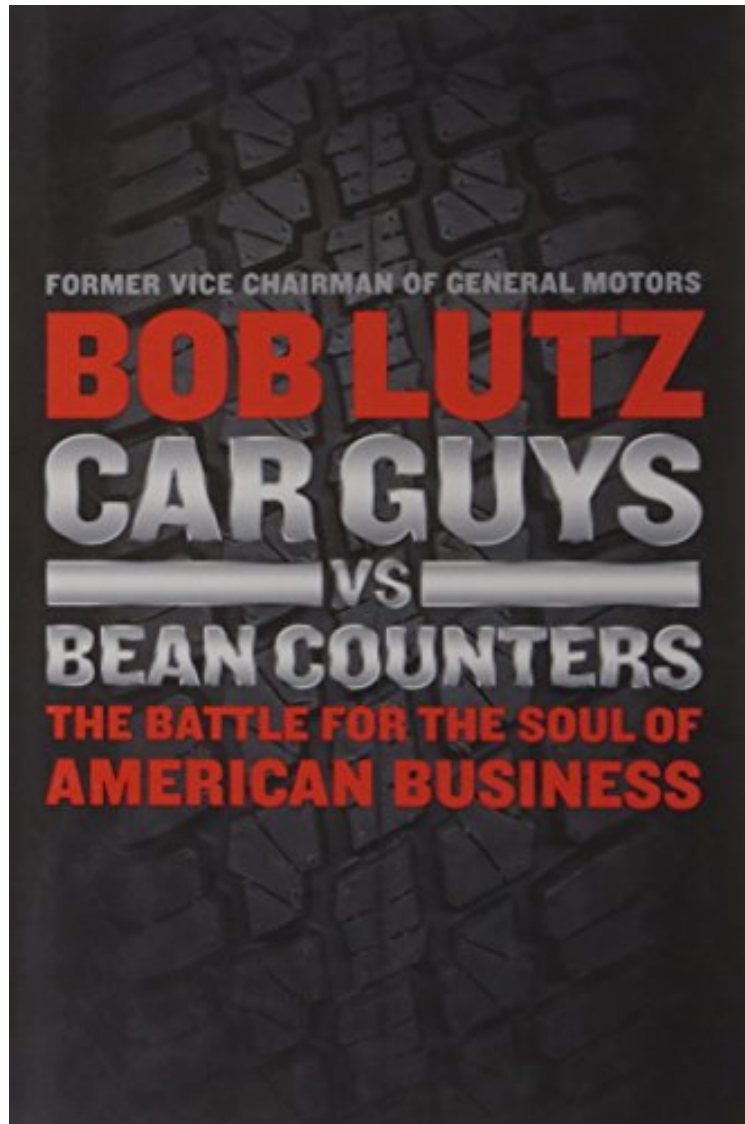


(Download pdf ebook) Car Guys vs. Bean Counters: The Battle for the Soul of American Business

Car Guys vs. Bean Counters: The Battle for the Soul of American Business

Bob Lutz

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Bob Lutz : Car Guys vs. Bean Counters: The Battle for the Soul of American Business before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Car Guys vs. Bean Counters: The Battle for the Soul of American Business:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Fair and accurate look at GM in the pre-bankruptcy era By JasonBob did a good job capturing everything that happened at GM. I was a salaried employee there during those storied times

Bob tells us about. Knowing a lot about the industry, and having left GM for Toyota, I feel Bob's take on Toyota's dominance was purely because of the undervalued Yen and little legacy costs. Having seen Toyota's operations from the inside I can tell you the difference maker was culture. In my opinion, GM salaried life was a game of looking good rather than being good. Toyota was all about the customer, teamwork and continuous improvement. Two vastly different cultures. So take it for what it's worth. Toyota is about developing people and building cars is how they did it. That's why, I feel, they should get a lot more credit than Bob gives them. Americans love to demonize Toyota but if you worked in their U.S. plants you would see that they are run pretty much 99.9% by Americans.²⁹ of 30 people found the following review helpful. How America lost excellence -- and got beans instead

By Theodore A. Rushton

Absolutely marvelous; anyone who reads this will understand the enervating hubris that is destroying business, education and government in America and much of the rest of the world. First though, to set this book and Lutz in context, a quote from midway through the book: "I know I'm full of crap a lot of the time, but that comes with the territory. "Your job is to provide me with honest feedback," Lutz writes. If read with this caveat in mind, this book offers enough insight to rescue almost any failing industry without government bailouts. In my career as a reporter, I've seen enough once excellent newspapers go down the drain because publishers refused to understand Lutz's observations, insight and remedies. He's a "product man," which means a commitment to quality products instead of profits, prestige or paper pushing. Lutz is infuriated by "bean counters" who see value only in profits; as such, it is an eloquent 'cri de coeur' rather than a balanced analysis of business management. That said, few if any can't benefit from his basic insights into the over-confidence, hubris and arrogance that is making America into a third world society. Federal debt crisis? If Lutz's approach was applied to government and industry, the debate would center on how to use the surplus instead of crying about the deficits produced by dumb attitudes. The current assumption is that America is great simply by being America; Lutz argues superiority is based on a never-ending search for improvement and innovation rather than complacency. My experience is that America is better than its political or business satraps; if leaders can pick the wisdom from rants such as Lutz, no country can do better.⁹ of 9 people found the following review helpful. Well Worth Reading

By Kulamata

Well worth reading for what's between the lines as well as the ideas presented. The insight into the structural problems at GM is piercing and fascinating. What I found as interesting are Lutz's blind spots. He points out absolutely correctly that customers don't care that the project manager met his schedule and product cost goals; the customers care about the car in front of them, and for Lutz, that means the car's being appealing inside and out. Much good discussion of interiors, paint, proportions, etc. But only the most passing mention of what it's like to DRIVE the cars... after all, customers do more than just admire the lovely beasts. The "unfair shake" the automotive press gave GM was based on more than anti-GM prejudice; it was based on quality, durability, erratic ergonomics, and in the cognoscenti's magazines, on the driving experience. The forward unbalanced muscle cars like the GTO that didn't much care for stopping or turning were sneered at, as were the general family cars that rode smooooooth, but didn't much care to turn, and when they did, did so with excessive lean, and the occasional lurch. As time went by, the technical naivete of the cars became a constant topic in the enthusiast press... live rear axles, when independent rear suspension was available on imports; carburetors when fuel injection was available elsewhere; too many models with drum brakes long after discs were obviously better; bias ply tires when others supplied radials on new cars. Pointing this out may have been too easy, but it wasn't unfair. And the enthusiasts who read about this stuff were often the opinion-shapers that competent marketing folks try to cater to but whom Detroit denigrated. Detroit didn't need higher gas prices to spur the development of smaller cars; remember the Corvair, Vega, Tempest, Pinto, and the Valiant? The Valiant was a long lived solid car, but the others suffered from fundamental engineering problems or shoddy construction, or both. By the time of the CAFE standard, the public had given up on GM's small cars, and so had GM. It didn't help that when GM fought hard to prevent the adoption of CAFE that GM had already fought hard and reflexively, against EVERY mandate, including requirements for safety belts, padded dashes, decent headlights, (complex story there) and had, as a result, no remaining credibility. These blunders preceded the era of high medical and retirement costs; they later added injury to injury, but the rot had set in much earlier. It's true that the yen was undervalued; but the Deutschmark was not, and the Germans have had their successes regardless. Incidentally, when GM recently delivered, from what I've seen, the mainstream press responded with a relieved "at last!". I've read very warm reviews of the Malibu, the exotic Caddy, and the Volt. So I think that his complaints about the press were just more examples of Detroit's insularity and denial. So, a fascinating book; what he gets, he gets full well, and what he doesn't, he doesn't even suspect.

"It's time to stop the dominance of the number-crunchers, living in their perfect, predictable, financially-projected world (who fail, time and again), and give the reins to the 'product guys'...those with vision and passion for the customers and their product or service." When Bob Lutz got into the auto business in the early 1960s, CEOs knew that if you captured the public's imagination with innovative car design and top quality craftsmanship, the money would follow. The "car guys" held sway, and GM dominated with bold, creative leadership and iconic brands like Cadillac, Buick, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, GMC, and Chevrolet. But then GM's leadership began to put their faith in numbers and spreadsheets. Determined to eliminate the "waste" and "personality worship" of the bygone creative leaders, and

maximize profitability, management got too smart for its own good. With the bean counters firmly in charge, carmakers, and much of American industry, lost their single-minded focus on product excellence and their competitive advantage. Decline soon followed. In 2001, General Motors hired Lutz out of retirement with a mandate to save the company by making great cars again. As vice chairman, he launched a war against the penny-pinching number-crunchers who ran the company by the bottom line, and reinstated a focus on creativity, design, and cars and trucks that would satisfy GM customers. After emerging from bankruptcy in 2009, GM is finally back on track thanks in part to its embrace of Lutz's philosophy, with acclaimed new models like the Chevrolet Volt, Cadillac CTS, Chevrolet Equinox, and Buick LaCrosse. Lutz's common-sense lessons, combined with a generous helping of fascinating anecdotes, will inspire readers in any industry. As he writes: "It applies in any business. Shoe makers should be run by shoe guys, and software firms by software guys, and supermarkets by supermarket guys. With the advice and support of their bean counters, absolutely, but with the final word going to those who live and breathe the customer experience. Passion and drive for excellence will win over the computer-like, dispassionate, analysis-driven philosophy every time."

"This book should be required reading for every young person who seeks a business degree. That applies equally to the current management of GM."—David E. Davis, Jr., former editor and publisher of *Car and Driver*
"This is exactly what you'd expect from Bob Lutz: no holds barred, no punches pulled, and no stone left unturned. It's a true insider's perspective and a great read."—Stephen J. Girsky, vice chairman of General Motors
"Car Guys vs. Bean Counters is the best book written by an auto industry insider since Iacocca in 1984, and deserves to be shelved alongside Alfred P. Sloan's management classic, *My Years with General Motors*."—Fortune
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 2001 to 2010. He is the bestselling author of *Guts: 8 Laws of Business from One of the Most Innovative Business Leaders of Our Time*.