



The Critical Path: Inventing an Automobile and Reinventing a Corporation

Brock W. Yates

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The story of how Chrysler's minivan team created an automobile that captured the 1995 Motor Trend Car of the Year and other major awards - and reinvented a perilously entrenched corporation in the process - is as dramatic and inspiring a story as any in business today. Brock Yates, one of the most respected writers in the auto world, was given unprecedented access to Chrysler - every planning session, presentation, budget review, test drive, assembly line start-up, and marketing launch. The result is a book that unveils the mysteries of modern car-making, revealing how cars are shaped through countless interlinked decisions ranging from size and power to door configurations, color selections, and innumerable other interconnected details. It also captures the complex process by which the thousands of separate pieces that make up a car are designed, tested, manufactured, and marshaled into place at the exact moment they are needed. For any reader who cares about cars, this is the most intriguing look inside the mysteries of their creation ever written. At the same time, The Critical Path recounts an extraordinary drama of all-too-human managers attempting to make something new, in a new way, inside a corporate culture that resists them at every turn. The story of how Chrysler's minivan platform team kept their commitment to quality, schedule, and budget - with a \$3 billion investment and the company's fate palpably in the balance - is as encouraging a tale as has emerged from American business in years. The unprecedented triumph and Chrysler's resultant comeback is a lesson in successful management that will be savored by any reader interested in how great companies make breakthrough products.

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