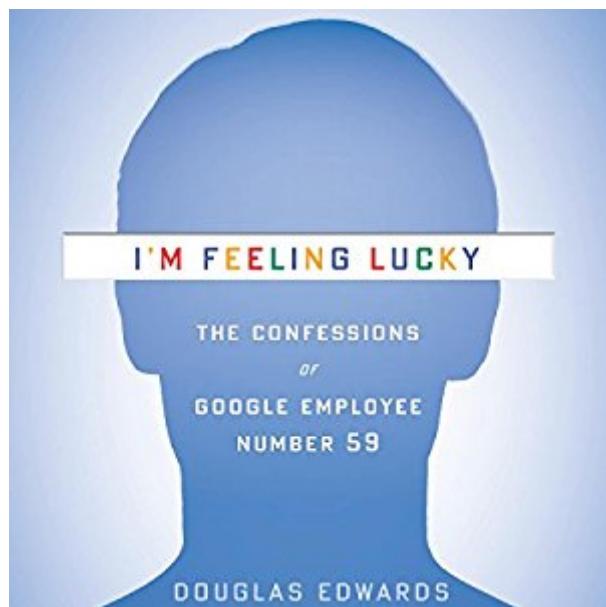


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I'm Feeling Lucky: The Confessions Of Google Employee Number 59



Synopsis

Comparing Google to an ordinary business is like comparing a rocket to an Edsel. No academic analysis or bystander's account can capture it. Now Doug Edwards, Employee Number 59, offers the first inside view of Google, giving listeners a chance to fully experience the bizarre mix of camaraderie and competition at this phenomenal company. Edwards, Google's first director of marketing and brand management, describes it as it happened. We see the first, pioneering steps of Larry Page and Sergey Brin, the company's young, idiosyncratic partners; the evolution of the company's famously nonhierarchical structure (where every employee finds a problem to tackle or a feature to create and works independently); the development of brand identity; the races to develop and implement each new feature; and the many ideas that never came to pass. Above all, Edwards - a former journalist who knows how to write - captures the Google Experience, the rollercoaster ride of being part of a company creating itself in a whole new universe. I'm Feeling Lucky captures for the first time the unique, self-invented, yet profoundly important culture of the world's most transformative corporation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

To be honest, I wasn't sure of what to expect from this book. The review copy arrived at the same time I got my hands on two other Google books- In The Plex: How Google Thinks, Works, and Shapes Our Lives and The Googlization of Everything: (And Why We Should Worry). Both of those books are serious takes on different elements of Google. I wasn't really sure where "I'm feeling

"lucky" would fit in. I was pleasantly surprised then to see it as a refreshingly unique and non-techie/non-geeky take on Google by a marketing guy who hit upon his motherlode with what was then yet another tech startup from the valley. Douglas Edwards, a marketing guy from the Valley who gets into Google without knowing much about the technology or where it would take him, makes an interesting person's eyes to view Google from. There is some amount of technology covered here but more of the Dummies style where the author assumes the reader knows nothing. There is also a fish out of water element pervasive throughout the book that is alternatively funny and overdone. The other fun part about the book is the plethora of anecdotes from Google's early days from an insider. Some of these nuggets give a human tone to the massive entity that is Google. Some of the otherwise unknown and background characters from the early days of Google get their share of their limelight here. As someone who has read every decent book on Google out there, I came to know of quite a few such early day champions from Google. Geeks might not find a whole lot of new stuff here but I liked the book for what it tries to be- an non-engineering insiders view of Google. Its fun and worth a read.

When I saw the premise of this book, I thought this book would be an interesting trip through how Google became one giant company that I, like millions of others, use everyday for a myriad of needs. This book is a not an account of how the founders grew the company, nor is it an exposé on Google business secrets. Rather, it is more of the story of how the writer went from a job in journalism in the Silicon Valley to working for what would become a major player in the Silicon Valley. Through 400 pages, the book describes this journey in not unpleasant detail. Along the way, I learned that a lot of the supposed beliefs about Google were probably more the product of misinformation than malignant intent (such as the "Do No Evil" meme), and that Google operated like many technical companies in that the supposed well considered plans were often the product of haphazard planning and organization. This is certainly not a bad book by any stretch, and some parts are compelling and interesting. However, those parts aren't coincident with the whole of the book. I found myself as a casual observer of Google often thinking that there was more that could be told. I think this book doesn't know what to be exactly. It isn't a technical primer, nor is it really a memoir as much as it is a pastiche of pieces written about an organization that grew exponentially in a way that the author, and probably the founders, never anticipated. A good, but not great read. For a casual observer, there aren't really great moments of insight here, and for the technical geek, you definitely looking in the wrong place. Decent reading, but to my mind, no more. Worth the effort, but not a great read in the end.

1) This book is great! Doug is a fantastic writer and a compelling story teller.2) The book is pseudo chronological. As you finish one part that strolls along for a set period of time, you may have to regain your temporal bearings when he starts the next part chronologically *before* the last part ended. It doesn't detract from the story telling, but it's something to watch for. It's kind of like when people didn't have automatic panorama cameras and instead would take several shots along the horizon... then try to physically piece all the prints together with varying degrees of overlap. The overall picture is still fantastic, so don't let this bother you too much.3) Marissa Mayer. He really, really seems to dislike her. I'm surprised I haven't seen more about this in the reviews so far. The first thing he says about Marissa in the book and the last thing are both framed positively. But in between she is the one topic he comes back to over and over throughout the book; with a lot more bad than good. He describes how she tried to use all sorts of manipulative and deceptive tactics to outmaneuver him, keep him out of key meetings, directly block his access to the founders and possibly lie about what they were saying, belittle his role in the company, go over and around him at every possible opportunity... and even that her relationship with Larry Page was strategically leveraged against him. Without ever actually putting it bluntly he also said that Marissa did more harm than good in just about everything she worked on. Every time he and Marissa disagreed it turned out he was right... this all according to Doug. He handled the topic of Marissa Mayer in what felt like such a casual, although repeatedly occurring, manner that as I was reading I wondered if he was even conscious of what he was doing or whether we are witnessing the work of a literary mastermind getting his ultimate revenge.

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