



Who Says Elephants Can't Dance?: Leading a Great Enterprise Through Dramatic Change

By Louis V. Gerstner Jr.



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In 1990, IBM had its most profitable year ever. By 1993, the computer industry had changed so rapidly the company was on its way to losing \$16 billion and IBM was on a watch list for extinction -- victimized by its own lumbering size, an insular corporate culture, and the PC era IBM had itself helped invent.

Then Lou Gerstner was brought in to run IBM. Almost everyone watching the rapid demise of this American icon presumed Gerstner had joined IBM to preside over its continued dissolution into a confederation of autonomous business units. This strategy, well underway when he arrived, would have effectively eliminated the corporation that had invented many of the industry's most important technologies.

Instead, Gerstner took hold of the company and demanded the managers work together to re-establish IBM's mission as a customer-focused provider of computing solutions. Moving ahead of his critics, Gerstner made the bold decision to keep the company together, slash prices on his core product to keep the company competitive, and almost defiantly announced, "The last thing IBM needs right now is a vision."

Who Says Elephants Can't Dance? tells the story of IBM's competitive and cultural transformation. In his own words, Gerstner offers a blow-by-blow account of his arrival at the company and his campaign to rebuild the leadership team and give the workforce a renewed sense of purpose. In the process, Gerstner defined a strategy for the computing giant and remade the ossified culture bred by the company's own success.

The first-hand story of an extraordinary turnaround, a unique case study in managing a crisis, and a thoughtful reflection on the computer industry and the principles of leadership, *Who Says Elephants Can't Dance?* sums up Lou Gerstner's historic business achievement. Taking readers deep into the world of IBM's CEO, Gerstner recounts the high-level meetings and explains the pressure-filled, no-turning-back decisions that had to be made. He also offers his hard-won conclusions about the essence of what makes a great company run.

In the history of modern business, many companies have gone from being industry leaders to the verge of extinction. Through the heroic efforts of a new management team, some of those companies have even succeeded in resuscitating themselves and living on in the shadow of their former stature. But only one company has been at the pinnacle of an industry, fallen to near collapse, and then, beyond anyone's expectations, returned to set the agenda. That company is IBM.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Gerstner quarterbacked one of history's most dramatic corporate turnarounds. For those who follow business stories like football games, his tale of the rise, fall and rise of IBM might be the ultimate slow-motion replay. He became IBM's CEO in 1993, when the gargantuan company was near collapse. The book's opening section snappily reports Gerstner's decisions in his first 18 months on the job—the critical "sprint" that moved IBM away from the brink of destruction. The following sections describe the marathon fight to make IBM once again "a company that mattered." Gerstner writes most vividly about the company's culture. On his arrival, "there was a kind of hothouse quality to the place. It was like an isolated tropical ecosystem that had been cut off from the world for too long. As a result, it had spawned some fairly exotic life-forms that were to be found nowhere else." One of Gerstner's first tasks was to redirect the company's attention to the outside world, where a marketplace was quickly changing and customers felt largely ignored. He succeeded mightily. Upon his retirement this year, IBM was undeniably "a company that mattered." Gerstner's writing occasionally is myopic. For example, he makes much of his own openness to input from all levels of the company, only to mock an earnest (and overlong) employee e-mail (reprinted in its entirety) that was critical of his performance. Also, he includes a bafflingly long and dull appendix of his collected communications to IBM employees. Still, the book is a well-rendered self-portrait of a CEO who made spectacular change on the strength of personal leadership.

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Review

"[Gerstner] entertains as he educates." (New York Times Book Review)

"A well-rendered self-portrait of a CEO who made spectacular change on the strength of personal leadership." (Publishers Weekly)

"Effective, to the point...Louis V. Gerstner Jr deserves his place in the management hall of fame." (Financial Times)

"The best business book I've ever read." (Imus in the Morning)

"[Lou Gerstner] has the substance of a genuine and ... interesting story." (Wall Street Journal)

About the Author

Louis V. Gerstner Jr., formerly head of RJR Nabisco and American Express, is the CEO of IBM.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Judy Turner:

Now a day people who Living in the era wherever everything reachable by connect to the internet and the resources included can be true or not need people to be aware of each details they get. How a lot more to be

smart in having any information nowadays? Of course the correct answer is reading a book. Reading through a book can help people out of this uncertainty. Information specifically this Who Says Elephants Can't Dance?: Leading a Great Enterprise Through Dramatic Change book as this book offers you rich information and knowledge. Of course the details in this book hundred pct guarantees there is no doubt in it you know.

Fred Ashman:

The book Who Says Elephants Can't Dance?: Leading a Great Enterprise Through Dramatic Change has a lot info on it. So when you check out this book you can get a lot of advantage. The book was written by the very famous author. McDougal makes some research ahead of write this book. This particular book very easy to read you can obtain the point easily after scanning this book.

James Walton:

Playing with family in a park, coming to see the marine world or hanging out with good friends is thing that usually you might have done when you have spare time, subsequently why you don't try factor that really opposite from that. One particular activity that make you not feeling tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you have been ride on and with addition details. Even you love Who Says Elephants Can't Dance?: Leading a Great Enterprise Through Dramatic Change, you are able to enjoy both. It is very good combination right, you still want to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh can occur its mind hangout men. What? Still don't get it, oh come on its known as reading friends.

Kermit Moors:

This Who Says Elephants Can't Dance?: Leading a Great Enterprise Through Dramatic Change is great guide for you because the content and that is full of information for you who have always deal with world and possess to make decision every minute. This specific book reveal it info accurately using great plan word or we can say no rambling sentences inside. So if you are read it hurriedly you can have whole data in it. Doesn't mean it only gives you straight forward sentences but challenging core information with splendid delivering sentences. Having Who Says Elephants Can't Dance?: Leading a Great Enterprise Through Dramatic Change in your hand like finding the world in your arm, data in it is not ridiculous just one. We can say that no publication that offer you world within ten or fifteen moment right but this reserve already do that. So , this is good reading book. Hey Mr. and Mrs. busy do you still doubt that?

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