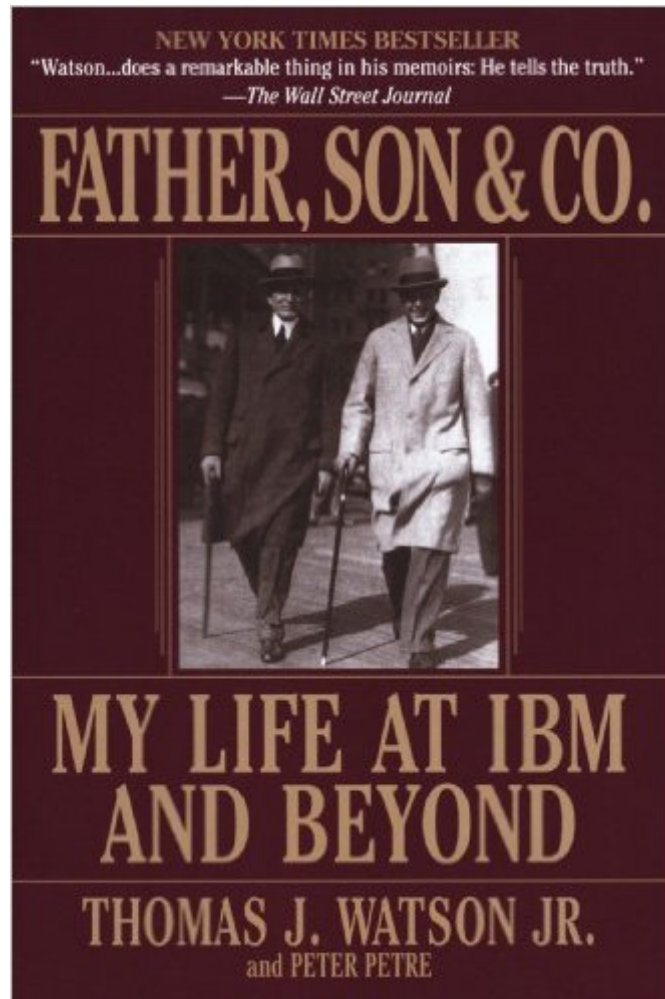


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# Father, Son & Co.: My Life At IBM And Beyond



## Synopsis

In this eloquent first-person account of a family drama that changed the face of American business, the man who transformed IBM into the world's largest computer company reflects on his lifelong partnership with his father--and how their management style and shared dedication to excellence united to create a unique corporate culture that became the blueprint for the entire technology boom. In the course of sixty years Thomas J. Watson Sr. and his son, Thomas J. Watson Jr., together built the international colossus that is IBM. This is their story: a riveting and revealing account of two men who loved each other--and fought each other--with a terrible fierceness. But along with the story of a father and son, this is IBM's story too. It chronicles the management insights that shaped its course and its unique corporate culture, the style that made Thomas Watson Sr. one of America's most charismatic bosses, and the daring decisions by Thomas Watson Jr. that transformed IBM into the world's largest computing company. One of the greatest business-success stories of all time, *Father, Son & Co.* is a moving lesson for fathers who dream for their children, as well as a testament to American ingenuity and values, told in a disarmingly frank and eloquent voice. Promising to remain an important business reference as we move into the next century, *FATHER, SON & CO.* takes a look at the management insight that helped to shape IBM's course and unique corporate culture. It looks at Watson, Sr., one of America's most charismatic bosses, and Watson, Jr., who spurred IBM into the computer age. Ten years after its original publication, *FATHER, SON & CO.* remains a uniquely honest book. Watson's willingness to write about the loving but ferociously combative relationship he had with his father and the turbulent battles behind some of IBM's most far-reaching decisions gives readers rare insights into the realities of leadership. -->

## Book Information

Perfect Paperback: 512 pages

Publisher: Bantam (February 29, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0553380834

ISBN-13: 978-0553380835

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.9 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars See all reviews (23 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #448,984 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #97 in Books > Biographies &

Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Computers & Technology #165 in Books > Computers & Technology > History & Culture > History #1363 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Business

## Customer Reviews

This book tells one of the most fascinating, indeed riveting, stories that I have ever read. It is about the building of one of the great American businesses of the 20C, but also much much more: it is about the conflict of an extraordinarily hard-driving father and his talented though psychologically burdened and rebellious son. From the beginning, they were at each others' throats and never relented in their conflict, even when it became evident that the son's genius surpassed that of his father to build an empire that can only be compared to the accomplishments of the first two Caesars, Julius and Augustus. The book also covers a good deal of American business history from the great depression to the beginning of the stagnation of the 1970s and early 1980s. Thus, it can be read on numerous levels. There are so many insights in it that it will bear re-reading for a long time to come. Watson Jr. was acutely aware of the cost of success and was brutally honest about his own failings as a manager and family man. I find myself remembering scenes in that book, running them in my mind as examples from which to learn. Warmly recommended.

It is always interesting to read what sons have to write about their fathers. Thomas J. Watson Jr.'s book is no exception to this rule. Although in many ways the book is a business biography, the relationship between the two men creeps in between the lines (almost more than you could imagine that the author had intended it to). Watson Jr. was clearly influenced by his iconic father, both for better and for worse. The book is a lot about how that influence (and the escape from that influence) shaped the company that is IBM today. Obviously the company has gone through many changes since this book was written-- Gerstner, downsizing, eBusiness, Business Consulting Services, etc. But still, it is remarkable how much of the culture is recognizable back to the very earliest days. I have a special interest in the subject matter, so it is hard for me to say how fascinating someone without an IBM attachment would find the book. If you do have that special interest in IBM history, however, it is an interesting book and well executed.

Almost everyone in the U.S. and many parts of the world recognize the three letters "IBM." Where did it start? How did it become so big and encompassing in our lives? This is an autobiography of Tom Watson Jr., former President of IBM and son of the company's founder Thomas Watson Sr.

Auto-biographies usually paint more of the bright side than the dark side. But he gave a lot his personal perceptions, fears, thoughts, and family relationships in this book, and for that respect is deserved. He never came off as condescending considering the wealth and power he attained. He was a poor student, who later became his own man serving in WWII. He did look death in the face on a few occasions. He proved from his own actions to become a good-thinking businessman while ascending to the helm at IBM, which was no easy task. He appears to understand human psychology well also. He also knew when to get out of the strainfull rat race and enjoy his interests outside of the company. He came across as a humanist who valued his employees in a personal way uncommon in corporate America. As the company grew so quickly and became so large, there were obvious "big company" problems and issues to address. And he did his best to tackle them. The book provided a lot of interesting historical background of his father, the origins of IBM and it's growth. a lot of information about what was going on in American business and technology in the 1950s and 60s is noted as well. Good auto-biography.

Wow, what a lovely book. A great book to begin the journey of learning about IBM. Who better to tell the story than Tom Watson. No, it's not all about the computers and tabulators, though Tom has much to say about the hardware and software as well as the goings on in "Big Blue", the IBM'ers of the time and his own family and their friends. Tom was no angel but his the book explains much of what was going on in his head and shows that the family cared very much for the company and it's staff. Makes ya' THINK!

The IBM 702 was the first commercially available modular computer second only the ENIAC Tom Watson Jr. Guided IBM out of the mechanical Hollerith machine era into the modern computer age this is his story.

I purchased this book on the strong recommendation of a friend who referred me in to IBM for a job. It had been recommended to him as a means for better understanding IBM's philosophies, culture and business practices during his long tenure as the manager of another technology company's business alliance with IBM. Tom Watson, Jr spent more than half of his life deeply enmeshed in IBM, from boyhood through a significant portion of his professional adult life. It is, in fact, a deeply revealing look inside IBM and did fulfill my primary goal of better understanding my new employer. What I wasn't expecting was the rich, fascinating story of an incredibly interesting life. Tom gives us a compelling recount of an historic journey, in and out of IBM, that includes a close

look at the under-told story of America's WWII relationship with the Soviet Union, how IBM evolved from a somewhat stodgy business machine manufacturer to an innovative technology leader, and his post-IBM adventures in business and government. As I turned the last page and closed the book, what struck with me, and has stayed with me, was how honest and authentic his story had been. Tom didn't gloss over things that were unpleasant or didn't show him in a favorable light -- he shined a bright light on them and made at least part of his story a cathartic confession of his failings as well as a celebration of his (many more) successes. Just a terrific read about an extraordinary American. More than worth the time!

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