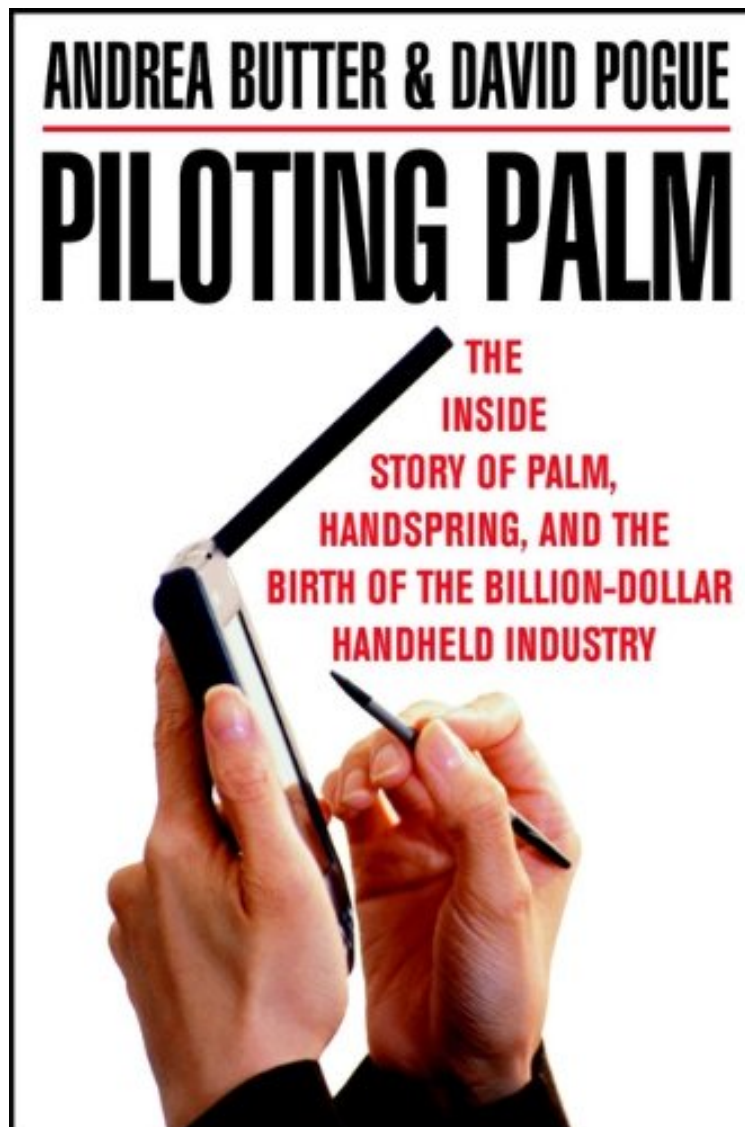


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Piloting Palm: The Inside Story of Palm, Handspring, and the Birth of the Billion-Dollar Handheld Industry

Andrea Butter, David Pogue
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Andrea Butter, David Pogue : Piloting Palm: The Inside Story of Palm, Handspring, and the Birth of the Billion-Dollar Handheld Industry before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Piloting Palm: The Inside Story of Palm, Handspring, and the Birth of the Billion-Dollar Handheld Industry*:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great Read, Edited So They Can Still Work in Silicon ValleyBy

Tech Historian For those of us in Silicon Valley who only knew Palm from the outside this book is a great read. The true hero of the story is Donna Dubinsky; her travails makes the Perils of Pauline seem tame. However, the book was obviously written by people who still care to work in the computer industry. It pulls so many punches that the story reads like light fiction. Too polite and politically correct the authors simply dance around some issues that were clearly crying out to be discussed.

1. Palm's first venture capitalists essentially bailed on the company by not leading a second round of funding. This forced the company to sell itself to US Robotics. There is a lot of "happy talk" about why the VC's did not want to lead the round, but if they truly believed in the company they could have, and would have. How did Donna Dubinsky really feel? What was really said when they turned their back on the company?
2. Before there ever was a Cisco, 3Com (Palm's second owners) owned the networking market. (I'm sure there's a great book in someone on how 3Com managed to blow this huge lead.) While never quite coming out and directly saying it, Eric Benhamou's (3Com's CEO) constant dithering about whether to spin-off Palm seems to be indicative of his management style in running the rest of 3Com. How did Donna Dubinsky and Palm really feel?
3. Carl Yankowski comes off as if someone wrote a whole chapter on how he personally sank Palm, and then removed it for legal liability issues.
4. Did Jeff Hawkins use Xerox PARC the same way as Steve Jobs did? Xerox had demo'd two of the unique Palm innovations; a constrained handwriting recognizer, and the keen observation that the PDA would be a PC attachment, not a standalone device, well before Palm. Give Hawkins credit, he was the only one to read or see the Xerox PDA stuff and get it, but there is zero acknowledgement in the book that these ideas did not spring full blown out of Hawkin's head. (Probably a good reason, since Xerox finally sued Palm for patent infringement. Given the Xerox track record for belated cluelessness, it's doubtful they'll collect.) The deification of Hawkin's at the expense of the truth might maintain the authors personal relationships, but not mentioning these issues as at least the current hot topics in Silicon Valley, is disingenuous at least.
5. Handspring's success is still predicated on Palm's ability to innovate in its operating system. Palm's glacial speed was fine when Palm was the only game in town, but Microsoft's inexorable progress should be nightmarish. Handspring and the other licensees are known to be pulling their collective hair out as Palm painfully updates their operating system. Not a word on this issue.
6. Now Palm has split into two parts. An operating system group and a hardware group. The new head of the Palm Operating System group is Eric Nagel, best known at Apple as the head of research for 10 years who let Microsoft catch up and leave them in the dust. How do Donna Dubinsky and Jeff Hawkins really feel about being dependent on Palm?

Overall, still a great book.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Piloting Palm Pulls Punches By Hugh Claffey This is the story of the handheld PDA and its development. Originally an idea of Jeff Hawkins, he brought Donna Dubinsky on board as CEO to start a company to develop what became the Palm Pilot. Along the way both struggle to get enough capital to continue to make the product a success. They eventually get backing from 3Com and while the capital is available, dealing with 3Com management becomes a major issue. Both eventually leave to form Handspring, and the story stops about a year into the new company, with Palm the dominant supplier of PDAs, but seemingly mismanaged, and Handspring's future uncertain. The punches are surely pulled when describing the investors of capital in the business (there were many) - why would the story be so torturous if there had been more belief among the major investors in either the product and/or the management? Another issue which I read into the story, is the sheer difficulty of working with the vision team that is Hawkins/Dubinsky - each non-Palm manager who is brought in by 3Com to develop the product seems to be confused, visionless or plain wrong. I began to have sympathy for the folks who had to manage Palm during the long-running dispute that led to their departure. From this book's viewpoint it looks as if only the original team of true believers could deliver the product, the process and the profits. I was not convinced. Hawkins seems to have developed the operating systems and handprint recognition software that was the basis of the original product. He and Dubinsky argued against licensing this software while at Palm and yet were the primary beneficiaries of such a license when they formed Handspring. Hawkins in particular seems obsessed with the product rather than the system, and this I feel must limit the proliferation of the PDA concept - surely the reason that the PC overcame Apples' first mover advantage was the decision by IBM to license the operating system. Most of the early Palm personnel were ex-Apple, so maybe the lesson was not well learned. [There is, incidentally, a deliciously vicious description of the failure of the Apple Newton, the first attempt at a mass market PDA] I came away from the book feeling that Hawkins/Dubinsky were an excellent, driven duo, who can inspire fierce loyalty and overcome challenges to develop a product, but their vision may not be wide enough to make the PDA a ubiquitous system, as opposed to a handy device for technophiles.

2 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Clear, accurate, highly informative and enjoyable! By A Customer I've read many (most?) of the books about high-tech companies over the past 18 years, and this is one of the best. I'm familiar enough with the participants and events in Palm's history to know it is accurate. But it is also well-written, a fascinating story to read, and is well-documented with careful references throughout. Andra and David are to be congratulated! I am recommending it highly to my colleagues.

The definitive behind-the-scenes story of the visionary team that launched the handheld industry. Palm insider Andrea Butter and New York Times columnist David Pogue -- with full, exclusive cooperation of the company's founders and more than fifty key Palm and Handspring executives -- tell the riveting tale of the start of an industry constantly in the

headlines. The origins of this volatile industry began with the tiny team who beat staggering odds to turn the PalmPilot into a billion-dollar market and later took their ultimate vision to Handspring, now Palm's most powerful rival. Many of today's current events relating to the competition in this industry are forecasted in this important business drama. The authors take an unprecedented look at how the visionary founders of the industry led one of the most successful startups in history to succeed against all odds-including a shoestring budget, shortsighted corporate partners, and competition from Microsoft. The roller-coaster ride is full of insight into the bumbles of venture capitalists, the allure and pitfalls of partnerships with giant corporations, and the steely determination needed to maintain entrepreneurial and visionary independence. With gripping accounts of the last-minute crises that almost torpedoed the PalmPilot on the eve of its unveiling, and the triumphant, unprecedented reception of Palm in the marketplace, as well as the glimpses into the future of this industry, this book is as entertaining as it is instructional. Key revelations include: * The principles of business, economy, and product design that led Palm to succeed where billion-dollar corporations like Apple, Motorola, and Casio had failed. * Important moments in technological development of the handheld such as the secret "Easter egg," a software surprise planted in the Palm software that nearly sank launch plans. * Unique insight into the showdown with Microsoft, and 3Com's tragic decision not to make Palm independent that led Palm's founder Jeff Hanwkins and CEO Donna Dubinsky to take their vision elsewhere. * The ongoing competition between Palm and Handspring. The new rivals to contend with including Sony.