



Becoming Hewlett Packard: Why Strategic Leadership Matters

By Robert A. Burgelman, Webb McKinney, Philip E. Meza

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Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard invented the model of the Silicon Valley start-up and set in motion a process of corporate becoming that made it possible for HP to transform itself six times over the 77 years since its founding in the face of sweeping technological changes that felled most of its competitors over the years. Today, HP is in the throes of a seventh transformation to secure its continued survival by splitting in two independent companies: HP Inc. and Hewlett Packard Enterprise.

Based on extensive primary research conducted over more than 15 years, this book documents the differential contribution of HP's successive CEOs in sustaining the company's integral process of becoming. It uses a comprehensive strategic leadership framework to examine and explain the role of the CEO: (1) defining and executing the key tasks of strategic leadership, and (2) developing four key elements of the company's strategic leadership capability.

The study of the strategic leadership of HP's successive CEOs revealed the paradox of corporate becoming, the existential situation facing successive CEOs (that justifies the book's empathic approach), and the importance of the CEO's ability to harness the company's past while also driving its future. Building on these novel insights, the book shows how the frameworks used to conceptualize the tasks of strategic leadership and the development of strategic leadership capability can serve as steps toward a dynamic theory of strategic leadership that animates an evolutionary framework of corporate becoming. This framework will be helpful for further theory development about strategic leadership and also offers practical tools for founders of new companies and CEOs and boards of directors of existing companies who intend to create, run or oversee companies built for continued relevance, longevity and greatness.

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Editorial Review

Review

"McKinney, Meza, and Burgelman cite four key ways the company could have pulled off a softer, less humiliating landing. They amount to four big lessons for Silicon Valley today."

--*MIT Technology Review*

"[A] unique perspective and a comprehensive insight into Hewlett Packard's iconic and perhaps inspirational impact on contemporary organizational leadership and strategic management...The book is an intriguing documentary on Hewlett Packard and its historical significance as much as it is also an important contribution to the management sciences literature. Drawing on the authors' in-depth knowledge of HP's strategic and leadership innovations, the book challenges traditional management and leadership principles and practices as it conceptualizes an inspiring, persuasive, and unique general strategic framework for organizational leadership and long-term sustainability."

--*CHOICE*

"At a time where management studies are mainly fascinated by impressive short term venture success stories, this important book reminds us that the core identity of the firm is to become for the long term, an inspiring concept to enlighten the messy path and open-ended process of organizational transformation. *Becoming Hewlett Packard* is both a master piece of business history based on seventeen years of impressively well-executed research, and an inspiring strategy book to understand the role of CEO leadership in this corporate becoming phenomenon. A great book for those, student or professional, that will have to understand how to combine technology-driven entrepreneurship and business development strategy."

-- *Christophe Midler, Research Director at CRG (Management Research Center) and Innovation Management Professor at Ecole polytechnique*

"Robert Burgelman's et al's *Becoming Hewlett Packard* is an important contribution to how the field and practicing managers understand organizational evolution. With extraordinary access to HP, Burgelman and his colleagues induce a provocative process theory of organizational becoming. This comprehensive book adds great insight to the literature on organizational evolution. Their insights on the role of senior leaders, the board, and the shifting nature of organizational identity are particularly important. This book will have an impact on both scholars as well as senior leaders."

-- *Michael L. Tushman, Paul R. Lawrence MBA Class of 1942 Professor of Business Administration Chair, Program for Leadership Development Harvard Business School*

"This book provides a very rare longitudinal corporate history of a pioneering firm that has had a huge impact on the technology landscape. It is however much more than a rich analytical history of a long lasting enterprise. Robert and his colleagues, carefully distill key insights and build a robust conceptual framework that transcends HP and should be of interest to anyone interested in building a resilient enterprise."

-- *Ranjay Gulati, Jaime and Josefina Chua Tiampo Professor of Business Administration, Harvard Business School*

About the Author

Robert A. Burgelman is the Edmund W. Littlefield Professor of Management at Stanford Business School, and served as Executive Director of the Stanford Executive Program (1996-2015). He is the author of *Strategy is Destiny: How Strategy-Making Shapes a Company's Future* (2002), and co-author of *Inside Corporate Innovation: Strategy, Structure and Managerial Skills* (1986), *Strategic Dynamics: Concepts and Cases* (2006), and *Strategic Management of Technology and Innovation* (5th edition, 2009). He is a Fellow of the Strategic Management Society and the Academy of Management, and serves as advisor and senior executive educator for global companies.

Webb McKinney began his career at HP when David Packard and Bill Hewlett ran the company. McKinney held numerous engineering management and executive positions at HP, running HP's entry into consumer PCs, and going on to lead its entire PC business. McKinney later led worldwide sales, marketing and supply chains for all of HP's commercial customers. Before retiring from HP in 2003, McKinney was the EVP responsible for HP's integration of Compaq. McKinney is currently a consultant in merger integration and leadership development. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees in electrical engineering from the University of Southern California and serves on the boards of non-profit organizations.

Philip E. Meza is a strategy consultant and researcher. Much of his consulting work focuses on technology strategy and business development. His books and numerous case studies are used at business schools and universities around the world. A graduate of the University of California at Berkeley and The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, Meza is the author of *Coming Attractions: Hollywood, High Tech and the Future of Entertainment* (2007) and co-author of *Strategic Dynamics: Concepts and Cases* (2006). Meza also serves on the board of Toolworks, a social enterprise that helps people with disabilities. You can learn more about him at philipmeza.com.

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