

BOOKS

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Heads up

Not since the days of Dr. Guillotain has "execution" been such a hot topic, though these days it tends to be more concerned with business performance. As it turns out, getting a company to achieve goals quickly and efficiently is far harder than making heads roll, as *Get It Done! A Blueprint for Business Execution* makes clear. The book details the many reasons for the huge gap between what a business wants to achieve and what it actually does, and most of them boil down to two things: inadequate corporate self-knowledge, and the resistance of, occasional sabotage by, and conflicts among individual constituencies with the company. While corporate execution will never be as neat as dropping a head in a basket, it can get better, and the guidelines offered here are a good start.

Price: \$29.95.
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What's true for GM ...

While not everyone may agree

that "what's good for General Motors is good for the country," it seems fair to say that what's true for GM is true for American business as a whole. Nowhere is this clearer than in *Billy, Alfred, and General Motors*, a history of the automaker from its creation

by Billy Durant from an agglomeration of acquired and merged companies, through its rise to dominance under the management theories of Alfred Sloan. A fascinating tale of the rise of an iconic company in a quintessentially American industry, the book is also an illuminating study of two early pioneers of modern business — the flamboyant Durant, whose adventures in acquisition offer lessons for anyone on the M&A path, and the methodical Sloan, who

has been credited with (or blamed for) creating the modern corporation as we know it.

Price: \$27.95.
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SOX guides

One could conceivably call the Sarbanes-Oxley Act fractal: The more deeply you look into it, the more levels it seems to have, and the more you think about it, the more complications it develops. These ever-increasing ramifications require a similarly ever-increasing number of guides and reference books. Two of the latest of these are *Accounts Payable and Sarbanes-Oxley* and the second edition of *Sarbanes-Oxley Guide for Finance and Information Technology Professionals*. The first is aimed at treasurers, controllers and anyone else involved in payables, and delves into the sort of internal controls that are necessary both to ensure SOX compliance and to avoid fraud, while the second focuses more broadly on the company as a whole, with practical guidance on how to make and keep a company compliant.

Price: *Accounts Payable* — \$34.95; *Finance and IT Professionals* — \$45.
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'Corporate Governance'

When it comes to corporate governance, going beyond the bare minimum required by regulators seems like a sucker's bet. After all, who's going to reward you for doing more than you have to?

The market will, according to *Corporate Governance*. Its theory is that quality governance adds value to companies, and that a business that takes it truly to heart will boost its own worth and increase its pool of potential buyers. Good buyers value quality, after all, and reliability, too.

Price: \$49.95.
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FAIR VALUE FOR FINANCIAL REPORTING

MEETING THE NEW FASB REQUIREMENTS

Alfred M. King

Fair value

As anyone who has ever dealt with children can attest, what's considered "fair" is infinitely malleable. You would think that it would be easier to determine the "fair" value of a business than, say, a "fair" distribution of toys in a kindergarten class, but then, kindergarten teachers never have to deal with the Financial Accounting Standards Board, which has mandated that more and more items be reported at fair value, at the same time as valuation methods have grown more complicated. *Fair Value for Financial Reporting*, by noted valuation expert Alfred King, is an invaluable reference to the ins and outs of the topic, demystifying a prohibitively complicated subject with in-

