



The Ride of a Lifetime: Lessons Learned from 15 Years as CEO of the Walt Disney Company

Author: Robert Iger

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“The Ride of a Lifetime” is a lesson in management and character authored by Walt Disney Company’s Executive Chairman, Bob Iger.

His business memoir reveals the toughness, risk-taking and agility a successful leader needs to possess even when he or she is on the brink of a meltdown.

“And I tend to approach bad news as a problem that can be worked through and solved, something I have control over rather than something happening to me,” writes Iger.

Iger’s business *mantra* was guided by Roone Arledge, then the president of ABC Sports and ABC news, who insisted, “Innovate or die.”

Iger got his first position at ABC Television as a studio supervisor at 23 and spent the next 31 years moving through more than 20 different positions at the network. He was named CEO of The Walt Disney Company in 2005 and was elected its chairman in 2015.

At Disney, Iger was the driving force behind the acquisitions of Pixar, Lucasfilm, Marvel and, more recently, 21st Century Fox. Many of the above acquisitions involved a leap in the dark.

“Don’t be in the business of playing it safe. Be in the business of creating possibilities for greatness,” states Iger in his book.

A leader of the caliber of Iger needs to maintain a strict self-discipline. He rises at 4:15 each morning and works out seven days a week.

Iger’s accounts of deal making are very intriguing. There is a mention of a meeting that took place between Iger and Steve Jobs. Soon after the

announcement that Disney had acquired Pixar/Apple, Jobs took Iger on a walk and revealed to him that his cancer had spread to his liver. Jobs was not completely happy with this deal, but Iger was clever enough to woo Jobs directly and became one of his close friends.

Some of his other intriguing deal makings included the agreement for buying Fox over a glass of wine at Rupert Murdoch’s vineyard.

In trying to acquire Marvel, Iger couldn’t track down the company’s elusive leader, Ike Perlmutter.

Iger writes that being and staying positive is one of the most important qualities a leader can have.

“If you walk up and down the hall constantly telling people ‘The sky is falling,’ a sense of doom and gloom will, over time, permeate the company. You can’t communicate pessimism to the people around you. It’s ruinous to morale,” Iger writes.

He says the bottom line is that “no one” wants to follow a pessimist. Optimism is about believing in yourself and your employees’ abilities

As a side note, Iger plans to retire in 2021. Asked about whether he’d run for president in 2024, when he will be 73, he says, “I don’t know that I have it in me.”

-Reviewed by Anil Shrivastava ‘Musafir’