



## **Driving Honda: Inside the World's Most Innovative Car Company**

*Jeffrey Rothfeder*

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**For decades there have been two iconic Japanese auto companies. One has been endlessly studied and written about, the other has been generally underappreciated and misunderstood. Until now.**

Since its birth as a motorcycle company in 1949, Honda has steadily grown into the world's fifth largest automaker and top engine manufacturer, as well as one of the most beloved, most profitable, and most consistently innovative multinational corporations. What drives the company that keeps creating and improving award-winning and bestselling models like the Civic, Accord, Odyssey, CR-V, and Pilot? Read and find out!

## Driving Honda: Inside the World's Most Innovative Car Company Details

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## **From Reader Review Driving Honda: Inside the World's Most Innovative Car Company for online ebook**

### **Lori Walsh says**

I admit, this is not my normal read, however IT WAS GREAT! I had no idea what an interesting company Honda is and it is written in a style that is completely engrossing. I stayed up too late many times because I just wanted to read a little bit more. Who knew that a non-fiction book about a car company could be a page turner! This book also made me question my plan to replace my current Honda with a Toyota.

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### **Russell Romney says**

Really liked this book. Even though I have followed the auto industry a little over the years, I had no idea how different Honda is as a car company, or the importance of its various innovations.

The author slipped a lot of personal ideas into the book as well, especially about globalization and other trade issues; these removed the book from its thesis a little bit. Also, the conclusion left much to be desired: it was about two paragraphs long, with very little to tie up the loose ends.

Overall though, this was a great read.

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### **Jiwa Rasa says**

Melihat falsafah pengurusan Honda yang sedikit berbeza berbanding Toyota. Honda melalui jalan berbeza dengan bermula dari penciptaan motorsikal kelas rendah. Syarikat yang menekankan penyelidikan dan perkembangan ini juga melihat konflik sebagai sumber idea baru. Honda melanggar kebiasaan dengan mengambil pengurus dan pekerja bukan dari lulusan kejuruteraan, menggalakan pendapat peribadi yang melanggar konvensi. Honda berjaya di luar negara dengan menyesuaikan organisasi dengan budaya setempat. Budaya rekacipta didahulukan dari Six Sigma tang menjadi tonggak kejayaan Toyota. Buku ini berjaya menyerlahkan kepintaran pengasas Honda juga pengurusannya.

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### **Mike says**

A lot of Honda rah rah fanboy writing was tough to read. It was important to me to learn why Honda was different than Toyota, and in a way, this book did help describe it. The focus on localization, rather than a strong central office / hierarchy was part of it. Going to the spot, seeing the actual situation is also key.

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## **Rod Van Meter says**

Corporate hagiography.

I'm not finished reading it yet, but felt the need to vent. The superlatives in this book are endless. Everything is unique, groundbreaking, innovative, unparalleled. Honda is the world's best car company, bar none, and every setback is just a steppingstone to more success. Honda succeeds because it understands the difference between its values and its processes, whereas staid, rigid Toyota lost sight of its and got its comeuppance in millions of recalls. I love Honda's products, and have been curious to read about its idiosyncratic founder, but the book is a disappointment. It reads like a Forbes article.

I'm a researcher and engineer, and was looking forward to learning more about the engineers, but there's not that much on them so far. Lots of pivotal moments and incidents giving insights into corporate values and mottos, though. Asimo and the Hondajet have made cameos, but I'd love to hear more about them and about how Honda Research got started. Maybe there will be a little before we're done...

Soichiro's drinking and carousing and even his humiliation of his subordinates are all sanitized. I don't mean to suggest that the author is actually a hack for Honda, but it seems everything told to him by Hondaites is taken at face value. He does have a long history of reporting on the company, and I not in favor of some sort of false balance of the sort reporters always seem to strive for, but surely there's another side to this very human story?

...finished it. Doesn't get better, but it does take a tack: the last quarter of the book is an "I told you so" about globalism. Honda is relegated to only occasional mentions, receiving praise for their "global localism". It certainly seems naive when the author suggests that the US should adopt Honda's R&D policy, supporting manufacturing. Does the author realize that running a country's economy or even just R&D portfolio is different from running even a large company?

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## **Bob Wallner says**

So this is the first book I have read about the Honda Way of doing things. There were some things that interested me, some things that educated me, and some things that I greatly angered me.

First off is Honda's approach. Their approach to production and development is, in the author's terms, not as structured as other Japanese companies. They proactively use innovation versus kaizen to solve problems. Their approach to design, in my opinion, very closely mirrors Steve Jobs' approach during his time at Apple. Build a unique product and tell the market what they want. Honda's entry into the light truck arena is a very good example of this. They offered many non-traditional items in their truck such as a different tailgate and a trunk under the bed. I found this interesting yet this is in a good part of why I am anti-Apple. I don't want to be told what I want in a product, at least not to that degree. I like options that I decide on, not ones that are made for me.

The last couple chapters of the book talk about the International Market and how much of a challenge it has been to bring a new product to market in China. I was blind to the issues that occurred in the early 2000s between Japan and China. People were getting killed in China for the simple fact they were driving a car

with a Japanese name. Honda's approach to counter this shows how creative the company is at solving problems.

As interested as I was in the sections mentioned above, I was equally angered with the author's utter ignorance of Lean and Six Sigma. First, he starts by inaccurately describing how Six Sigma is a derivative of lean. Lean is the act of applying Toyota Principles to your entire organization. Six Sigma is about understanding a problem so deeply that you can see the causes of variation and learn to control them. The fact that they are used to drive improvements in organizations are the only things they have in common. Second, he blames Lean and Six Sigma for the failing creativity of 3M over the course of several years. Lean is about maximizing value. It only stifles creativity when it is improperly applied. A plant requires light and water to grow if you give it too much of either you will kill it. In 3M if creativity adds value to R&D, then a truly lean organization will respect that value, not trivialize it and not try to monetize it. If the author had done research he would have concluded that the person and they rolled lean was to blame, not lean itself. That would be like blaming the hose for drowning a plant, not the farmer who left the water on too long.

I am interested in learning more about Honda's Way, but not by this author. His obvious lack of understanding regarding the true purpose of lean and how truly lean companies use it as a competitive advantage makes me question his ability to present an accurate picture of the company. I understand his position on trying to separate Honda from other "motor manufacturers" but stating inaccuracies as fact don't bode well with me and I cannot trust any other "facts" in this book.

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### **Mary Anne says**

I picked up this book because I was picking up a bunch of other books in the library, and this book caught my eye. Must be the shiny red cover. Since it's a recent publication, it's front and center. Additionally, I acquired a Honda not that long ago, and I figured learning a little more about the company would be cool.

I certainly know more about Honda now. And the book wasn't the most enjoyable thing ever, but it was worth reading, to me, to see all the accomplishments of Honda. To be sure, this author is really a big fan of Honda, so of course there's a bunch of good stuff about the company here. I think the book is also supposed to be inspiring for businesses, as apparent in the last chapter (A Manufacturing Manifesto) which is oddly a "talkin' to" for other companies to get their stuff together. It's a little off-putting.

The majority of the book is about how Honda went from a small Japanese company to a worldwide business. There's a lot to admire in terms of adaptability, having engineers as CEOs, and focusing on creativity and dedication to the company. That's also, to some extent, the focus of the second-to-last chapter (The Local Multinational), which addresses a new way of discussing globalization.

Quotation about globalization: Instead of flat and seamless, globalization is full of hurdles and obstacles. Though presented as a panacea for the world with haves and have-nots--a way to eliminate economic disparities and magically expand multinational revenue streams--globalization is still a barely profitable and perplexing strategy for most companies and a dubious asset for many emerging economies. Indeed, the fault with globalization lies in its fundamental premise, which for a hard-charging business concept is oddly Rousseauian; it hinges on the belief that an innate altruism stirs in people and their institutions and that the desire to cooperate in an equitable worldwide economic order is just under the surface, waiting to be tapped. That idea, of course, has no basis in reality. It disregards the weight of nationalism, cultural sensitivities, and historical antagonism in framing global relationships, while neglecting the way self-interest motivates

people, companies, and governments to seek gain at the expense of others. Incomprehensibly, proponents of globalization assumed, or at least proffered the notion, that the mere prospect of significant economic growth would persuade individuals and nations to bury their differences to take part in the system (p. 252-253).

It was a random but interesting chapter about the Senkaku Islands and the impact on Honda in China. A fair portion of the book is the difficulty that Honda had getting traction in the US post-WWII, which was neat. But I like the focus on globalization and localization.

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### **Morgan Gariepy says**

An interesting insight into one of my favorite auto manufacturers.

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### **Chad Rexin says**

Enjoyed the history and philosophy of Honda and its manufacturing processes.

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### **Trung Nguyen Dang says**

The book is highly insightful and detailed on Honda's culture (autonomy ...), history of the founder and the business, and its approach to businesses (localization, tight control on supply chain to the third or fourth level down). There are also a number of small stories to illustrate those points. The book is a great read for anyone interested in business and/or manufacturing, not just car businesses.

However, the book feels overly biased, even for a Honda's fan like myself. Almost all (6) of my family's motorbikes and mine are Honda with the exception of the last one (Triumph). The last one also reaffirms my belief that Honda's superior reliability. The book seems to suggest Honda could do no wrong despite the author has told many failures such as the burned piston in its racing debut. However, in each of those failures, Honda will always bounce back. Or the Honda's way seems to be the right way.

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### **Anggit Wirawan says**

A good reference and beautiful story telling of an innovative company.

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### **Kevin says**

It is interesting to read book about a company that I had worked for. The philosophies, principles and even some antidotes are so familiar (I've dealt with one of the suppliers mentioned in the book, and spent a week at another supplier to manage their production schedule). So I'm likely biased when I say this is a pretty good book on a great company that is rarely written about.

But the book is even more biased in that it focuses too much on the positives and didn't spend much time to reflect on the missteps. It would be nice to talk more about why Honda failed to capitalize the lead in having the first Japanese luxury division and first hybrid car in US, oh and the 2012 Civic Debacle...

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### **Carol says**

This book was an enjoyable and well-researched look inside the doors of Honda by an experienced business journalist. He tells of the company's founder, university dropout and automotive engineering genius Soichiro Honda, who founded the company after World War II to manufacture inexpensive motorbikes. In 1949, Takeo Fujisawa joined the company as its coleader, beginning a twenty-five-year collaboration with Honda. In the 1960s, Honda expanded into the U.S. as a manufacturer of small motorized minibikes, and the company also began manufacturing automobiles. It was one of the first non-U.S.-led automobile manufacturers to build factories on U.S. soil. Management of Honda's U.S. plants is highly localized and the company is said to have close relationships with U.S. suppliers. The only reason I did not give this book more stars is that the author often seems to lose his objectivity and become a cheerleader for Honda. One suspects that Honda had substantial editorial control over this book. Still, as the (past and present) owner of four Honda vehicles, I found this book quite interesting and other Honda enthusiasts will, too.

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### **Charles says**

Definitely a lot of cool Honda stories and info. Veered off into broader globalization impacts towards the end, which while interesting wasn't necessarily what I was reading it for.

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### **David says**

Very informative and enlightening. I was aware that Honda marched to the beat of a different drummer, but I didn't know just how different they are than any other company I have read or am familiar with. CEO's and chief executives could learn quite bit on running a successful, forward looking, cutting edge company.

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