Building IBM: Shaping an Industry and Its Technology (History of Computing)

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No company of the twentieth century achieved greater success and engendered more admiration, respect, envy, fear, and hatred than IBM. Building IBM tells the story of that company -- how it was formed, how it grew, and how it shaped and dominated the information processing industry. Emerson Pugh presents substantial new material about the company in the period before 1945 as well as a new interpretation of the postwar era.Granted unrestricted access to IBM's archival records and with no constraints on the way he chose to treat the information they contained, Pugh dispels many widely held myths about IBM and its leaders and provides new insights on the origins and development of the computer industry.Pugh begins the story with Herman Hollerith's invention of punched-card machines used for tabulating the U.S. Census of 1890, showing how Hollerith's inventions and the business he established provided the primary basis for IBM. He tells why Hollerith merged his company in 1911 with two other companies to create the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company, which changed its name in 1924 to International Business Machines. Thomas J. Watson, who was hired in 1914 to manage the merged companies, exhibited remarkable technological insight and leadership -- in addition to his widely heralded salesmanship -- to build Hollerith's business into a virtual monopoly of the rapidly growing punched-card equipment business.The fascinating inside story of the transfer of authority from the senior Watson to his older son, Thomas J. Watson Jr., and the company's rapid domination of the computer industry occupy the latter half of the book. In two final chapters, Pugh examines conditions and events of the 1970s and 1980s and identifies the underlying causes of the severe probems IBM experienced in the 1990s.

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