Making the Cisco Connection: The Story Behind the Real Internet Superpower

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Cisco Systems is known among the technology elite in Silicon Valley as one of the most successful companies to emerge from the Valley in many years. It has been dubbed computing's next Superpower. Just as Intel and Microsoft soared to lofty heights with the rise of the personal computer, Cisco Systems is flying on the spectacular updraft of the Internet. The company, which makes specialized computers that route information through a network--acting as a sort of data traffic cop--has captured 85 percent of the market for routers used as the backbone of the biggest network of them all, the Internet. As a result, over the last five years, the value of Cisco's total outstanding stock has risen over 2,000 percent--twice the increase of Microsoft Corp. stock in the same period. Beginning as a tale of two college sweethearts at Stanford University who cofounded the company fifteen years ago, the often-told Cisco legend has all the makings of a great novel--love, money, a villain or two, corporate coups, and the sweet taste of victory. But mostly, the Cisco story is a very unusual tale of corporate success. Despite the struggle of passing through several regimes, Cisco managed to hit all the crucial spots of its business. Cisco consistently bested competitors like 3Com and IBM with insight, innovation, customer focus, and one of the biggest corporate buying sprees in history. Making the Cisco Connection deftly traces the networking giant's path to success, from its founding couple, Sandra Lerner and Leonard Bosack, to current CEO John Chambers. It highlights the company's astounding knack for buying other businesses and making them part of a huge conglomerate; its own highly developed use of technology; and its unusually tight-knit culture. Featuring the perspective of top Cisco executives and competitors, this book reveals how Cisco's technology, employees, and even its competition have blended to make Cisco possibly the most important company shaping the future of communications. Next to ruthless competitors Microsoft and Intel, Cisco shines with a kinder, gentler image, emphasizing happy customers and employees. You'll see how Cisco built its impressive culture by cultivating community, boosting morale, whittling down bureaucracy, and saving money to boot. This book also explains how Cisco is positioning itself to enter a new competitive playing field, moving beyond Internet routers in an attempt to build a single, giant, global communications system--based on the Internet--that would make the current telephone system obsolete. Cisco wants to be the company that delivers the infrastructure of this new network, which will combine computer networks with telephones, television, radio, and satellite communications. To do that, it is now challenging global giants such as Lucent Technologies and Fujitsu. Cisco plans to become the backbone of the entire communications industry, making it a corporation of incredible power as the Internet Age blossoms in the new millennium. Provocative and instructive, Making the Cisco Connection traces the unique history of one of the most profitable and enduring technology companies in business today. Acclaim for Making the CISCO Connection "If you want to learn the whole scoop about the first Internet-Age company, and one of the most successful firms of any age, you've come to the right place. Bunnell's treatment of Cisco's rise--and continued rise--is fascinating and full of human detail. It's clear that Cisco is not just a firm with great technology, but also great leaders and managers."--Thomas H. Davenport, Director, Andersen Consulting Institute for Strategic Change; Professor, Boston University School of Management "Cisco has emerged as a twenty-first century leader. David Bunnell captures the ongoing story of the Cisco executive team exploiting IT, structuring a unique organization, and creating a dynamic strategy for this breakaway dot com company."--Richard L. Nolan, William Barclay Harding Professor of Business Administration, Harvard Business School

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