, we are getting accustomed to leaders being less than they seem. True at HP now? 11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Under the Pretext. By Booklubber. The pretexting scandal exploded in the media and then crawled through kangaroo Congressional hearings and a campaigning California AG's office. Righteous indignation amplified the bias of a press that was captivated by a swashbuckling septuagenarian. It was a comedy of egos with tragic consequences and a reasonable explanation has been a long time coming. There are two sets of characters. There are two directors (one, a misogynistic, narcissistic egomaniac given to self-aggrandizing drivel who takes pleasure in making enemies by setting up his colleagues, --- and his foolishly loyal friend). And, there are two leaders (one, an idealist, who gives in to her protective instincts submitting to ruthless interrogation, and an ambitious fast rising star who, with calculated reticence, deftly positions his protector between himself and an impending train wreck). How could it have been too difficult to unravel the conflicts from their interests and discern who was telling the truth? Amazingly, it was for a lot of very powerful people including supposedly savvy journalists. Hopefully, with the benefit of Anthony Bianco's dedicated adherence to detail and his loyalty to accuracy, what should have been obvious finally is. Bianco doesn't resort to these cliches but the clarity of his style speaks to the axiom that the simplest explanation is the most likely. You wouldn't expect a book on this subject to be a page turner but *The Big Lie* was hard to put down. While the question of how a pro-active board capable of navigating the termination of its high profile, star struck CEO could be characterized as dysfunctional is never addressed and the described "fecklessness of the board's oldest member and his loose lipped ally" remains an ambiguous indictment, Bianco does a superlative job contextualizing great background and stubborn little facts into an excellent read that reveals a real heroine. *The Big Lie* sets much of the record straight while confirming that "If you have enough money and you're willing to spend enough, you can buy and sell somebody's reputation". What it doesn't do is dispel those nagging suspicions of a single Zillionaire who protested too much.

Hewlett Packard is an American icon, the largest information technology company in the world. The bedrock of Silicon Valley, it employs more than 300,000 people, its market capitalization is in excess of 100 billion and its products are in almost every home in the country where there is a printer or computer. In 2003 the company began a transition from the family management style of its founders. It made a bold statement by hiring as its new CEO the most visible female business executive in America: Carly Fiorina. Less than two years later, the board fired her, amid accusations of imperiousness that had begun damagingly to leak into the business media. The board at that time included one of Silicon Valley's most flamboyant venture capitalists and owner of the largest and most expensive yacht in the world, and a former CIA asset who believed he personally channeled the values of the company's founders. Each had a long and complicated history with HP, and each believed he should determine the company's future. They ran up against a corporate governance expert whom they could not roll, and a new CEO whose loyalties on the board were entirely opaque. In this way, the stage was set for a rancorous feud that split the board into implacably distrusting factions. In the middle of the damaging schism, HP introduced the Big Lie. The lie was pinned on the chairman, who was receiving treatment for stage 4 ovarian cancer. And it sizzled through a largely unquestioning media. Anthony Bianco gets to heart of the ethical morass at HP that ended up damning the entire board that created it. Almost every American has an interest in how the country's greatest corporations are run, and the character of the people entrusted with them. The story of Hewlett-Packard reflects power struggles that shape corporate America and is an alarming morality tale for our times.

San Francisco Chronicle, July 18, 2010 "[A] gripping, well-sourced and illuminating book, "The Big Lie" [is] a gossipy and at times vulgar account of the battle of wills between Dunn and Tom Perkins, one of California's wealthiest venture capitalists. Think Tyra Banks meets "American Idol" judge Simon Cowell in a televised food fight... A splendid account of the very flawed stars of HP's sideshow." Sacramento Book , June 30, 2010