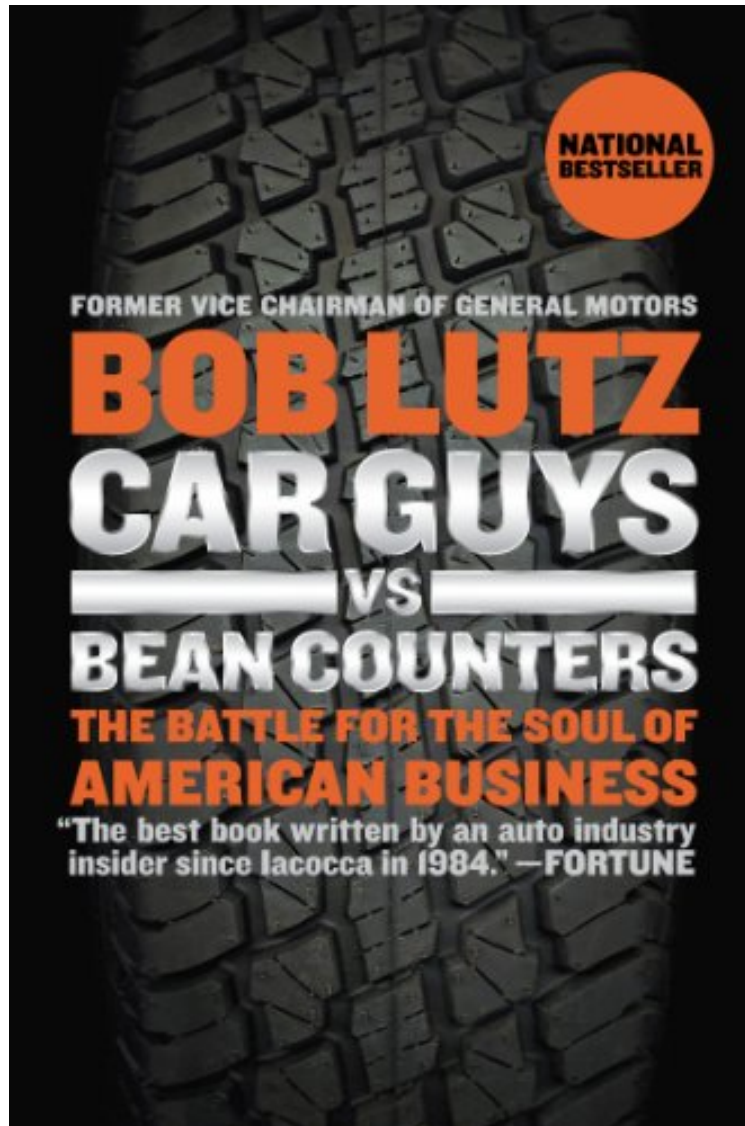


# Car Guys vs. Bean Counters: The Battle for the Soul of American Business

Bob Lutz

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**Bob Lutz : Car Guys vs. Bean Counters: The Battle for the Soul of American Business** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Car Guys vs. Bean Counters: The Battle for the Soul of American Business:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Fair and accurate look at GM in the pre-bankruptcy eraBy JasonBob did a good job capturing everything that happened at GM. I was a salaried employee there during those storied times Bob tells us about. Knowing a lot about the industry, and having left GM for Toyota, I feel Bob's take on Toyota's

dominance was purely because of the undervalued Yen and little legacy costs. Having seen Toyota's operations from the inside I can tell you the difference maker was culture. In my opinion, GM salaried life was a game of looking good rather than being good. Toyota was all about the customer, teamwork and continuous improvement. Two vastly different cultures. So take it for what it's worth. Toyota is about developing people and building cars is how they did it. That's why, I feel, they should get a lot more credit than Bob gives them. Americans love to demonize Toyota but if you worked in their U.S. plants you would see that they are run pretty much 99.9% by Americans.<sup>29</sup> of 30 people found the following review helpful. How America lost excellence -- and got beans instead

By Theodore A. Rushton

Absolutely marvelous; anyone who reads this will understand the enervating hubris that is destroying business, education and government in America and much of the rest of the world. First though, to set this book and Lutz in context, a quote from midway through the book: "I know I'm full of crap a lot of the time, but that comes with the territory. "Your job is to provide me with honest feedback," Lutz writes. If read with this caveat in mind, this book offers enough insight to rescue almost any failing industry without government bailouts. In my career as a reporter, I've seen enough once excellent newspapers go down the drain because publishers refused to understand Lutz's observations, insight and remedies. He's a "product man," which means a commitment to quality products instead of profits, prestige or paper pushing. Lutz is infuriated by "bean counters" who see value only in profits; as such, it is an eloquent 'cri de coeur' rather than a balanced analysis of business management. That said, few if any can't benefit from his basic insights into the over-confidence, hubris and arrogance that is making America into a third world society. Federal debt crisis? If Lutz's approach was applied to government and industry, the debate would center on how to use the surplus instead of crying about the deficits produced by dumb attitudes. The current assumption is that America is great simply by being America; Lutz argues superiority is based on a never-ending search for improvement and innovation rather than complacency. My experience is that America is better than its political or business satraps; if leaders can pick the wisdom from rants such as Lutz, no country can do better.<sup>9</sup> of 9 people found the following review helpful. Well Worth Reading

By Kulamata

Well worth reading for what's between the lines as well as the ideas presented. The insight into the structural problems at GM is piercing and fascinating. What I found as interesting are Lutz's blind spots. He points out absolutely correctly that customers don't care that the project manager met his schedule and product cost goals; the customers care about the car in front of them, and for Lutz, that means the car's being appealing inside and out. Much good discussion of interiors, paint, proportions, etc. But only the most passing mention of what it's like to DRIVE the cars... after all, customers do more than just admire the lovely beasts. The "unfair shake" the automotive press gave GM was based on more than anti-GM prejudice; it was based on quality, durability, erratic ergonomics, and in the cognoscenti's magazines, on the driving experience. The forward unbalanced muscle cars like the GTO that didn't much care for stopping or turning were sneered at, as were the general family cars that rode smooooooth, but didn't much care to turn, and when they did, did so with excessive lean, and the occasional lurch. As time went by, the technical naivete of the cars became a constant topic in the enthusiast press... live rear axles, when independent rear suspension was available on imports; carburetors when fuel injection was available elsewhere; too many models with drum brakes long after discs were obviously better; bias ply tires when others supplied radials on new cars. Pointing this out may have been too easy, but it wasn't unfair. And the enthusiasts who read about this stuff were often the opinion-shapers that competent marketing folks try to cater to but whom Detroit denigrated. Detroit didn't need higher gas prices to spur the development of smaller cars; remember the Corvair, Vega, Tempest, Pinto, and the Valiant? The Valiant was a long lived solid car, but the others suffered from fundamental engineering problems or shoddy construction, or both. By the time of the CAFE standard, the public had given up on GM's small cars, and so had GM. It didn't help that when GM fought hard to prevent the adoption of CAFE that GM had already fought hard and reflexively, against EVERY mandate, including requirements for safety belts, padded dashes, decent headlights, (complex story there) and had, as a result, no remaining credibility. These blunders preceded the era of high medical and retirement costs; they later added injury to injury, but the rot had set in much earlier. It's true that the yen was undervalued; but the Deutschmark was not, and the Germans have had their successes regardless. Incidentally, when GM recently delivered, from what I've seen, the mainstream press responded with a relieved "at last!". I've read very warm reviews of the Malibu, the exotic Caddy, and the Volt. So I think that his complaints about the press were just more examples of Detroit's insularity and denial. So, a fascinating book; what he gets, he gets full well, and what he doesn't, he doesn't even suspect.

A legend in the car industry reveals the philosophy that's starting to turn General Motors around. In 2001, General Motors hired Bob Lutz out of retirement with a mandate to save the company by making great cars again. He launched a war against penny pinching, office politics, turf wars, and risk avoidance. After declaring bankruptcy during the recession of 2008, GM is back on track thanks to its embrace of Lutz's philosophy. When Lutz got into the auto business in the early sixties, CEOs knew that if you captured the public's imagination with great cars, the money would follow. The car guys held sway, and GM dominated with bold, creative leadership and iconic brands like Cadillac, Buick, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, GMC, and Chevrolet. But then GM's leadership began to put their faith in analysis, determined to eliminate the "waste" and "personality worship" of the bygone creative leaders. Management

got too smart for its own good. With the bean counters firmly in charge, carmakers (and much of American industry) lost their single-minded focus on product excellence. Decline followed. Lutz's commonsense lessons (with a generous helping of fascinating anecdotes) will inspire readers at any company facing the bean counter analysis-paralysis menace. From the Hardcover edition.