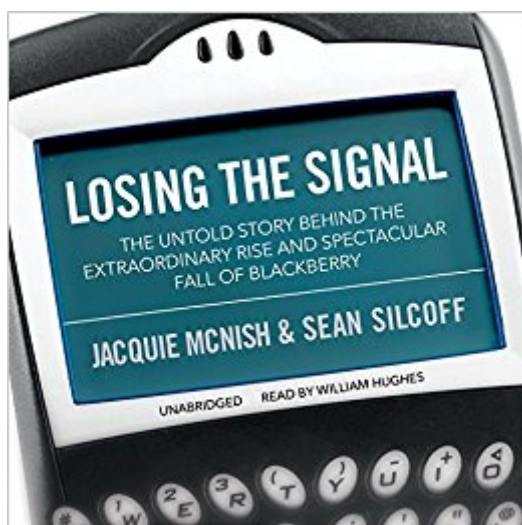


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# Losing The Signal: The Untold Story Behind The Extraordinary Rise And Spectacular Fall Of BlackBerry



## Synopsis

[Read by William Hughes] In 2009 BlackBerry controlled half of the smartphone market. Today that number is 1 percent. What went so wrong? Expertly told by acclaimed journalists Jacquie McNish and Sean Silcoff, this is an entertaining, whirlwind narrative that goes behind the scenes to reveal one of the most compelling business stories of the new century. Losing the Signal is a riveting story of a company that toppled global giants before succumbing to the ruthlessly competitive forces of Silicon Valley. This is not a conventional tale of modern business failure by fraud and greed. The rise and fall of BlackBerry reveals the dangerous speed at which innovators race along the information superhighway. With unprecedented access to key players, senior executives, directors, and competitors, Losing the Signal unveils the remarkable rise of a company that started above a bagel shop in Ontario. At the heart of the story is an unlikely partnership between a visionary engineer, Mike Lazaridis, and an abrasive Harvard Business School grad, Jim Balsillie. Together they engineered a pioneering pocket email device that became the tool of choice for presidents and CEOs. The partnership enjoyed only a brief moment on top of the world, however. At the very moment BlackBerry was ranked the world's fastest-growing company, internal feuds and chaotic growth crippled the company as it faced its gravest test: Apple and Google's entry into mobile phones.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In the tech industry, they say that you learn more from a failure than from a hit. Well, if that's true,

Losing the Signal will give you a post-doctoral education. Reading the inside story of the BlackBerry's helpless flame-out is like watching any other train wreck: You're horrified, but you can't look away." --David Pogue, Author of POGUE'S BASICS and founder of Yahoootech.com" "In Losing the Signal, Jacquie McNish and Sean Silcoff tell the harrowing and riveting story of how we lost the connection to the Blackberry, a communication device so innovative and addictive that it was known, among aficionados, as a Crackberry. It's a tale of rivalries, jealousies and missed opportunities. You won't be able to put it down." --William Cohan, author of House of Cards: A Tale of Hubris and Wretched Excess on Wall Street and Money and Power: How Goldman Sachs Came to Rule the World" "Losing the Signal tells of the marriage and divorce of Mike Lazaridis and Jim Balsillie, how two opposites built RIM into a world-beater and how they lost it. This is first-class reporting that reads like a juicy novel, with one amazing story after another. A terrific book." --Howard Green, author of Banking on America

JACQUIE MCNISH is a senior writer with the Globe and Mail and before that the Wall Street Journal. She has won seven National Newspaper Awards and is the author of three best-selling books, two of which won the National Business Book award. She lives in Toronto with her husband and two sons. SEAN SILCOFF is a business writer with the Globe and Mail and a two-time National Newspaper Award winner. He lives near Ottawa with his wife and three children.

The rise and fall of RIM. RIM rode technology disruption and created a company with \$20 billion/year in revenue only to see it disappear by being disrupted themselves. Lots of lessons here. 1) Even though the CEOs were reading the "Innovators Dilemma" they still had little perspective on how rapid disruption would happen to them. And even less of an understanding what to do about it. (The attempt to integrate the QNX software into existing products is a cautionary tale of technical debt, refactoring and plain bad engineering management.) The iPhone in 2007 should have been a wake-up call to both CEOs. Yet they both fell prey to the classic "disruption always looks like a toy to the incumbents" mistake. 2) The company grew past the management skills of the founders. The insular nature of the founders, the Canadian entrepreneurial ecosystem, founder hubris and a feckless board ended any potential of a positive intervention. It took a complete meltdown to get the board to act. 3) Mike Lazaridis, the technical CEO, fell prey to the "shiny object" syndrome. He discovered new technology (QNX) that he thought obsoleted the current software that drove the Blackberry handsets (Java). But instead of figuring out how to finesse the transition, he literally abandoned the existing development team (and revenue). A great example of how not to manage a

technology transition.3) Dealing with major platform disruption usually takes radical structural changes, not new product features. The story unfolds as a slow motion car crash as the CEOs waited, way, way too long to recognize, let alone deal with it. There's a reason that turnaround CEO's downsize companies and focus on what's important. If you're the founder it's almost impossible to get rid of your favorite projects. Only quibble others have noted. The book barely mentions the changes Heins made, and almost nothing about Chens strategy. A great business book.

I didn't realize the amount of ingenuity and innovation that came from Blackberry. Their story is very often overlooked when considering Google or Apple with respect to design thinking/innovation, but after reading this it is very clear that Blackberry began the archetype of innovator/technical & savvy business/marketing duo that seems to work in the tech space as well as some really innovative products based on design thinking and user experience (before this was really a buzz word in the space). Although they ultimately were "beat" by the Google's and Apples, the story is fascinating to read.

I followed the spectacular rise and quick decline of BB closely, as a consumer, a tech writer, and an investor, and I still learned a lot from 'Losing the Signal.' The story of how the founders met and ultimately became partners was well told as you realize how happenstance many of the factors leading to the partnership were: it might have not happened at all, quite easily. I was also taken with the descriptions of the early guerrilla marketing and how well it worked. I remember distinctly the first time I saw a BB and the instant tech lust for having my email available all the time. The decline of BB is perhaps a more familiar story, but 'Losing the Signal' enhances the drama with personal human stories: how the founders' genius and strengths ultimately became their downfall: the reliance on efficiency of network and battery use ignored the groundswell of desire for an always-with-me computer. A new wrinkle revealed by the book is the relationship between BB and the carriers, Verizon in particular. While Apple saw their customers as the millions of end users, BB saw Verizon as their customer, which ultimately let them ignore end-user demand. For the new ground covered, as well as the insider info which adds depth to the already-well-known material, 'Losing the Signal' is well worth your time.

What a well written book!! So much research and details: it's just amazing. I'm a HUGE BlackBerry fan: at the early stages of this book I was swelled with pride at what BlackBerry had accomplished (I

really didn't know they were THAT powerful) and then you kind of lose a bit of respect to the founders when you see how they handled situations. But I digress, or maybe not, the book is so well written that it makes you feel everything going on. Moreover, beyond BlackBerry, it helps you understand the mobile world and why it is what it is today. It's one of the very enlightening books I've read lately.

A thoroughly enjoyable read on how a little company beat all of the big guys at their own game, strong-armed the carriers into deal, and won the hearts of businesses and consumers, then let the whole thing slip through their fingers as the iPhone and other touch-screen devices along with data networks that weren't as concerned with data usage, completely changed the mobile phone landscape. The book is engaging and never gets bogged down in minutia. Right from chapter one, you want to keep reading to find out how the co-CEOs of RIM overcome each hurdle, and how they completely misread the market once the iPhone came out.

What's a great read. From the humble beginnings of RIM being a small and nimble start up to a former RIM CEO buying up the last Blackberrys from a local electronic store because he clung to the past, *Losing the Signal* really captured the ups and downs of a once great company. The author's way of writing made this story very engaging and addictive so much so that this is one of those books that you want to read in a week or less! I won't give away too much, but I never knew that both of these CEOs had such strife between them during the later glory days at RIM. If there were several business strategies that were executed differently, and lawsuits that would have never occurred which apparently threw both of them off from the daily grind of being CEOs, I wondered if RIM would be a leader on the mobile phone battlefield? Highly recommended!

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