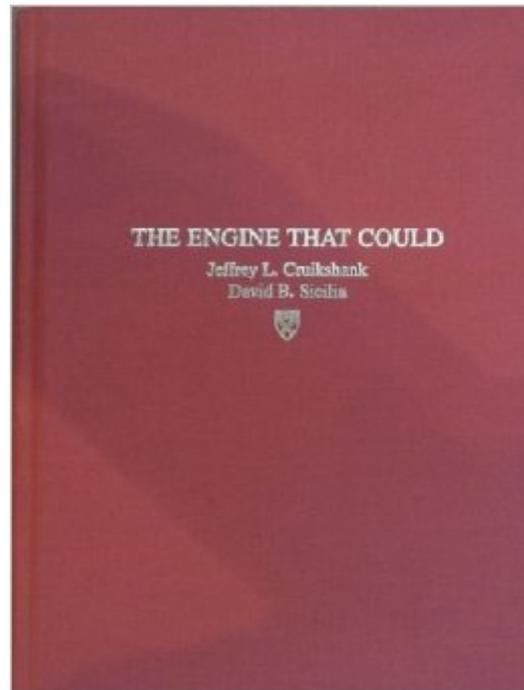


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# The Engine That Could: Seventy-Five Years Of Values-Driven Change At Cummins Engine Company



## Synopsis

The rise of Cummins Engine Company from a tiny Indiana machine shop to one of the world's leading producers of diesel engines is a story rich with lessons for today's managers. By responding to challenges familiar to all American manufacturers with a tough competitive stance and a uniquely people-centered philosophy, Cummins has carved out a distinctive profile in the international industrial landscape. A compelling and important contribution to the literature of business history, *The Engine that Could* showcases the strategic choices and the pivotal decisions that have shaped and influenced Cummins Engine. Drawing extensively on interviews as well as archival research, the authors provide an in-depth look at a way of doing business that is unconventional, flexible, and pragmatic. They explain how the firm's business model has evolved over time, and how it has survived the pressures of a dramatically changing competitive arena. Cummins' remarkable seventy-five year history captures much of what is interesting - and important - about the evolution of American business from the 1920s to the 1990s.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An undertaking of this sort may have limited results from the start. One must first identify the best observers and then find them to register their thoughts. For example, at one time...in the early 1970s...Vaughn Beals, an engineer was seen as the best manager that ever darkened Cummins' doors. He left in frustration when his plan for main engine plant improvements was vetoed. The 'troika', Schacht, Henderson and Hackett persuaded J. Irwin Miller that the 'three legged strategy' was the way to go! The strategy was Base Business, Allied Businesses and Emerging Business.

K-2 Skis wet t shirts 'contests' and Jan Sport did not entirely fit. Mr. Beals initiated the first Cummins top down management development for all employees in the Research and Engineering Center. Dr. Bob House and Dr. John Rizzo thus began organization development at Cummins relying on the survey research method. Their survey work (all of R & E) and a portion of corporate indicated high levels of role ambiguity and role conflict across the organization. The separate employee survey after the 1972 DWU strike designed by professors from the Indiana University School of Business and the Institute of Social Research at the University of Michigan after years of delays was published by a senior HR manager in a very abbreviated form in a Cummins official employee magazine. During this same time frame Dr. Jay Forrester of MIT met from time to time with the most senior management of Cummins to discuss his ideas of "Industrial Dynamics." It was said that Dr. Forrester was very frustrated with this process. At the same time Mr. Miller employed a Dr. Griest, a psychiatrist to meet with and counsel staff at the Irwin Management Company. His confidential assessments of matters in Columbus for Mr.

It can be quite difficult to know how a company got where it is. That is certainly the case with Cummins, Inc. Cummins is a successful manufacturer of diesel engines, supplying customers in trucking, power generation, marine, and many other industries. If large, heavy-duty diesels are required, Cummins is a premier supplier. However, a company such as Cummins does not become a premier supplier overnight; it had to have a beginning, growth, successes and failures. This book chronicles the founding of Cummins, its growth, and the company's high points and low points to the mid-1990's. There are several ways to look at this book. It is a history book. It is a case study. It is literature. Let us examine how this book behaves in each of its aspects. As literature, this book succeeds. The writing is clear and coherent. The authors organized the chapters well, though I had to get used to the overlapping of years in the later chapters. I also found the story captivating. Though I knew that Cummins was successful, the early decades of the company were uncertain. How would W.G. Irwin and Clessie Cummins turn an invention into a successful business? Though I knew the end of the story, in a manner of speaking, the story pulled me onward. The authors researched this book well. More than forty pages provide acknowledgements, interviews and references cited in the chapters. This book is an excellent reference book that describes in detail a small portion of our industrial history. There are many features to this history. It provides a lot of detail regarding several of the key figures involved in the creation in development of Cummins, thus to some extent it is biographical.

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