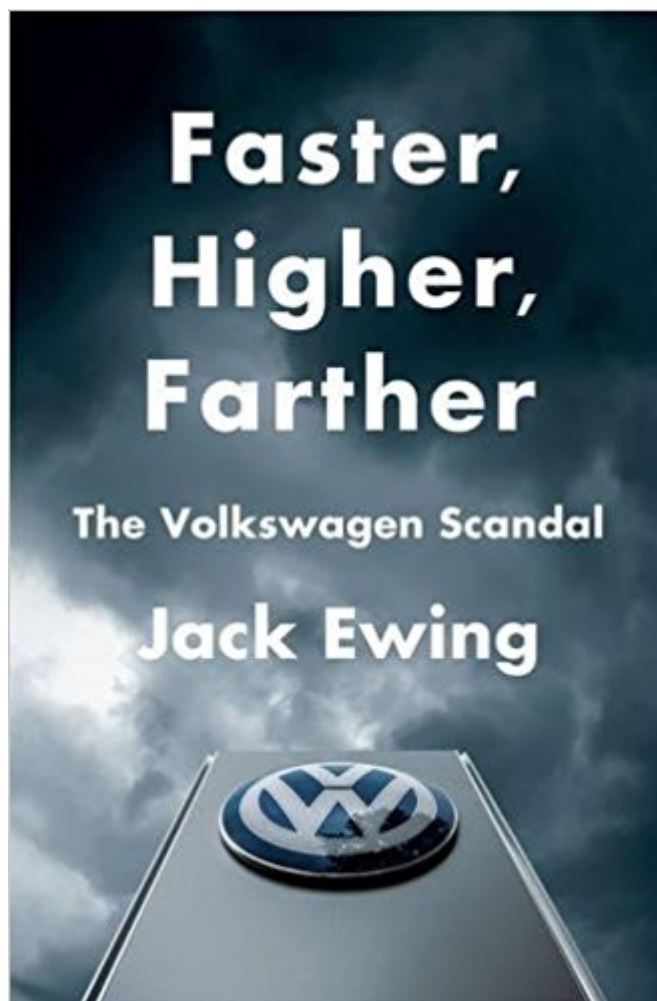


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Faster, Higher, Farther: The Volkswagen Scandal



Synopsis

A shocking exposé of Volkswagen's fraud by the New York Times reporter who covered the scandal. In mid-2015, Volkswagen proudly reached its goal of surpassing Toyota as the world's largest automaker. A few months later, the EPA disclosed that Volkswagen had installed software in 11 million cars that deceived emissions-testing mechanisms. By early 2017, VW had settled with American regulators and car owners for \$20 billion, with additional lawsuits still looming. In *Faster, Higher, Farther*, Jack Ewing rips the lid off the conspiracy. He describes VW's rise from "the people's car" during the Nazi era to one of Germany's most prestigious and important global brands, touted for being "green." He paints vivid portraits of Volkswagen chairman Ferdinand Piëch and chief executive Martin Winterkorn, arguing that the corporate culture they fostered drove employees, working feverishly in pursuit of impossible sales targets, to illegal methods. Unable to build cars that could meet emissions standards in the United States honestly, engineers were left with no choice but to cheat. Volkswagen then compounded the fraud by spending millions marketing "clean diesel," only to have the lie exposed by a handful of researchers on a shoestring budget, resulting in a guilty plea to criminal charges in a landmark Department of Justice case. *Faster, Higher, Farther* reveals how the succeed-at-all-costs mentality prevalent in modern boardrooms led to one of corporate history's farthest-reaching cases of fraud with potentially devastating consequences. 8 pages of illustrations

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Customer Reviews

“This will go down in history books as a great corporate scandal, but the story told by the New York Times reporter Jack Ewing is also much more than that. It’s a rich history of a company whose cars, for better and worse, have touched millions of lives, a character study of a brilliant but deeply flawed leader, and a case study in how a corporate culture can turn toxic.” - Bethany McLean, New York Times Book Review
 “Faster, Higher, Farther: The Volkswagen Scandal takes readers through the combination of pressures that produced what may be the biggest corporate scandal ever, detailing the company’s personalities and the history behind the saga with fluency and wit.” - The Atlantic
 “A shocking and incredibly compelling exposé of one of the great corporate scandals of all time....reads like a fast-paced thriller.” - The Guardian
 “A damning indictment of corporate malfeasance and an accessible account of one of the most expensive business mistakes ever recorded.” - Patrick McGee, Financial Times
 “A fascinating exposé....Ewing’s compelling prose makes his book read like entertainment more than education and the story of Volkswagen’s fall is a study in corporate hubris.” - Publishers Weekly
 “It is a corporate scandal to rival Enron and Lehman Brothers....Ewing weaves a conspiratorial tale of corporate greed run amok. Capturing the public fascination with craven financial scandals, and with a movie in the works, Ewing’s sordid saga is the latest addition to the history of corporate fraud.” - Booklist (starred review)
 “A shocking, sobering story and, given the current antiregulatory mood, one likely to be repeated.” - Kirkus
 “Meticulously chronicles one of the greatest corporate scandals ever.” - Library Journal

Jack Ewing has covered business and economics from Frankfurt for The New York Times since 2010. He has worked as a journalist in Germany since 1994, including over a decade as a BusinessWeek correspondent.

This book is superb. It’s astonishing how fast it came to market. Of course it was begun before the most recent developments in the scandal, but it includes events that happened in mid-March this year and was published two months later, in May. There is no hint of the book’s being rushed. I came across the book in the Atlantic Magazine, which had an interview with the author. Why read the interview, when I could read the book? Of course, I’d heard about the scandal in the press, but, you know, day to day journalism leaves you with a jumble in your head. A book could sort it all out. And this one did. The book is based on journalism by the The New York Times, no doubt much of it

done by Ewing. The book is 274 pages long, and after enticing the reader in chapter one, Ewing doesn't get to the scandal until just before halfway in. The first half of the book is the story of Volkswagen, the legendary creation of the Beetle by the Nazis, the car's role as a counterculture icon during the sixties, the ties between Volkswagen, Porsche, and Audi, and the various vicissitudes of the company. Then 1992, and a rebirth of the company with goals of dominance, which eventually became focused in the 2000s on a diesel engine, supposedly more economical and less polluting than gasoline. I'm not going to tell the story. We have here a saga of an authoritarian, provincial company whose deceit has half destroyed it by 2017, and the investigation is only now getting criminally serious. The Volkswagen has played a very strong role in my own American family. My mother owned a Beetle back in the day, later replaced by Hondas. I still remember us all being crammed into the bug, and there were legendary family incidents that involved it. I have been in love with Porsches, especially that beautiful 356, and I've mulled buying an Audi, a Jetta, a Passat, though never did. Volkswagen seemed strong but perhaps a cut too austere for my taste. (What did I drive: an MGB, a BMW 2002, a Saab 96 then a 99, an Accord, a Ford truck, and now, living in the world's biggest megacity, Guangzhou in the Pearl River delta, I walk. Incidentally, Volkswagens and other German cars are everywhere on the streets here.) The book tells the story in measured prose, never purple. It is hard to say it's journalism. The prose is better than that. I even enjoyed the book as literature. I kept thinking, this is really good prose. It reminded me of Orwell. The book is unlikely to be a classic, because the story is yet ongoing. Later books will tell more. The book is an education — a case study in corporate culture, a reminder if one were needed of the need to regulate markets, a look at the impact of environmental regulation in the EU and America, it's even a detective story, I marked the big clues — e.g., that the nitrogen oxide levels in the cities of Europe hadn't gone down as much as the new diesel engines should have made it do, and of course there's the David v. Goliath story how a small group of American researchers (I am trying to avoid the words scruffy and ragtag) from West Virginia U. and California and German regulatory bodies working on a shoestring rigged a Rube Goldberg machine and tested the diesel engines on the road, learning that nitrogen oxide emissions on one Volkswagen were 15-35 times (not percent, times) higher than the legal limit. At the time the researchers had no idea what they were initiating. They thought their equipment might be faulty. I learned, too, about nitrogen oxide and what it does to humans and how it helps generate smog. Nitrogen oxide is devastatingly bad. It kills people and helps warm the planet by creating low-lying ozone. This deceit around diesel engines is a serious offense against humanity and the earth. The end of the story, not yet written, may be the loss of

Volkswagen, or Volkswagen in another form. Germany can hardly afford to lose this great manufacturing company, but may do. It's unlikely any company in the world can now use the excuse, they didn't know they couldn't use defeat devices. I would buy this book and use it in your business class. Ciao.

Volkswagen's survival following its emissions scandal was a miracle. It's only piece of good luck in such HUGE FRAUD was a federal judge that wanted the vehicles off the road. Single Jetta or Golf diesel emitted 2x as much nitrogen oxide as a full tractor trailer semi. Volkswagen contributed significant pollution to the USA and even more in Europe. If it were not for the University of West Virginia and the California Air Resources Board the biggest fraud in corporate history may not have been uncovered. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the European community of environmentalists that funded the study in West Virginia. They felt VW was lying for years and sought the expert technologies developed at the University of West Virginia to provide the proof. Between the University and the California Air Resources Board the truth about the VW fraud was discovered.

While we're all familiar with the VW scandal from the news media, this book gives the full behind the scenes story. It's a fascinating look at a corporate culture created during pre-WWII Germany. But, if Volkswagen could be brought to justice in the U.S., it begs the question of why no corporate U.S. bankers were ever similarly brought to justice after the banking scandals.

This is a must read for anyone in the auto business. The story is compelling and shows how small decisions and an autocratic culture created the largest scandal ever in the auto business

I've done two reviews for this book. First, my book review for car lovers: This is a book about Ferdinand Piech where the numbers 9, 1 and 7 do not appear once on the same page, let alone next to each other. The End. Second, my review for everybody else: In the 1990s Volkswagen was caught in the middle of a mortal battle with the 100% government-supported and to a great extent government-owned French industrial complex. And it was losing. A barrel of oil, after you refine it, does not only give you gasoline. The other major byproduct is Diesel. In the (wasteful) US, where nobody once thought anything of transmitting electricity at 110 Volts or fluorinating rather than chlorinating water, or leaving the air conditioning on while on vacation, for that matter, that problem was dealt with via an energy-intensive process

called cracking, which pretty much converted the whole barrel of oil into gasoline. The French and Italian oil industries also being to a great extent government-owned (and government supported via the largely government-controlled banks) used their influence to ensure that Diesel would be promoted as appropriate fuel for passenger cars, rather than just commercial vehicles. The tax on diesel was set much lower than the tax on gasoline. Renault, Peugeot-Citroen and Fiat got the jump on the Germans, with the exception of Daimler-Benz, who in addition to selling luxury cars are also one of the world's largest makers of trucks. Two enormous breakthroughs made normally slow and smelly Diesel cars competitive: Peugeot was first to launch a turbo-diesel car, in its Pininfarina-designed flagship, the 604. And Fiat invented common-rail, a cheap but effective way to deliver Diesel to each cylinder. With the full support of the powers-that-be in the EU, Diesel took the European market by storm, getting up to 40% of passenger cars in no time. The Germans were in a pickle. Not just VW, but also BMW and the German subsidiaries of Ford and GM (Opel / Vauxhall). They all took different approaches to solving their problem. BMW took everything they knew about engines, distilled it into a new motor and rushed to market the 524td. Its guinea-pig drivers soon discovered that while it delivered both good fuel economy and fantastic performance, it tended to self-combust. BMW quite simply replaced every single car with the next model, the 525td, but the lessons gleaned from the enormous experiment that had been the 524td fast-tracked BMW to Diesel stardom. If you're driving on the Autobahn and something indeterminate suddenly overtakes you in a rush of wind and disappears into the distance, it was a 4-door BMW Diesel sedan. Count on it. Ford was much more practical. They did a deal with Diesel pioneers Peugeot. Twenty years later, my Ford C-Max is running the same 1.6 turbodiesel engine you will find in any Peugeot, Citroen or DS. The fancy Jaguars above 2 litres today still run Peugeot engines today, reflecting the legacy of former Ford ownership. As does your Volvo V40 D5, though not for long. With Chinese money (and input from Denso of Japan), Volvo are now developing their own. Bosch, masters of everything electronic, had to eat humble pie and buy the rights to common rail Diesel technology from Fiat. GM refused to play. They stuck to gasoline for so long, that by the time their "whispering Diesel" was finally on the market, their market share was no longer compatible with profitability. They are no longer in Europe. They sold out, to Peugeot, inevitably, last year. To make a long story short, the plans of the Eurocrats have worked out well. Renault is back to thriving, Peugeot-Citroen (after a quick brush with death) now has the largest market share in its history, and Fiat actually owns Chrysler of the US! Oh, and Diesel is now part of the moral high ground, because it uses less CO₂, it's now our ally in the war against global warming. How convenient!!! The opposition to the Eurocrat juggernaut lies either

crushed or humbled and the weapon was Diesel. Not so Volkswagen. Led by the indomitable Ferdinand Piech, the Volkswagen group, the "sick man of Europe" of the 1990s singlehandedly fought the bureaucrats of the EU and won. And boy did they do it in style. Much as he did with Porsche in the seventies and much as he did with Audi in the eighties, Piech stamped his authority on this new challenge via motorsport. No expense was spared in developing in-house Diesel technology, with multiple strands competing inside the same group. When Piech had picked the winner, he got a catchy name for it (TDI) that he would first sell on the luxury Audi brand and then allow to trickle down to the lesser brands like VW and Skoda. When in 2006 the Automobile Club de l'Ouest, organizers of the Le Mans car race, and 100% captive to the French industrial complex, announced favorable rules to Diesel, so Peugeot could become the first ever Diesel winners of the 24h du Mans upon entering in 2007, they were in for a surprise: seemingly out of nowhere, Audi would ALSO be fielding a Diesel contender, and straight away, in 2006. They won! 2007 was a closely-fought thing, but Peugeot, twice winners in the 1990s lost. Audi and TDI triumphed. Peugeot had to wait two agonizing years more and did not squeak in a win till the 2009 edition of the race, as German racing nous overcame what was probably still a French technological advantage. Piech repeated this exact same feat with hybrid electric power, incidentally, pulling the same move on Toyota for the 2012 race, also scoring the first ever hybrid victory. Toyota are still chasing that first victory, incidentally, some five long years later. The upshot is that VW has bulldozed its way from bloated and hopeless "sick man of Europe" to being the continent's (and, briefly, the world's) #1 car maker. But there have been costs. The Diesel battle in Europe, which was emphatically won against state-supported opposition, both on track and in the marketplace, meant that VW took its eye off the American market. This is the historical background you need to understand what happened with the Diesel scandal. The man who beat the French, the Italians and the Eurocrats at their own game via a motorsport and technology led marketing campaign made some very wrong decisions, thinking he could also bulldoze his way around American regulation. He lost. And now he may lose his company. That's the story I was expecting "Faster, Higher, Farther" to tell! Instead, author Jack Ewing chooses to tell a story that is only tenuously related to the Diesel scandal. He takes you to the founding of Volkswagen by you-know-who and tells the story of Ferdinand Porsche, his sons and grandchildren. It's got so hopelessly little to do with the Diesel scandal, it really adds nothing other than pages. Moreover, by telling stories from when Piech was a boy and from there moving on to the

machinations involved in his ascension to power inside the VW group, this really reads like a petty corporate scandal, of the kind we regularly read about in the Wall St. Journal.

That's a true pity, because what we have here is a story worthy of classic Greek drama, full of hubris and, eventually, nemesis. I'd give it one star, except for two things. First, I learned stuff from this book. I made discoveries from which my hours of reading of car magazines (which depend on advertising from the car industry) had sheltered me. Allow me to list them: 1. The original, 2009 defeat device acts on two different parts of the engine: when it's active, it both makes less gas recirculate and it also flushes out the NOx trap less frequently. It is no afterthought. 2. The brain behind it started life in Audis. Diesels only really burn nice at high pressure / temperature (thought that's precisely when they emit more NOx). At lower revs the burning is uneven, leading to local explosions inside the cylinders, causing them to rattle. Audi combatted this by injecting more gasoline at idle, which eliminated the poor burning. But they needed a way to keep rattling if the car was being tested for emissions, leading to the technology to detect if the car is being tested (and to the name of the defeat device: "acoustic function," because it stops the engine from sounding awful) 3. There were new, separate, devices in the 2012 car, to meter urea slowly when not being tested, in order to ensure the contents of the urea tank could last between inspections. Second, Ewing explains very well what VW did wrong. Yes, yes, it is absolutely ridiculous and hypocritical that Americans, the most wasteful polluters the planet has known, feel they have a right to criticize a company that makes some of the least polluting and most economical vehicles on earth, BUT: 1. VW set out to break the law. It did not merely fail to report. The analogy to tax, made by the author, works well. VW is not like somebody who did not declare tax. It's like somebody who filed a false declaration. 2. VW set out to misinform the public and misleadingly advertised its cars as "clean." 3. VW, once found, refused to come clean. They tried for two years to cover up. 4. VW has refused to concede that the fish stinks from the top. "Faster, Higher, Further" has helped me understand these issues better, so I'll part-forgive it having listed the wrong history. It scrapes with three stars.

Really brings into focus how despicable corporate management can be and how hubris drives their actions. Too bad the entire Board wasn't thrown into jail.

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