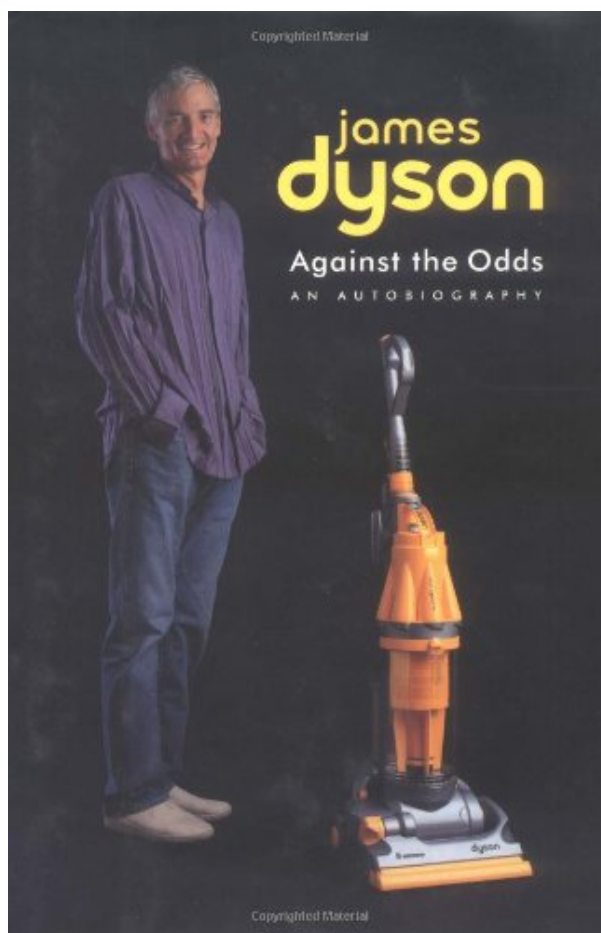
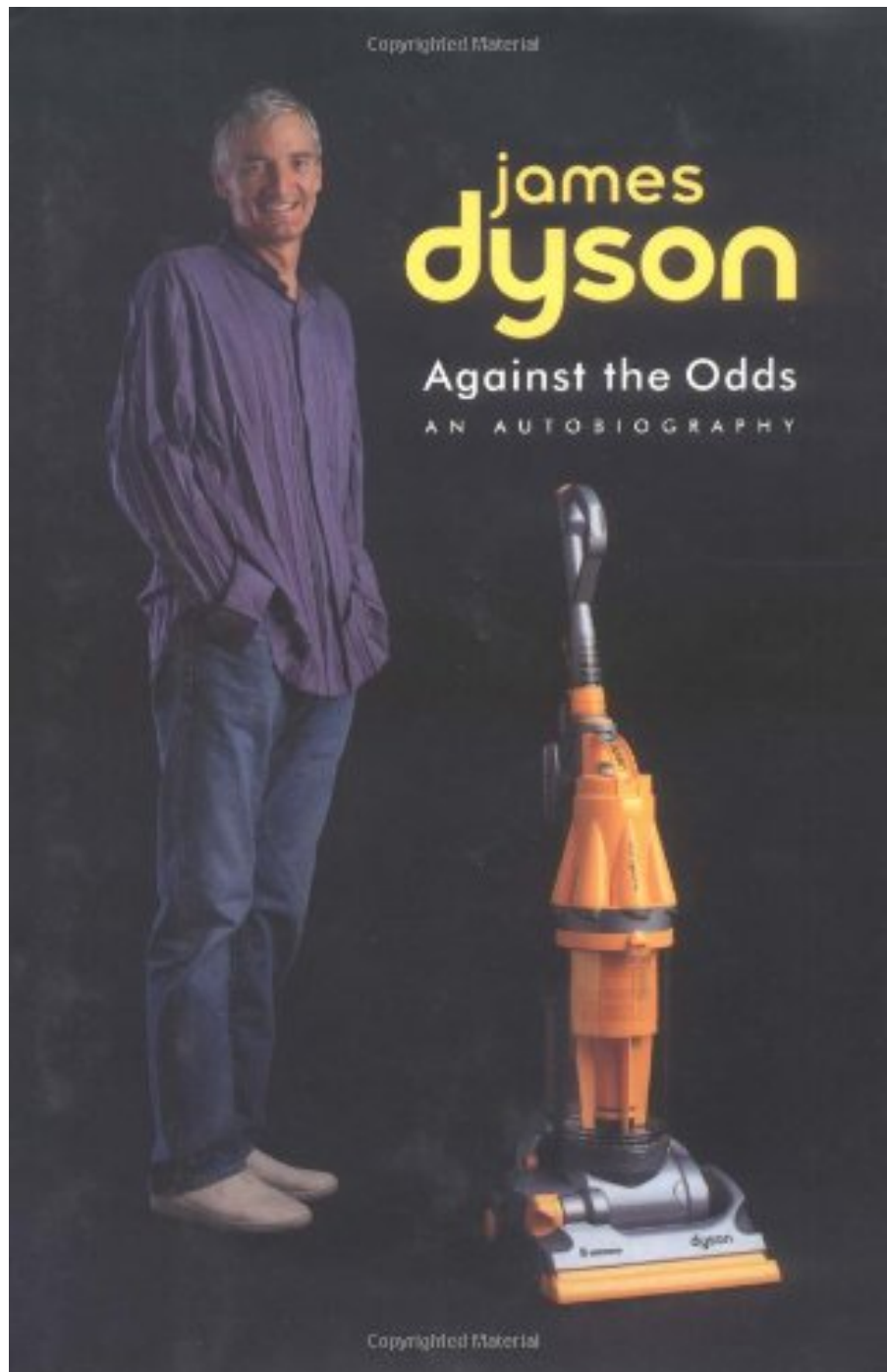


AGAINST THE ODDS: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY BY JAMES DYSON



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About the Author

James Dyson is an inventor and the founder of Dyson Appliances. He invented the Dual Cyclone, the country's biggest selling vacuum cleaner. He is also a board member of the Design Council. He lives in Malmesbury, Wiltshire.

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The inspiring autobiography of James Dyson, the country's leading entrepreneur and inventor, and how he succeeded against all the odds. Dyson's freewheeling account of his struggles, failures and successes is interspersed with his insights on how to turn an inspired idea into a household name. Also includes an updated chapter that reveals the details of the latest TOP SECRET Dyson appliance. Against the Odds will inspire engineers, inventors, and entrepreneurs and appeal to readers around the world.

- Sales Rank: #114532 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Texere
- Published on: 2003-04-17
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 1.13" h x 6.34" w x 9.74" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 320 pages

Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

An Amazing Story of a Stunning Product, and Inventor

By Joseph G. Wick

I got this book because I have seen James Dyson on many advertisements for his famous vacuum cleaner and recently I found that he was a Billionaire. Billions from a vacuum? My curiosity was set afire. This book is more intriguing than I expected. It's a thorough and humorous autobiography combined with many trenchant statements about the shortcomings of modern business. More important, it sets forth Dyson's successful approach to product design.

I've written a review about the English scientist, Freeman Dyson, and this is about the product-designer-industrialist, James Dyson. There is no indication they are related. Both are fascinating individuals.

Growing up in the 50s and 60s Dyson seems to have had a delightful childhood, albeit with a few bumps. He was rather good as an artist and ended up going to Art School. Not being able to decide on where to park his talents he tried a number of areas. He ended up, essentially, as an industrial designer although it was "interior

design" for which he was awarded a diploma.

Several things you can't miss in this autobiography are that Dyson was definitely always following his own drumbeat. Further, his persistence and ability to shake off defeat is incredible -- it would make Winston Churchill seem like a softy. He is a very good observer of people and businesses. And, whether you agree with him or not, he sets forth some very concrete principles as to what makes a good, and profitable, product. He says that Henry Ford and Thomas Edison were guiding lights for him. In part that seems true, but in part very wrong. I'll let you make the determination.

For anyone who likes a brisk and humorous story combined with some radical business wisdom, this is a very good book. Moreover, it should be required reading in every single department of industrial (product) design at universities and would be a worthwhile supplemental read for those in engineering.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Be an engineer, designer and entrepreneur all in one

By Ilya Grigorik

"Against the odds" is an apropos title. What we now celebrate as the "overnight success" and "the genius" of Dyson products is anything but, and this is the book that tells this fascinating story. It took Dyson over a decade to turn the original "eureka" moment for his vacuum cleaner into a product on the market, which includes finding bank loans, years of day to day R&D, years of unsuccessful attempts at licensing deals, oh and half a dozen legal battles in between. Even just reading this story makes you wonder how James Dyson managed to get through it all.

This is a true entrepreneurial story, with all the ups and downs, and dozens of interesting insights. Dyson's perspective and attack on the state of British manufacturing and funding is in itself a must read for every entrepreneur. Additionally, we get a glimpse at his no-nonsense, "Edisonian" approach at innovation: don't worry about the experts, get to it, test one thing at a time, iterate, improve, rinse, repeat. It took Dyson 1000+ prototypes to arrive at his first vacuum cleaner.

This is a book that every existing or aspiring entrepreneur, designer, and engineer will find something in (spoiler: don't pick one, be all three). Great read.

21 of 22 people found the following review helpful.

An entrepreneur's struggle and testimonial

By John C. Dunbar

This is a great story of a stubborn, possibly cantankerous, designer turned manufacturing entrepreneur. It was a real page-turner and I couldn't put it down.

This Brit took on the vacuum sweeper industry worldwide and now is introducing washing machines that may be technologically superior -- just like his sweepers. He has invented and introduced several products to the world.

Here's what you can get from this book:

- 1) A humorous story of entrepreneurial struggle and then success,
- 2) Dyson's rules for product design,
- 3) Dyson's rules for start-ups for manufacturing companies,

- 4) Some great words to improve your vocabulary (he's British remember),
- 5) Lessons in patents and the lengths to which you will have to defend them,
- 6) How entrenched product manufacturers will buy companies to squelch a superior technology to keep it off the market,
- 7) How your wayward son who goes off to study art may actually end up richer than you.
- 8) How to protect yourself from unscrupulous competitors (are there any other kind?)

Most important of all are his rules for design and for startups.

His basic rule for coming up with new products goes like this:

Find a durable consumer product that every household buys. Find out what bugs people about this product. Use technology to dramatically improve its performance -- preferably find the technology in other industries. Look for new materials providing superior durability. Prototype, prototype, prototype. Test, test, test. Then design outward for style and ergonomics (Form follows function.) Don't listen to others. Don't hire consultants. Market and manufacture it yourself. You can learn any subject in 6 months (I think that's a little quick but the point is well made). Keep improving (Japanese style Kaizen) once you have developed your new product (he's developed many improved models once he went into production).

I really enjoyed this book and recommend it heartedly. I wondered though if Dyson wasn't a bit too cantankerous for his own good. I often wondered why he ended up in so many lawsuits and business deals gone awry. Were all his competitors ruthless? Or was he difficult to establish business relationships with? We will never know, and perhaps it's not that important. But there's lots to learn by reading this book. I understand he has another book, self-published, just on the design and invention aspects and I hope to get that book also. I'll check with the wife to see if we need another sweeper. He says they really suck. In fact it sucks up to three times more than competitors. Well, that's his humor not mine.

This book should be required reading at all business schools.

John Dunbar

Sugar Land, TX

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