

The Tale of the Scale

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SOLLY ANGEL



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出版者:

出版时间:2004-2

装帧:

isbn:9780195158687

In the mid-1980s, Solly Angel had a technological mini-vision. He saw in his mind's eye a quarter-inch thick personal scale weighing a pound-a travel scale-and he decided to make it a reality, to bring it to market. The Tale of the Scale is a rare first-person account of the process of invention and design as it unfolds in the remaking of the familiar bathroom scale. It is rare because inventors seldom have the inclination to articulate their thought processes and to recount their experiences in great detail. Written by an inventor, the book stands apart from recent books about inventors. Angel, an urban planner by profession, had no mechanical skills as he embarked on his journey. The Tale records his transformation, over the course of a decade, from a bungling ignoramus to an expert on thin scales. Readers know as much about scales-or about invention for that matter-as Angel does at the beginning of the journey. Listening to Angel's unfolding story, they learn about the intricacies of invention and design as Angel finds out about them. The Tale of the Scale is truly an odyssey of invention. The pursuit of the thin scale takes readers to fascinating places-from Bangkok to Rolling Hills, California, from Groningen in the Netherlands to Murrhardt in Germany, and from New York to Tokyo. But the places Angel explores are not only visually different. They are realms of knowledge inhabited by people with diverse yet complementary outlooks on the invention process-engineers, designers, lawyers, product development specialists, corporate functionaries, and friends who philosophize on the deeper meanings of one's life pursuits.

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