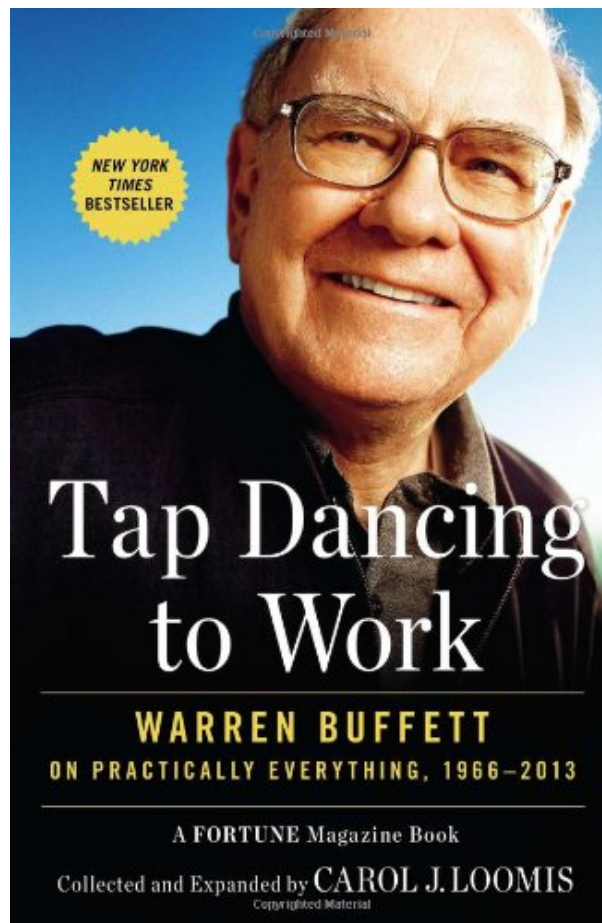
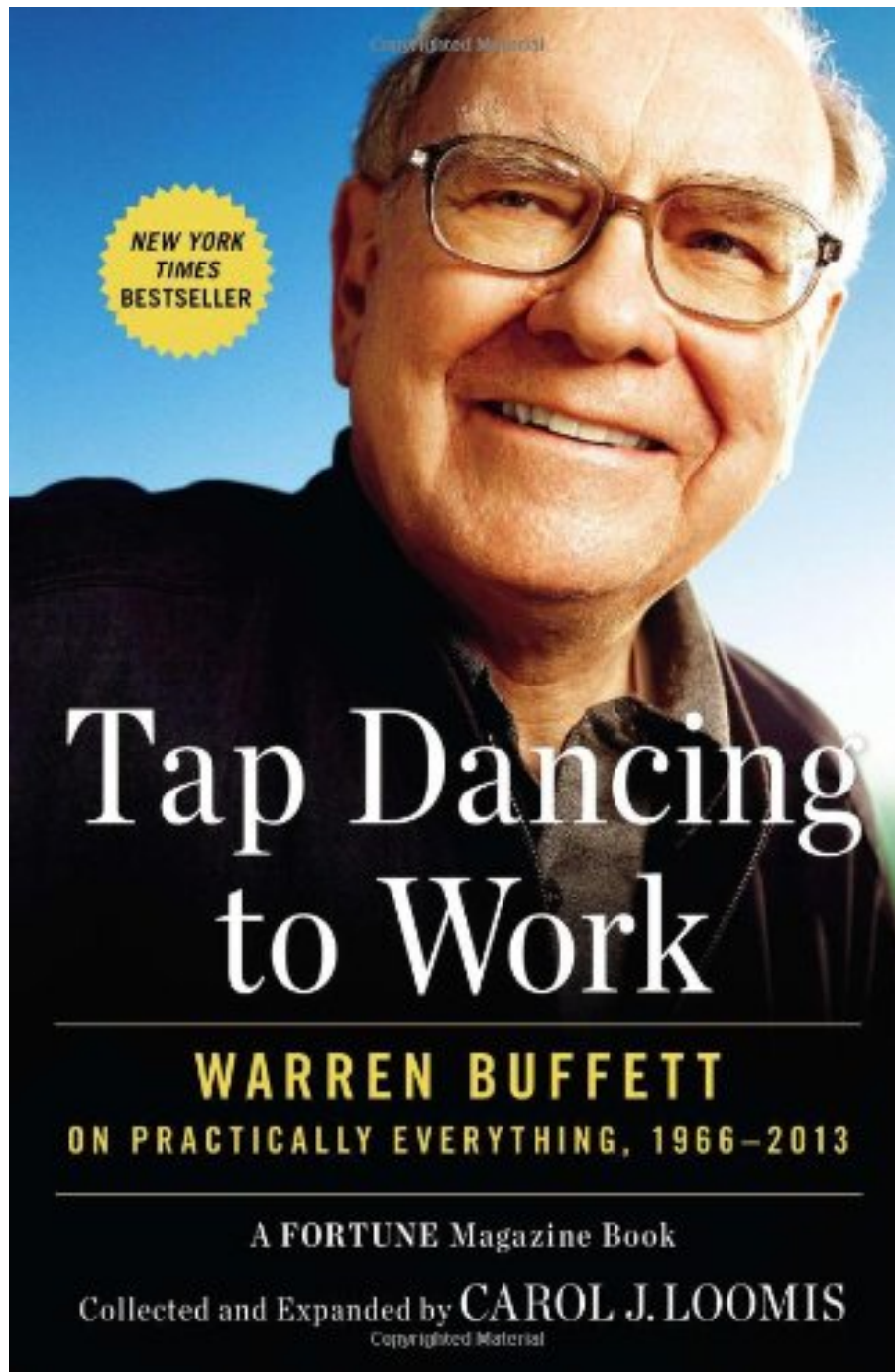


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BUFFETT ON PRACTICALLY EVERYTHING,
1966-2013 BY CAROL J. LOOMIS**



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“Serious investors as well as those interested in the history of Berkshire Hathaway and the philanthropic ideas of Buffett will enjoy these revealing pieces extracted from the Fortune archives.”
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TAP DANCING TO WORK: WARREN BUFFETT ON PRACTICALLY EVERYTHING, 1966-2013 BY CAROL J. LOOMIS PDF

Warren Buffett built Berkshire Hathaway into something remarkable— and Fortune journalist Carol Loomis had a front-row seat for it all.

When Carol Loomis first mentioned a little-known Omaha hedge fund manager in a 1966 Fortune article, she didn't dream that Warren Buffett would one day be considered the world's greatest investor—nor that she and Buffett would quickly become close personal friends. As Buffett's fortune and reputation grew over time, Loomis used her unique insight into Buffett's thinking to chronicle his work for Fortune, writing and proposing scores of stories that tracked his many accomplishments—and also his occasional mistakes.

Now Loomis has collected and updated the best Buffett articles Fortune published between 1966 and 2012, including thirteen cover stories and a dozen pieces authored by Buffett himself. Loomis has provided commentary about each major article that supplies context and her own informed point of view. Readers will gain fresh insights into Buffett's investment strategies and his thinking on management, philanthropy, public policy, and even parenting. Some of the highlights include:

- The 1966 A. W. Jones story in which Fortune first mentioned Buffett.
- The first piece Buffett wrote for the magazine, 1977's "How Inflation Swindles the Equity Investor."
- Andrew Tobias's 1983 article "Letters from Chairman Buffett," the first review of his Berkshire Hathaway shareholder letters.
- Buffett's stunningly prescient 2003 piece about derivatives, "Avoiding a Mega-Catastrophe."
- His unconventional thoughts on inheritance and philanthropy, including his intention to leave his kids "enough money so they would feel they could do anything, but not so much that they could do nothing."
- Bill Gates's 1996 article describing his early impressions of Buffett as they struck up their close friendship.

Scores of Buffett books have been written, but none can claim this work's combination of trust between two friends, the writer's deep understanding of Buffett's world, and a very long-term perspective.

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- Released on: 2013-12-31
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Most helpful customer reviews

124 of 137 people found the following review helpful.

This Book is a Huge Disappointment

By Book-Movie-Music Lover

I was very much looking forward to this book - to be able to read a comprehensive and organized treatise on Buffett's many philosophies and strategies. What a disappointment!

Unfortunately, I pre-ordered the book, before the "See Inside" feature was available, which would have given me the opportunity to see the Table of Contents and warn me that the book is nothing but tidbits and random bits and pieces of articles written about him (and a few by him) over the last 46 years.

I started reading when the book arrived yesterday, but quickly found that the vast majority of the information is either completely outdated, completely irrelevant, or both. One of the articles contained in the book was there simply because Buffett's name happened to be mentioned once, in one sentence! What the heck! In another section, one paragraph of one article was printed, simply because his name happened to be mentioned in the paragraph!

If you think you can learn something about the man simply by reading the words "Warren Buffett" a few thousand times, then you might get something out of this book. Or, if you are a Buffett "groupie" - someone who feels compelled to read and own every word every written about or by the man, then this book might have value. But don't expect to learn anything you probably already didn't know.

Any normal person wanting to learn about what really makes this man tick, and what his investing philosophies and strategies are, would do better to read Alice Schroeder's comprehensive and impressive biography of Buffett - "The Snowball."

I will be donating "Tap Dancing" to my local library in the morning, so they can sell it at their annual book sale.

108 of 123 people found the following review helpful.

Lots of Good Buffett Insights -

By Loyd Eskildson

Warren Buffet loves his job, and when asked, will tell you he 'tap dances to work' every morning. Lucky readers, armed with insights gleaned from this book, his intelligence, and plenty of hard work, will too. I particularly enjoy his quotations - finding them witty, insightful, and important.

The book is built around numerous Fortune magazine articles (including 13 cover stories) involving Buffett - most written about him, but also another 12 written by the 'Oracle of Omaha.' Author Carol Loomis' first

mentioned (one sentence) the then little-known Buffett in a 1966 Fortune article, and has followed him since. The material also follows his transition from being 'just' an extraordinary investor to being an extraordinary manager as well - the latter resulting from numerous instances in which he's acquired entire companies (eg. BNSF).

In 1969 Buffett announced that he no longer understood the market, believed making money in stocks was going to become much harder to do, and closed his highly successful hedge fund at the end of the year. He'd been providing compounded annual returns of 29.4%, vs. 7.4% for the Dow since 1956 and accumulated a personal fortune of about \$25 million running the fund. His partners had kept all gains up to 6%, with Buffett taking one-fourth of everything over that.

Buffett, upon the urging of a friend, became an active trustee of Grinnell College in 1968 - retaining that role until 1987, and staying as lifetime trustee until 2011. During that period its endowment went from \$8 million to around \$1.5 billion.

When Buffett took over Berkshire Hathaway in 1965 it was a New Bedford (Ma.) textile manufacturer. He closed the textile business in 1985, unwilling to make substantial capital investments to continue competing in a discouraging business. ("Should you find yourself in a chronically leaking boat, energy devoted to changing vessels is likely to be more productive than energy devoted to patching leaks.")

He's leery of most acquisitions. ('Managers who want to expand their domain at the expense of owners might better consider a career in government.') Part of the rationale is that acquirers' stock often sells for a discount, and is then used to fully pay for fully-valued (even overvalued) properties, reassured by friendly investment bankers anxious for fees. ('Never ask your barber if you need a haircut.')

The book illustrates both Buffett principles and his own adherence to them. For example, Buffett strongly values thrift and cost management - 'Our experience has been that the manager of an already high-cost operation frequently is uncommonly resourceful in finding new ways to add overhead.' His World Headquarters staff in Omaha (currently estimated to number 20 - 25) is characterized by Buffett as 'A compact organization that lets us spend all our time managing the business rather than managing each other.'

Buffett sets the pay of the top men in his operating companies, along with an open-ended incentive plan, and takes no role in compensation beyond that. There also are no companywide management meetings, and no imposed management systems.

His investment advice - 'Buy things that make more things,' not gold or other commodities. He prefers investments that do not involve high technology (admits he's not that knowledgeable in that area), serve a strong demand, are well-managed, bring in strong financial returns, have minimal capital requirements and low debt, and are protected by a strong 'moat' that provides a sustainable competitive advantage (eg. Coca-Cola's brand value, a monopoly position, a low-cost advantage - Geico, often achieved through advantageous economies of scale, patents). He currently sees houses as an investment opportunity for many.

Much of the latter part of 'Tap Dancing to Work' is taken up with his commitment to philanthropy. His children will not inherit a significant proportion of his wealth - he's opposed to the inter-generational transfer of great fortunes. Buffett plans to give 83% of his fortune to the Gates Foundation. On current events, he believes ObamaCare fails to sufficiently deal with the high costs of U.S. health care, though he supports its expanding coverage, that taxes on the wealthy are too low, sees the trade helping net ownership of the U.S. amounting to \$11 trillion by 2015 (we become a 'sharecropping society'), supports expensing of stock options and renewable energy.

Bottom-Line: Though sometimes dry and dated, overall the book is entertaining and educational.

22 of 26 people found the following review helpful.

"When we own portions of outstanding businesses with outstanding managements, our favorite holding period is forever." WB

By Robert Morris

At last count, I have read more than a dozen books and several dozen articles about Warren Buffett and thus felt well-prepared for this volume, collected and expanded by Carol Loomis, in which she and more than 40 others (including Buffett) contribute their thoughts and feelings about a remarkably diverse range of subjects (including Buffett) from material that was originally published in Fortune magazine from April, 1966 until February 12, 2012 and "still happening." Included are thirteen cover stories and a dozen articles written by Buffett.

If there were a Rushmorean monument to honor the four greatest business executives, Buffett would certainly be among them. (Who would you select? In addition to Buffett, my choices would be Benjamin Franklin, John D. Rockefeller, and Alfred Sloan.)

These are among the articles or passages of greatest interest and value to me, also listed to suggest the range of subjects that are explored with rigor and eloquence:

- o How Inflation Swindles the Equity Investor (Pages 9-22)
- o Berkshire's Shareholder Contributions (26)
- o You Only Swing on 3-0 (42)
- o Warren Buffett's Wild Ride at Salomon (78-90)
- o How I Goofed (103-106)
- o Gates on Buffett (121-125)
- o Interview Excerpt: What's a Company Really Worth? (143-146)
- o A House Built on Sand (152-161)
- o Warren Buffett: Revivalist (176-177)
- o The Oracle of Everything (204-214)
- o Avoiding a "Mega-Catastrophe" (216-220)
- o America's Growing Trade Deficit Is Selling the Nation Out from Under Us (227-234)
- o Interview Excerpt: Warren Buffett Gives It Away (256-264)
- o Interview Excerpt: What Warren Thinks (272-)
- o Buffett's Mr. Fix-It (297-304)

After reading several biographies, notably those by Alice Schroeder and Roger Lowenstein, as well as The Essays of Warren Buffett: Lessons for Corporate America, Second Edition, edited by Lawrence A. Cunningham, then this one, here is my take on Warren Buffett:

1. What you see is what he deems appropriate but whatever you see is [*begin italics*] authentic [*end italics*].
2. He is far more interested in helping to build profitable companies that "make a difference" than increasing his net worth.
3. His defining intellectual talent is his ability to absorb, digest, and process voluminous data faster than anyone else can, then apply what he has learned where it will produce the most desirable results. He views "doing nothing" as a legitimate option and, more often than not, the best one.

4. To the extent he is a gambler, he "bets" on people whom he trusts and respects. He agrees with 3M's then chairman and CEO, William L. McKnight, who observed (in 1924), "If you put fences around people, you get sheep. Give people the room they need." Consider this passage from Cunningham's Introduction to The Essays of Warren Buffett:

"The CEOs of Berkshire's various operating companies enjoy a unique position in corporate America. They are given a simple set of commands: to run their business as if (1) they are its sole owner, (2) it is the only asset they hold, and (3) they can never sell or merge it for a hundred years. With regard to investment thinking, one must guard against what Buffett calls the 'institutional imperative.' It is a pervasive force in which institutional dynamics produce resistance to change, absorption of available corporate funds, and reflexive approval of suboptimal CEO strategies by subordinates. Contrary to what is often taught in business and law schools, this powerful force often interferes with rational business decision-making. The ultimate result of the institutional imperative is a follow-the-pack mentality producing industry imitators, rather than industry leaders - what Buffett calls 'a lemming-like approach to business.'"

5. Finally, his judgment is wholly consistent with his values and that applies to people as well as to business decisions, especially investments. His tastes in food, residences, etc. are not "simple," as many have suggested. Rather, they are uncomplicated. To an extent few other human beings have, Buffett has spent most of his life in residence where Oliver Wendell Holmes once characterized as "the other side of complexity."

No brief commentary such as mine can possibly do full justice to the scope and diversity of material in Tap Dancing to Work but I hope that I have at least suggested why I think so highly of it. Also, I hope that those who read this commentary will be better prepared to determine whether or not they wish to read the book and, in that event, will have at least some idea of how the information, insights, and counsel provided by Carol Loomis, Warren Buffett, and their collaborators could perhaps be of substantial benefit to them as well as to their own organization.

Bravo, Carol Loomis. Well-done!

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