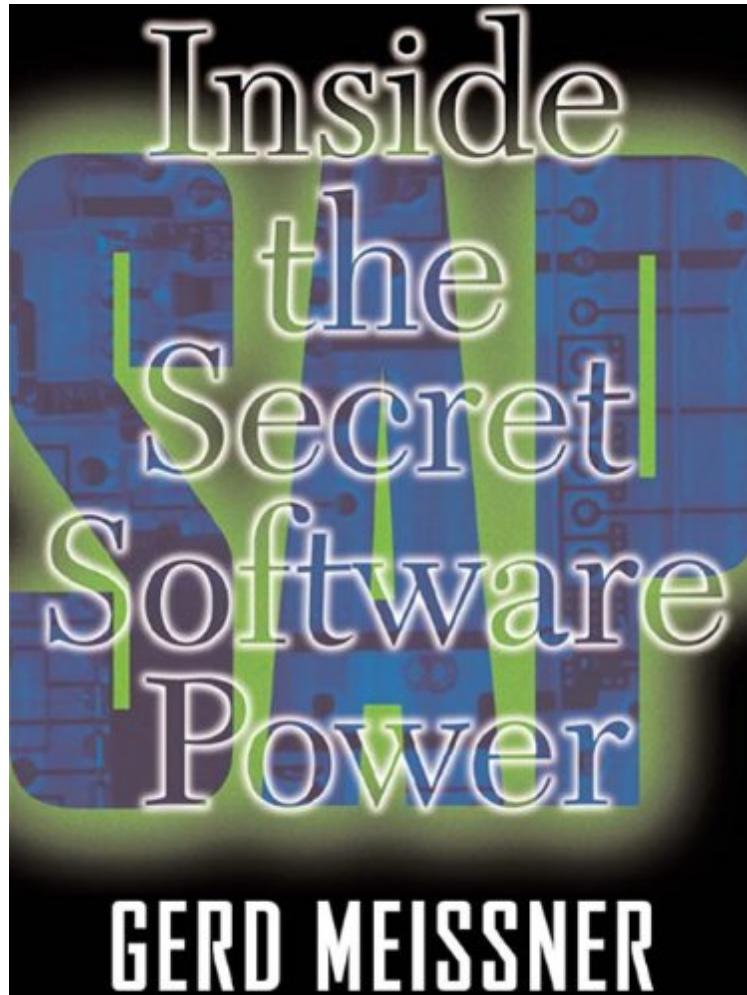


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SAP: Inside the Secret Software Power

Gerd Meissner

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Gerd Meissner : SAP: Inside the Secret Software Power before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised SAP: Inside the Secret Software Power:

3 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Good Overview of SAP's origins, founders, and successBy Tim747This book will give you a decent of idea of how SAP was created, its strengths, and its culture. If you want to learn a little about SAP and how it has gotten to where it is this is a book that will give that to you.On the other hand, the quality of writing and the style of the writing, I found lacking. In the end of the book, the author claims that interviews with key players were used in writing of the book. That did not show however in the book. It seemed as if all the information was compiled from articles. A decent telling of the SAP story, but by no means a great book.45 of 50 people found the following review helpful. Where's the Beef?By Harry ForbesCertainly in the decade of the 1990s there was no development in the software industry as surprising as the phenomenal growth of SAP. Who in 1990 predicted the enormous success of SAP's flagship ERP product, R/3, and the billions of dollars that would be spent

deploying R/3 throughout the Fortune 1000? Or the shortage of and frantic competition for SAP consultants and the huge premiums they could draw in the market? While Microsoft also enjoyed huge successes in the 1990s, the Redmondians occupied a well-established position in the IT world at the start of the decade. In 1990, SAP occupied a market niche. All the conventional wisdom of the time suggested that they would be lucky to hold even that. Instead, new ERP systems (excuse me, ENTERPRISE systems) became a "must have" initiative for almost all large companies. R/2 evolved to R/3, which cemented its position as the undisputed market leader in the class. This in spite of being a devilishly complex product even by German standards, created by a non-American software company that was reputedly shy of publicity, thin-skinned, arrogant, and vindictive. R/3 was received its entre and initial sponsorship in the USA not by SAP itself, but by consulting firms Anderson Consulting, the (then) Big Six accounting firms, CSC, Cap Gemini, and others. The results have been mixed. In extreme cases, companies have sunk hundreds of millions both in deploying SAP and in the process re-engineering associated with its deployment. Even the "expected" ratio of software to implementation expense is 7:1 or 10:1. This suggests the reality that R/3 is more an application framework than a shrink-wrapped solution, as CEOs and CIOs quickly discovered. Nevertheless both the huge investment and the high-level executive sponsorship have made SAP a fixture in much of the corporate world today. There is surely a fascinating story to be told of SAP's capture of this market position. What exactly did the consultants see in R/3 that was missing elsewhere? How did they sell the huge implementation costs? How did SAP sell them on R/3, and on themselves? How did they cross the large cultural barriers? How did this compare with the competition? Unfortunately, you will not find any such history in Meissner's book. This utterly dreadful volume reads like a translated German press release...if you can imagine a press release that is 200-pages long! Perhaps that is unfair to press releases, which have some clear content and direction, which this book sorely lacks. What you will learn is that six IBM "drop-outs" created an integrated transaction-oriented mainframe business software package during the 1970s, using mainframe computer time borrowed from their first customer. They enhanced and extended the product, launching a client/server version in 1992. Their sales strategy was to sell strictly to CEOs, and the doors to the executive office were opened for them by their implementation partners. Their expansion in the USA was driven by the feisty Klaus Beiser. You will also learn that the SAP culture is characterized by a flat organizational structure, open exchanges of information (strictly within SAP, it is understood by all), flexibility in work hours, and lifelong learning. Typical valley start-up stuff. You won't learn anything else from Meissner. The book has less depth than most any other discussion of SAP (a formidable achievement, that). Perhaps a few examples will suffice. One Chapter is entitled "Washing Dirty Linen in Public - The Resignation of Cofounder Hans-Werner Hector". Just trips off the tongue, doesn't it? The book includes references to URLs which no longer exist, includes a few graphs and charts imported directly from Microsoft Excel, and numerous recycled sidebars, surprising in their location, but not their content. Just in case you wanted to know, it also includes the addresses and phone number of every SAP office worldwide (talk about filler!), although the order in which they are sorted is unfathomable (details, details!). The chapter on the SAP-Microsoft relationship ends: "At the Sapphire user conference in August 1996 in Philadelphia, where the business framework architecture was presented for the first time, Hasso Plattner and Bill Gates showed how R/3 can be used with Microsoft software on the Internet. In the evening, the conference participants met at a party on the bank of the Delaware River. For this party SAP engaged pop star Stevie Wonder, and the people from SAP and Microsoft had a grand time joining in on the line "We've got to reach higher" as the customers listened with great pleasure." Not a pleasure to read. This book certainly deserves at least a "B-" grade in any course in English as a second language, but it is hard to swallow a full volume of such drivel when so poorly written. 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Packed With Knowledge! By Rolf Dobelli If you own stock in SAP, perhaps the world's premier producer of the enterprise software that integrates such business functions as finance, distribution and human resources, this year's been a wild ride. But despite this patch of management problems, earnings pressure and roller-coaster stock price fluctuations, SAP remains one of the largest and most firmly entrenched software companies in the world. Gerd Meissner attributes much of this success to the corporate culture established at SAP's birth by its five German founders, and in more than 200 compelling pages, he proves his point by piercing the veil of this innovative and secretive organization. Meissner traces the history of the company back to its origins in the early 1970s, keeping his finger always on the thread of characteristics that set SAP apart from its competitors - for better or for worse. We at getAbstract.com strongly recommend this book both as a gripping biography of an industry giant and as an incisive study in employee empowerment, business alliances and corporate innovation. In other words, in reading this book, not only will you learn something about this thriving software company, you'll probably learn something about your own company as well.

SAP came out of nowhere to become the world's second largest software company. Its stock rose 3700% in five years. It's made the cover of Fortune and other global business magazines. Everyone, including Bill Gates, is in awe of this Germany-based giant; shy; and at last they can learn what makes SAP tick. In *SAP: Inside the Secret Software Power*, an internationally technology reporter takes an in-depth and penetrating look at SAP's founders, employees, customers, critics, competitors, and strategies. He profiles the company's meteoric rise in a real-life tale of power and

intrigue.

.com German company SAP, the global leader in business-enterprise software, is one of those omnipresent computer-age giants about which the public knows very little. Certainly its name, an acronym for Systems, Applications, Products in Data Processing, isn't much help. Neither are the strong-arm spin-control tactics undertaken to keep it that way by the multibillion-dollar firm. It was launched in 1972, three years before Microsoft, and now ranks second in the software industry behind that Billy-come-lately in Redmond. SAP's long-standing veil of anonymity was first nudged aside in 1997, however, with the German publication of technology reporter Gerd Meissner's *Inside the Secret Software Power*. Now available in English, it offers a still-unparalleled appraisal of a company that came out of nowhere to dominate the market for behind-the-scenes software packages that manage financials, materials, and logistics for multinational companies like DuPont, Deutsche Telekom, Coca-Cola, and even Microsoft. Meissner traces SAP's development, along with the media relationships that defined much of its first three decades, to show where the company has come from and where it might be going. SAP howled in protest when the book was first released but has since taken a noticeably more proactive PR approach (which include TV commercials for its MySAP.com entry in the Internet wars). --Howard Rothman
Language Notes
Text: English (translation)
Original Language: German
From the Back Cover
SAP came out of nowhere to become the world's second largest software company and, many say, the smartest. Its stock rose 3700% in five years. *BusinessWeek* ranked SAP's team of cochairmen among the top 25 managers in the world. *Forbes* ranked CEO Dietmar Hop with the power elite, one of the world's top ten creative and successful people. What brought five IBM-ers with wildly disparate personalities together in 1972 to form a daring startup that didn't even own a computer of its own? How did this unassuming European group creep up and surpass such established forces as Big Blue - and then orchestrate an extraordinary penetration into America's high-end market which firmly entrenched its R/2 and R/3 software? What makes this maker of customized enterprise software so brilliant, so savvy, and so sought after that even Bill Gates is an admiring customer and partner? This fascinating look at the inner workings of one of today's hottest companies was a major bestseller in Europe; now for the first time, it is available in English. International technology reporter Gerd Meissner opens the doors to SAP's offices to examine the minds and motives of the founder, employees, clients, and rivals who played key roles in the company's dramatic story. Read *SAP: Inside the Secret Software Power* and you will understand how the quiet juggernaut known as SAP meticulously planned almost every more in its rise to global dominance in enterprise software...and cunningly improvised the rest. Revealing the strategies underlying its meteoric rise, this is a probing look at a technology megaforce how it got to the top and where it is headed next.