David Bunnell, CEO and Editor of Upside Media, former editor of *PC World* magazine, has written a brief history of Cisco Systems, one of the truly outstanding corporate successes of our time. Cisco (name inspired by nearby San Francisco) was founded in 1984 by Stanford graduate students Sandra Lerner and Leonard Bosack.

Lerner and Bosack founded Cisco when Stanford declined to support their work (developing routers to enable incompatible computers and networks to be linked together into one large system). In the early days Cisco was funded by credit card debt and built by a small group of 100 hour/week enthusiasts. The founders were obsessive about customer service from the start.

In 1987, Cisco was funded by Sequoia Capital (75 other VC firms rejected them before Sequoia agreed!) with $2.5 million (which became $10 billion when Cisco went public in 1990). $1000 invested in Cisco at the IPO in 1990 was worth $100,000 by 1999. Also in 1990, founders Lerner and Bosack left Cisco over irresolvable differences with the management installed as part of the Sequoia deal. John Mortgridge was CEO from 1988-95; John Chambers has been CEO since 1995.

Cisco's corporate culture and its growth strategies set it apart from many of its competitors. The culture is unusually tight-knit, productive, happy, and driven. The strategy has relied on acquisition and integration of many small, new companies whose technological innovations Cisco wanted to purchase and exploit. Cisco's capacity to choose these acquisitions wisely and then to integrate the new companies and their people into the Cisco culture has been extraordinarily successful.

Cisco has ridden (and in part created) the tidal wave of interest in the internet. Today they think big about the possibilities and needs of a truly global communications system. It is difficult to criticize this successful, healthy, and benevolent operation but one concern this book raised for me was that, due to the high demands (and high interest, to be sure) of Cisco, "Local communities have lost the involvement of the employees of Cisco and other similarly high-commitment companies. And many of those communities are falling apart" (p. 100). Is participation in a high-powered, successful business only available to those willing to risk family and friendships and neglect neighbors, community, and nation? If that is the case, it is a very high price now, and will be immensely higher in years to come. It would be great if Cisco could help us find our way here too.