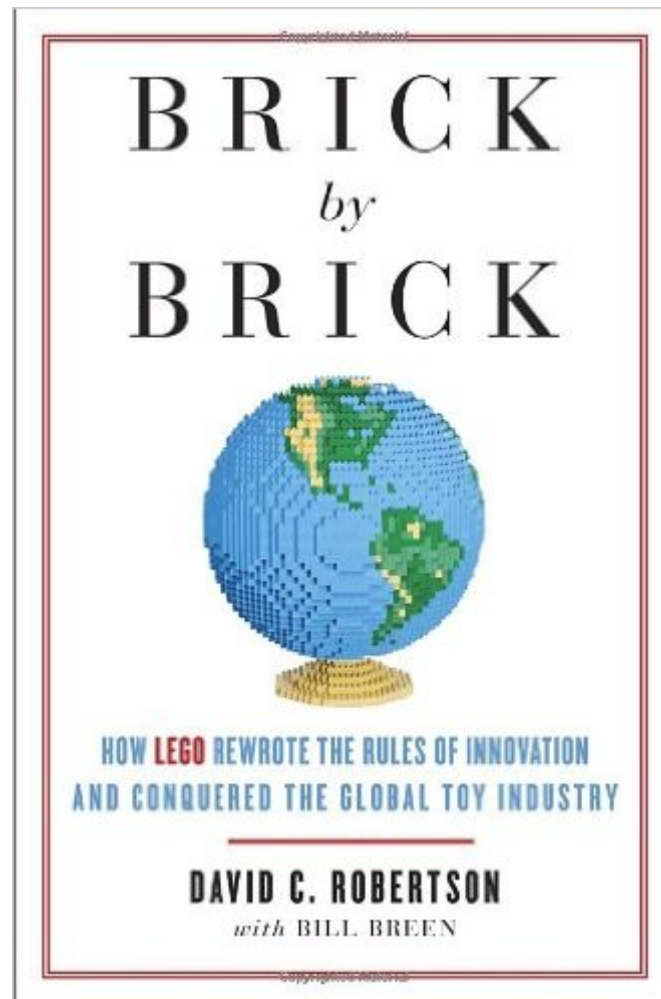


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Brick By Brick: How LEGO Rewrote The Rules Of Innovation And Conquered The Global Toy Industry



Synopsis

Brick by Brick takes you inside the LEGO you've never seen. By following the teams that are inventing some of the world's best-loved toys, it spotlights the company's disciplined approach to harnessing creativity and recounts one of the most remarkable business transformations in recent memory. Brick by Brick reveals how LEGO failed to keep pace with the revolutionary changes in kids' lives and began sliding into irrelevance. When the company's leaders implemented some of the business world's most widely espoused prescriptions for boosting innovation, they ironically pushed the iconic toymaker to the brink of bankruptcy. The company's near-collapse shows that what works in theory can fail spectacularly in the brutally competitive global economy. It took a new LEGO management team "faced with the growing rage for electronic toys, few barriers to entry, and ultra-demanding consumers (ten-year old boys)" to reinvent the innovation rule book and transform LEGO into one of the world's most profitable, fastest-growing companies. Along the way, Brick by Brick reveals how LEGO:- Became truly customer-driven by co-creating with kids as well as its passionate adult fans- Looked beyond products and learned to leverage a full-spectrum approach to innovation- Opened its innovation process by using both the "wisdom of crowds" and the expertise of elite cliques- Discovered uncontested, "blue ocean" markets, even as it thrived in brutally competitive red oceans- Gave its world-class design teams enough space to create and direction to deliver built a culture where profitable innovation flourishes Sometimes radical yet always applicable, Brick by Brick abounds with real-world lessons for unleashing breakthrough innovation in your organization, just like LEGO. Whether you're a senior executive looking to make your company grow, an entrepreneur building a startup from scratch, or a fan who wants to instill some of that LEGO magic in your career, you'll learn how to build your own innovation advantage, brick by brick.

Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Crown Business; Reprint edition (June 24, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0307951618

ISBN-13: 978-0307951618

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.9 x 8.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars See all reviews (75 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #156,713 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #41 in Books > Business & Money > Industries > Manufacturing #47 in Books > Business & Money > Industries > Industrial Relations #443 in Books > Business & Money > Biography & History > Company Profiles

Customer Reviews

Some 4 years ago, while cleaning our children's rooms, my wife dropped a Lego train, and the rarest thing to the utterly robust Lego happened: a little component broke off the train. It turned out to be a critical little part, making the whole train unusable. Having to explain to a 4 year old that his train was broken is nothing to look forward to as a parent, yet buying a whole new train set is unreasonably expensive as well. Our local toy store could not help out, but were kind enough to give us a Lego customer care number to call. Unassumingly we called them, having no expectations really. After all, who were we kidding, 1 component out of the zillion components Lego produces. And after all, we were just one of their millions of customers; why would they care...? We explained them what happened, explained the piece and the train model, they jotted down our name and address, and that was the last we expected to hear from it. Three weeks later a little envelope arrived. Addressed to my son (4 year olds love getting letters). It was a personalized letter from Lego to him, explaining how sad he must have felt when his mother had dropped the train. Therefore, Lego was glad to provide him with 3 new parts, no costs. And a free membership to the periodic Lego magazine. My jaws dropped. Not only did Lego totally outperform our expectations, they seemed to defy all logic. In the age of call centers and their associated customer carelessness, automation, mass production, depersonalization and standardization, they managed to do the exact opposite. It made my son and me life time fans of the company. This book is about how Lego manages to be so exceptional. Not by some wild eccentric leadership fad, but by a disciplined approach in their ways of working.

There could hardly be a more compelling story than the decline and eventual recovery of LEGO. Anyone who has been a child, or has a child, has experience with this iconic brand. The story contains all the necessary ingredients: hubris, near failure, a dogged recovery, a beloved brand. Actually, after reading Brick by Brick I'm amazed at how many parallels there are with Apple, another noted innovator. Like Apple, Lego was burning cash and found itself months away from bankruptcy. Lego was forced to make huge changes quickly. Both Apple and Lego fell on hard times by dramatically increasing the range of products with little emphasis on profitability or differentiation. Both brought aboard unlikely executives to lead the recovery. Apple brought back

Jobs, and Lego brought in a junior ex-McKinsey consultant with little turn around or leadership experience. Both leaders dramatically reduced product complexity and took a knife to operating costs, returning to profitability before attempting to grow through innovation. As an innovator, I think Brick by Brick is really a forensic story about the recovery of Lego, and not really a book about innovation per se. In many cases the previous Lego administration got Lego into trouble through unfocused innovation aimed at expanding the idea of what Lego meant to consumers, without bothering to discover real needs or consumer goals. Lego operated on a "push" model and angered customers by changing the meaning of Lego and the products' positioning. The resulting disaster wasn't a failure of innovation, just poor management.

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