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In Search of Excellence

Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies

HarperBusiness Essentials

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Preface

There are a few observations that may help the reader through the pages ahead. We collected the data on which this book is based and distilled them into eight basic findings. Some readers may say that the findings are motherhoods, but that's not true. Each finding in and of itself may seem a platitude (close to the customer, productivity through people), but the intensity of the way in which the excellent companies execute the eight—especially when compared with their competitors—is as rare as a smog-free day in Los Angeles.

Second, we hazard that Chapters 3 and 4 may be daunting, because they are devoted largely to theory. They can be skipped (or read last), but we *do* suggest that the reader skim them, at least, and consider giving them careful attention. We urge this, because the eight basics of management excellence don't just "work because they work." They work because they make exceptional sense. The deepest needs of hundreds of thousands of individuals are tapped—exploited, if you will—by the excellent companies, and their success reflects, sometimes without their knowing it, a sound theoretical basis. Moreover, we think readers may be pleasantly surprised to see how interesting the theory is. It is not, we would add, new or untested; most of the theory has stood the scientific test of time and defied refutation. It merely has been ignored, by and large, by managers and management writers.