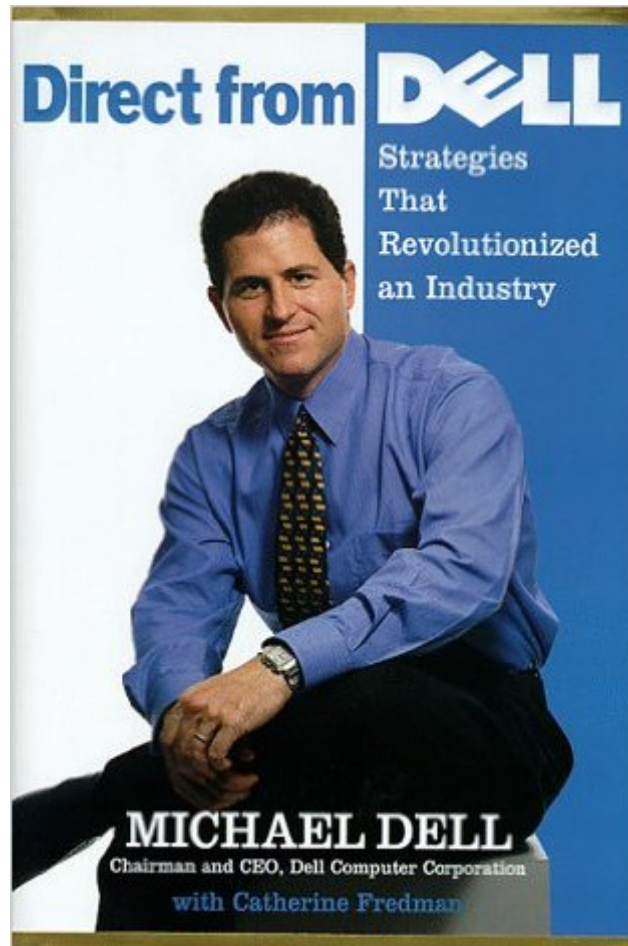


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# Direct From Dell: Strategies That Revolutionized An Industry



## Synopsis

In 1983, Michael S. Dell, then an incoming freshman at the University of Texas at Austin, drove away from his parents' Houston home in a white BMW he'd bought selling subscriptions to his hometown newspaper. In the backseat were three personal computers. Today, he is the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Dell Computer Corporation, an \$18 billion company, the second-largest manufacturer and marketer of computers in the world. Founded on a deceptively simple premise--to deliver high-performance computer systems directly to the end user--Dell Computer is the envy of its competition, constantly growing at five times the industry rate, and a perennial darling of Wall Street: its stock is up more than 36,000 percent this decade, and more than 200 percent in the last year. In *Direct From Dell*, Michael Dell himself tells the incredible story of Dell Computer's successful rise, beginning in his college dorm room with \$1,000 in capital. In these pages, you'll see the formation of a great visionary--and a great company. You'll meet the young Dell who, at the tender age of eight, had already begun looking "to eliminate unnecessary steps" and who, as a numbers-loving adolescent, was inspired by a newfound fascination with computers to save his money to buy a coveted Apple II--only to promptly take it apart. You'll encounter a young visionary who, upon witnessing the inefficiencies of an exploding industry, challenged conventional wisdom and set out to do nothing less than beat IBM at its own game. In so doing, Dell forever changed the way things "had always been done" in the computer industry. You'll also see the birth of a Dell hallmark--the direct model--which, in its ability to reach the customer directly, eliminated not only a substantial middleman markup but also the possibility of costly excess inventory, setting the stage for other extraordinary achievements. In an industry notorious for its unreliable service, Dell utilized its direct customer relationships to pioneer the concept of customer "support"--and didn't rest until the caliber of its service was rivaled only by the quality of its products and its speed of delivery. But the story of Dell Computer is no fairy tale. Marked by uncharacteristically rapid growth, the company was faced with challenges that could have threatened its very existence. From forays into retail to under- (and over-) developed product lines, Dell learned some hard lessons along the way--and emerged stronger as a result. The strategies born of those times--unrivaled speed to market; superior customer service; a fierce commitment to producing constantly high-quality custom-made systems--heralded what has perhaps been the company's crowning achievement: an early exploitation of the Internet. Not just for CEOs or those in high tech, the strategies revealed in *Direct From Dell* are invaluable to managers in a broad cross section of industries. From starting a successful business to pioneering computer sales and service over the Internet, Dell shares his perspectives on: Why it's infinitely better for any business starting

out to have too little capital, rather than too much How studying your customers--not your competition--will give you a greater competitive edge Why it can be life-threatening to your company to pursue too many good ideas--or to grow too fast Why it's essential to run a P&L on every area of your business Why your people pose a greater threat to the health of your business than your competition does How you can exploit your competition's weakness by exposing its greatest strength How integrating your business virtually can make the difference between being quick--and being dead Revealing nothing less than a new model for doing business in the information age, Direct From Dell is both an extraordinary business success story and a manifesto for revolutionizing any industry.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Someone once said that the definition of insanity is to continue to do the same thing but expect a different result. Prior to Mike Dell's assault on the PC Industry in the early 80's, all of the top PC players were playing the game called "follow the follower" nothing new or exciting, same old, same old. Then Mike Dell comes along with better products and a better strategy. I see that Dell made a clean sweep in the new issue of PC World with Dell products coming in first place in all categories listed I am not surprised. Dell products are the best. I have used various pc's from the Packard Bell to the Compaqs, nothing else even comes close to Dell. Perfect example of Dell's selling Direct strategy in action; eliminate the middle man and use the difference to develop better products and pass the savings on to the consumer. Obviously it has worked incredibly well. I have my own business and found Mr. Dell's book refreshing and packed with simple, but useful strategies. It is no

wonder that Dell has turned the PC Industry on it's ear. Read it, you'll benefit. Great book. This book deserves 10 stars, not 5

I can understand the criticism of this book that perhaps Mike Dell should have gone more in depth about the dynamics of his company and industry. However, this being his first book that I know of I can understand why he choose to keep it short and simple, and to his credit. A great peak into the mind of a business man and leader who in my opinion deserves to be mentioned in the same sentence with Henry Ford, Bill Gates, Lee Iacocca et al. One part in particular that caught my attention was Chapter 7 where on page 95&96 he talks about his "Know The Net" initiative in order to familiarize his employees with the Internet. I personally liked when he stated that: "Some might argue that if you give employees access to the World Wide Web, they will spend all their time surfing the Net. But that's like saying, We don't want to teach our people how to read because they might spend all their time reading." Fabulous insight into Michael Dell's view of the Internet's future as a conduit for Economic Efficiency in business, school, and life. Great piece of literature especially for beginning Business & Economics students. Peace :-)

This is a terrific book for anyone who aspires to run or lead a business. Dell writes entertainingly about his childhood adventures -- not many teenagers were enterprising enough to research how to find all newly married couples and all people who took out mortgages in order to sell newspaper subscriptions! He was making an annual salary higher than most of his teachers just from his summer activities. His parents should have known they were in for trouble. The first part of the book is devoted to how he founded his business with \$1000 of start up money and then all the ups, downs, and mistakes they made along the way. It is encouraging to read that it's not the mistakes that matter, but how quickly you acknowledge and address them that count. The second part of the book has tremendously practical advice for almost any company. Why make the same mistakes that you could avoid by following his model for success? I daresay there is enough solid information here for any informed person to put into practice what Dell did to make a successful business. After having read a series of books on leadership, I can say that this is one of the most practical and hands-on ones as well as one of the most interesting.

Just as Henry Ford pioneered the automobile industry, so has Michael Dell pioneered the computer industry. This book is a easy read, but highly informative. I also bought the tapes which I play in my car. I have reread this book 4 times and I always come up with a new idea that is profitable to my

business.

For a kid who enjoyed taking apart computers, Michael Dell has come a long way. In *DIRECT FROM DELL* he enthusiastically describes the development of his phenomenally successful business, Dell Computer Company. The book is a fascinating read for people who enjoy learning about "hypergrowth companies" and the personal computer industry. It's also interesting simply as an account of a businessman who possesses the exceptional ability of dealing with the rapidfire changes in technology and being able to build an organization whose employees thrive on change. Dell provides examples and advice for start-up business owners on ways to handle change and the importance of constant communication with employees, customers, and suppliers. He offers some innovative ideas for encouraging employees to think outside the box and for suppliers to work as partners with the company for everyone's benefit. Congratulations, Michael Dell, on your company's amazing success and your willingness to listen to the customer's needs over everything else.

Back in the 70's I worked with a successful sales and management professional who espoused the KISS Principle (Keep it simple and short). In reading some of the negative reviews, I can see that some people were expecting something out of Harvard Business School. What made Dell the incredible success story that it has become is doing the unusual, the new, the different. Going against the norm. And keeping it simple and short. When I was in the bookstore, someone told me that Mike Dell puts too much emphasis on people. Who do you suppose buys those computers? It's people. I like the fact that Mike Dell puts the customer first. Interesting that the Direct Model that Dell innovated with PCs was initially criticized and is now copied by the people who were his strongest critics. Is any wonder that Mr Dell is one of the most in demand speakers. Read and apply Mr. Dell's strategies. They will make you more successful in business and in life. And remember the KISS PRINCIPLE.

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