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Contact:

Barbara Henricks
Cave Henricks Communications
(512) 301-8936
barbara@cavehenricks.com

Maureen Cole
Portfolio / Penguin Group
(212) 366-2257
maureen.cole@us.penguin.com

More than **11,000** business books are published every year in the U.S., joining an already large library of classics that everyone in business *should* read, but just plain can't. Together these books would stack as high as a nine story building, contain 880 million words and take six and half years to read.

Where do you even begin?

Jack Covert and Todd Sattersten are in the business of business books, running a company called **800-CEO-READ** that grew from an independent bookstore in Milwaukee. They read countless titles a year and review, write about them on their website and blog (<http://800ceoread.com>), and sponsor an annual book award highlighting the year's best in a wide range of categories. Jack, with more than 25 years in bookselling, and Todd, a former GE man and self-described business book junkie, have identified one hundred titles that deliver the biggest payoff for today's busy reader in **THE 100 BEST BUSINESS BOOKS OF ALL TIME: What They Say, Why They Matter, and How They Can Help You (Portfolio; February 5, 2009)**.

The book already has some early fans, with the American Bookseller's Association selecting it as an "Indie Next" title for February (one of the few, if only, business books to ever to be

included) and *Harvard Business Review* planning a bylined piece by the authors in the March issue of the magazine.

“Business books,” say Jack and Todd, “are basically solutions to business problems. Sitting at the educational crossroads between ‘Let’s hire a consultant’ and ‘I know nothing about this,’ business books contain a high value proposition for the twenty dollars and two hours spent.”

THE 100 BEST puts the books in context, so that readers can quickly find solutions to the problems they face. From *The First 90 Days* in a new job, or how a new business can master *The Art of the Start*, or to take an existing company from *Good to Great*. Some of the choices will surprise, like *Moneyball*, *Orbiting the Giant Hairball* or the Dr. Seuss classic *Oh, the Places You’ll Go*. Some that didn’t make the cut – like Jack Welch’s memoir or Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* – will do the same.

This isn’t just a 1 to 100 list of the best business books of all time...Jack and Todd instead decided to present their picks differently, dividing them into a dozen categories -- from Strategy to Sales and Marketing, from Big Ideas to Biographies. Each category features original reviews of a handful of books that they feel offer the best information available on that particular subject. At the end of each review, there is a list of related books, both inside and outside **THE 100 BEST**. And sprinkled throughout the book are sidebars taking the reader beyond business books, suggesting movies, novels, and even children's books that offer equally relevant insights.

“Although we recognize that our picks will have detractors and that assessing quality can be subjective,” write the pair, “we started by asking the same questions about every book: Does the author make a good argument? Is there something new to what he or she is presenting? Does the idea align or contradict with what we know about business? And finally, can this idea be used to make business better?”

Once a book passed the "big idea" test, Todd and Jack then assessed each book for its relevance in business today and the accessibility of the information -- good ideas in poorly written books didn't make the cut.

Interestingly, when Jack and Todd separately wrote their individual lists of the 100 books they thought should be included, they had no idea how much their lists would overlap.

Surprisingly, 80 of their selections overlapped, leaving them to debate and ultimately decide on the remaining 20 books that made the list.

THE 100 BEST BUSINESS BOOKS OF ALL TIME is both an indispensable guide and an irresistible road map to the best business books of our time.

About the authors

Jack Covert is the founder and chief mentor of **800-CEO-READ**, a specialty business book retailer that began as a subsidiary of the Harry W. Schwartz Bookshops. **Todd Sattersten** is the company's president. Both read countless business books every year and review many of them on their Web site and blog (<http://800ceoread.com>). They live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. **800-CEO-READ** is an online bookseller and champion of great ideas in the business book category. They offer book buyers and authors a variety of tools, including a daily weblog (<http://800ceoread.com/blog>), a semi-weekly podcast (<http://800ceoread.com/podcast>) and a monthly publication of essays on ChangeThis (<http://changethis.com>). The company also highlights the best of the year in business books with the 800-CEO-READ Business Book Awards (<http://800ceoread.com/bookawards>), and their annual report, In The Books.

**THE 100 BEST BUSINESS BOOKS OF ALL TIMES:
What They Say, Why They Matter, and How They Can Help You**

by Jack Covert and Todd Sattersten

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MEET JACK & TODD

After years of reading, evaluating, and selling business books, Jack Covert and Todd Sattersten are two of the most respected experts on the category.



Jack Covert is the founder of and chief mentor for 800-CEO-READ, a subsidiary of the Harry W. Schwartz Bookshops. Hired twenty-five years ago by the late David Schwartz to promote business and computer books to the Milwaukee business community, Jack used his considerable sales skills and innate business acumen to grow that 3-shelf business section into a 7 million dollar specialty business book retailer.

How Jack Became the Author of THE 100 BEST

If you've ever met Jack, you'll know he has a lifetime full of fascinating stories. But he was reluctant to write about them despite being in the book business, happier to drop a good story during a lunch than to put them down on paper. But he began to write book reviews called "Jack Covert Selects," where each month he would pick the notable business books newly released and write short reviews to be sent to papers around the nation. When Todd Sattersten joined the company, he talked Jack into documenting all that he had learned from reading thousands of business books over the previous twenty-five years.



Todd Sattersten is 800-CEO-READ's president, joining the company in 2004. Previously, he spent six years at GE and three years working with his father in the family sheet metal fabrication business. Todd received his BS in mechanical engineering from Michigan Technological University and his MBA from Marquette University. But Todd also has a love of The Big Idea and he saw endless potential in the future of 800-CEO-READ.

How Todd Became the Author of THE 100 BEST

Todd continued writing even after the days of composing term papers and briefs were over. He started a weblog in 2003 called A Penny For..., one of the first business blogs on the internet. This led him to self-publish a compilation of essays from online writers called More Space. At 800-CEO-READ, he writes web content, blog posts and book reviews. Convinced that there are good business books if you know where to find them, he was inspired to team up with Jack to direct interested and curious readers to the best of the best. He strives to become a better writer and has become enamored with the craft.

10 Interesting Things about THE 100 BEST (Eight fun facts about the titles included in the book and two fun facts about the book itself)

1. 11,000 Business Books, Every Year

According to RR Bowker, 11,000 business books were published in the U.S. in 2007. That's 44 new business titles every single business day. If your job was to read every one of those books, there wouldn't be enough hours in the day.

The 100 Best distills 30,000 pages of the most important wisdom about work, business, and leadership to 300 pages, in 100 reviews. Each 700-word review does much more than summarize the book — it provides context for the ideas, arguments and insights, and explains who benefits from the book, and how to use its wisdom to solve problems.

What's more, the choices of **The 100 Best** and the analysis of the most valuable material to be found in them come from Jack Covert and Todd Sattersten, creators of what is undoubtedly the most-valuable business-book community, 800CEORead.

2. The 100 Best Shows: Modern Management Really Exists

Of the books in **The 100 Best**, 94 were published after 1980. That's not an accident. And given the history of important books about business and management — stretching back to Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations" (first published in 1776), **The 100 Best** represents a remarkable set of choices. The world of business, work and management really has changed — and these books show you how and why.

1980 marked a turning point in the world of work. The rigid processes and hierarchical structures of the 1960's and 1970's were supplanted by decentralization and team-based projects.

"In Search of Excellence," published in 1981, typifies a parallel change in business books. Instead of an impenetrable academic treatment of organizational design, Peters and Waterman produced an accessible — even fun — case-study of organizational practices that widened the market for reading about business beyond the executive suite.

The 100 Best means the most relevant, most revealing, most useful books from the world of business. Not necessarily the classics, or the most important ones.

Michael Porter, Abraham Maslow, and Ken Blanchard are all deservedly legendary, but their books do not appear anywhere in **The 100 Best**. Instead, Gary Hamel and C.K. Prahalad, Warren Bennis and Steve Farber do. Their books are accessible and useful to the contemporary reader, and so, they made the cut.

3. The 100 Best Offers Three Distinct Perspectives on Business and Work

All of **The 100 Best** fall into three simple categories: they are the work of thinkers, doers, or observers.

~66 authors fall into the traditional role of Thinker: these are the academics and consultants who study, research and report. Minds like Tom Peters, Jim Collins, Bob Sutton.

~23 authors are the Doers: these are the CEOs, the entrepreneurs, those who have spent time in the trenches. Leaders like Lou Gerstner, Richard Branson, Paul Hawken.

~11 authors are Observers: these are the reporters and writers who watch with a cool neutral eye and reveal things we can't see ourselves. Authors like Malcolm Gladwell, Michael Lewis, Richard Preston.

4. The 100 Best Takes Success Seriously, And Also Failure

Success matters; so does failure.

Formulas for success abound in the business book category. And 43 of **The 100 Best** employ this approach, including “How to Be a Star at Work,” “How to Win Friends and Influence People,” and “Good to Great.”

But failure is often an equally effective learning tool, when properly understood. Eight of **The 100 Best** focus on failure exclusively, including “Five Dysfunctions of a Team,” “The Innovator’s Dilemma” and “To Engineer is Human.” Sixteen more balance the good with the bad.

5. Megachange: Companies That Remade The World

Business is among the most powerful forces for societal change, and 14 of **The 100 Best** are books about companies that defined, or redefined, whole industries or the world of business at large.

These are role models — companies where the moment in history, the management, and the insight about what to produce came together in unprecedented ways: General Motors, General Electric, Toyota, Wal-Mart, Hewlett-Packard, McDonald's, Nucor, Standard Oil, Enron, Intel, Herman Miller, The Oakland A's. It is of note and interest that these companies remain highly relevant in today's business headlines, and are gaining iconic status as companies to watch for change and direction.

6. Fiction Isn't Just for Entertainment

Fiction is a great teacher. There is a common myth that academic books, nonfiction books, provide the most direct access to knowledge. In fact, though, it is stories that really enable people to understand a problem, identify with it, and learn from the subtleties of a situation.

The 100 Best features 25 works of fiction: 4 parables, 2 fables, 5 novels, 4 children's tales, and 10 movies. And in "Questions of Character", Joseph Badaracco shows how fiction can be used to teach leadership and ethics.

7. Business books solve problems.

Sitting at the educational crossroads between “I know nothing about this” and “Let’s hire a consultant,” business books contain a high value proposition for the twenty dollars and two hours spent. **The 100 Best** guides readers to the books that can help everyone working in business. It puts each book in context, so that readers can quickly find solutions to the problems they face, such as how to spend "The First 90 Days" in a new job or how to take their company from "Good to Great."

8. Business Books Can Change You, If You Let Them

Reading about work, business, leadership can change you — can change the way you relate to other people, can change the way you see the world, can change the way you think about your career and the story-line of your life.

The 100 Best is filled with the kind of books that open the world.

“The Lexus and The Olive Tree” inspires you to think global, no matter how local your work.

“Now, Discover Your Strengths” quizzes you, and then shows you how to explore and develop your talents, instead of focusing on your weaknesses.

“Moneyball” reveals that any industry is ripe for reinvention.

The magic of “The 100 Best” is that these books work whether you’re a front-line manufacturing worker or the CEO of an accounting firm. And **The 100 Best** is organized to let you find the books that will matter to you now, and help you most.

And two things about The 100 Best itself:

9. The 100 Best is A New Kind of Book— A Hyperlinked Book, A Social Network for Ideas

Facebook and MySpace have revealed a remarkable phenomenon — who our friends are matters, but who *their* friends are is what is really valuable. The power of connections is revealing, surprising, and potent.

The 100 Best creates exactly this same kind of connection between the most important books and ideas in the last century of business literature.

How is “Good to Great” connected to “In Search of Excellence”? More important, how is “In Search of Excellence” connected to the speeches of Winston Churchill — and what other wisdom do Churchill’s speeches have to offer struggling business people?

Every one of **The 100 Best** entries concludes with a list of books to which the book being reviewed owes a debt — and allows readers to explore the connections that seem most intriguing or valuable to them.

Like Facebook and MySpace, **The 100 Best** will lead you to places you want to go — but that you don’t yet know exist.

10. The 100 Best is Really Three Books in One

The 100 Best is not a classic “book of lists.” (For instance, there is no numerical ranking, #1 to #100, of the best.)

It can be read three ways:

- Browsable and readable, front to back. **The 100 Best** works as a standard book — you can simply read it from front to back, be introduced to new characters and ideas, and reminded of the power of familiar ones. You can browse it at will, depending on what catches your fancy.

- As a way to solve problems. The organization of **The 100 Best** is specifically designed so you can use it to solve some a problem you’re having in the world of work right now — a knotty personnel issue, a marketing strategy that’s flat, a lack of motivation or direction. **The 100 Best** will open the world of the best thinkers on those topics for you — and send you to the minds that will give you the best possible counsel.

- As a permanent reference. **The 100 Best** is the kind of book that business people will want to keep on the shelf in their office, or in their briefcase, or on their bedside table — a book to return to as your career evolves, as your work evolves, as your challenges change. **The 100 Best** can provide guidance, support and insight no matter what stage of work life you’re in.

An interview with Jack and Todd about

THE 100 BEST BUSINESS BOOKS OF ALL TIME

Q: Tell us a little bit about the criteria for books that made the list -- what made one book about a specific subject better than all the others in that category?

A: There were three criteria we considered key in choosing our list: accessibility, applicability, and the quality of the idea. Accessibility is about how well the author communicates his idea, whether it's the clarity of the writing or the crafting of memorable stories. Applicability refers to whether the book is still relevant to people working in business today; most concepts and company anecdotes die quickly. In rating of the quality of the idea, we asked of each book this subjective question: would we use these ideas in our own business?

Q: You are booksellers, reviewers, bloggers and purveyors of taste and popular opinion about business books. What made you want to write a book?

A: 800-CEO-READ has been offering book recommendations to business readers for 25 years. In the 80s, Jack sat at his typewriter each week and created a New Acquisitions list from publisher copy that he would then fax to his customers on Saturday mornings. In 2000, the list morphed into our Jack Covert Selects monthly column with Jack's personal reviews. In 2004, we introduced a series of daily blogs that include media notices, audio interviews and book excerpts. Our *In the Books* annual review and The 800-CEO-READ Book Awards feature the best of the year in business books. **The 100 BEST** is our stake in the ground for which business books are the best of all time, and publishing that list in book form gives these titles their proper recognition. Personally, becoming authors was a natural extension of our work; given the number of books we see, we figured we should try our hand at it too.

Q: With 11,000 books published in this category every year, how did you ever narrow it down to just 100 books? Did the two of you have a lot of debate about which books to include?

A: The process of choosing the books for **THE 100 BEST** started with each of us retreating into our respective offices and creating our own list of the books we thought were worthy of inclusion. We each came back with about 130 titles, and to our surprise, upon comparison 80 of the titles matched. So, the vast majority of the list was decided in about a day. The remaining books, however, were determined after months of mostly-friendly debate.

Q: Some very quirky books made your list -- from Dr. Seuss to titles like *Orbiting the Giant Hairball*. Can you talk about why books like that appeal to you?

A: We believe that the typical definition of a business book is too confining. Seuss, in 600 words, conveys the difficulties of decision-making, the lessons to be learned from failure, and the unwanted results of procrastination—as well as the promise of hope—more effectively than most business books. *The Republic of Tea* is a republishing of faxes that streamed back and forth between the owners of the company that lend authenticity and an unexpected quality to the book. *Zag* describes itself as “A Whiteboard Overview” and proves that creative graphics can often convey information more efficiently than text.

Q: THE 100 BEST also pulls readers outside of books, making suggestions for things like movies, case studies and conferences to attend. That makes it almost a pop culture guide to business. How do you think these influences sneak into the board room?

A: Business is a complex and compelling mixture of economics, mathematics, anthropology, engineering, psychology, and even theater, and, as such, is woven into and influenced by every aspect of our culture. Whether it is through the personal failures described in *The Great Gatsby* or the “management style” of Tony Soprano, other forms of media offer lessons about becoming more effective in business. In the boardroom and in books such as ours, pop culture provides a common language that keeps business relevant and accessible.

Q: Almost all of the books on your list were written in 1980 or after and you talk a bit about that marking the start of modern business literature as a genre. Can you talk a bit about why you think that was the beginning?

A: The early 80s were a time of great cultural and political turmoil, the kind that often leads to new ways of thinking about old modes of doing. At the same time, there was a distinct change happening in business: decision making was being pushed down, resulting in more managers with more responsibility than ever before (decentralization), and many of those managers were leaving to create their own companies. Enter *In Search of Excellence* and then *Iacocca*, two of the bestselling books of the time. Publishers realized that more and more people were looking for information and inspiration in a language they could understand. Now there is a plethora of books available to solve almost any problem in business.

Q: What do you say to the reader who says he is "too busy" to read business books?

A: Every day we struggle to find solutions to problems, whether it is the unmotivated employee, unproductive team or unviable business model. It is a constant challenge to find solutions. We look to the media. We take classes. We hire consultants. We ask friends. Sitting at the educational crossroads of “I know nothing about this” and “Let’s hire a consultant,” good business books contain a high value proposition for twenty dollars and two hours of your attention. The equation is this simple: 30 minutes a week, a chapter a night, an audiobook on the car, or a 2 hour plane trip from Chicago to New York. Reading a good business book is not as hard as you think.