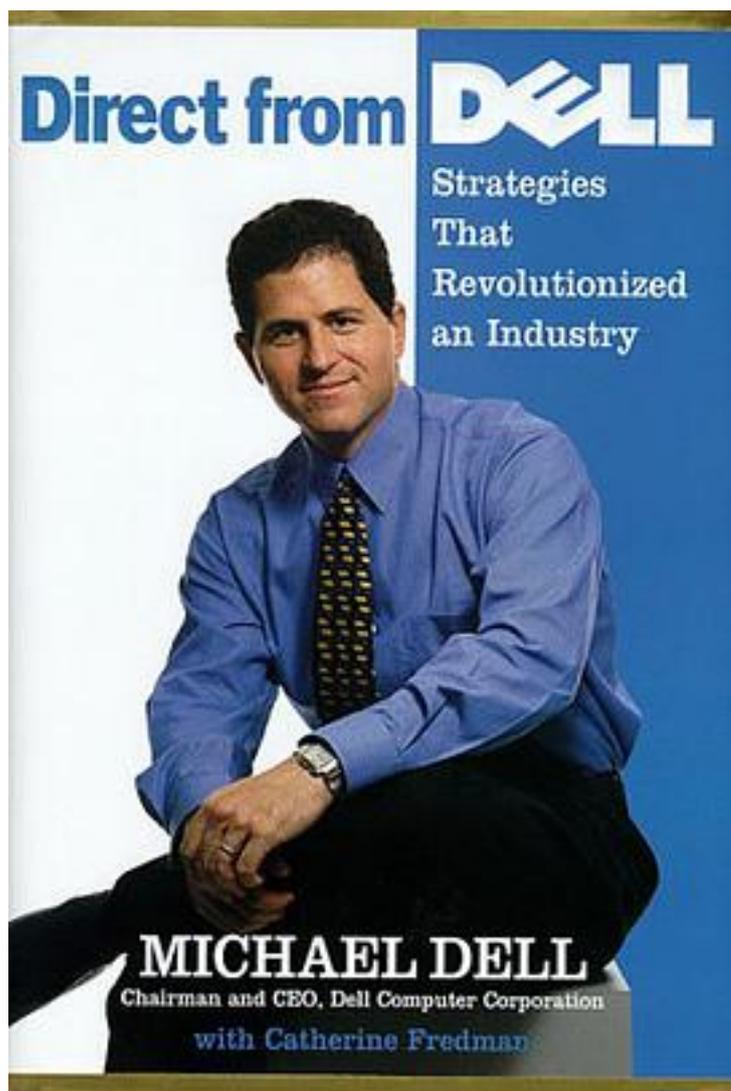


# Direct From Dell



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In 1983, Michael S. Dell, then an incoming freshman at the University of Texas at Austin, drove away from his parents' Houston home in a white BMW he'd bought selling subscriptions to his hometown newspaper. In the backseat were three personal computers. Today, he is the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Dell Computer Corporation, an \$18 billion company, the second-largest manufacturer and marketer of computers in the world. Founded on a deceptively simple premise--to deliver high-performance computer systems directly to the end user--Dell Computer is the envy of its competition, constantly growing at five times the industry rate, and a perennial darling of Wall Street: its stock is up more than 36,000 percent this decade, and more than 200 percent in the last year. In *Direct From Dell*, Michael Dell himself tells the incredible story of Dell Computer's successful rise, beginning in his college dorm room with \$1,000 in capital. In these pages, you'll see the formation of a great visionary--and a great company. You'll meet the young Dell who, at the tender age of eight, had already begun looking "to eliminate unnecessary steps" and who, as a numbers-loving adolescent, was inspired by a newfound fascination with computers to save his money to buy a coveted Apple II--only to promptly take it apart. You'll encounter a young visionary who, upon witnessing the inefficiencies of an exploding industry, challenged conventional wisdom and set out to do nothing less than beat IBM at its own game. In so doing, Dell forever changed the way things "had always been done" in the computer industry. You'll also see the birth of a Dell hallmark--the direct model--which, in its ability to reach the customer directly, eliminated not only a substantial middleman markup but also the possibility of costly excess inventory, setting the stage for other extraordinary achievements. In an industry notorious for its unreliable service, Dell utilized its direct customer relationships to pioneer the concept of customer "support"--and didn't rest until the caliber of its service was rivaled only by the quality of its products and its speed of delivery. But the story of Dell Computer is no fairy tale. Marked by uncharacteristically rapid growth, the company was faced with challenges that could have threatened its very existence. From forays into retail to under- (and over-) developed product lines, Dell learned some hard lessons along the way--and emerged stronger as a result. The strategies born of those times--unrivaled speed to market; superior customer service; a fierce commitment to producing constantly high-quality custom-made systems--heralded what has perhaps been the company's crowning achievement: an early exploitation of the Internet. Not just for CEOs or those in high tech, the strategies revealed in *Direct From Dell* are invaluable to managers in a broad cross section of industries. From starting a successful business to pioneering computer sales and service over the Internet, Dell shares his perspectives on: Why it's infinitely better for any business starting out to have too little capital, rather than too much. How studying your customers--not your competition--will give you a greater competitive edge. Why it can be life-threatening to your company to pursue too many good ideas--or to grow too fast. Why it's essential to run a P&L on every area of your business. Why your people pose a greater threat to the health of your business than your competition does. How you can exploit your competition's weakness by exposing its greatest strength. How integrating your business virtually can make the difference between being quick--and being dead. Revealing nothing less than a new model for doing business in the information age, *Direct From Dell* is both an extraordinary business success story and a manifesto for revolutionizing any industry.

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