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The Tale of the Scale: An Odyssey of Invention

Solly Angel

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Solly Angel : The Tale of the Scale: An Odyssey of Invention before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Tale of the Scale: An Odyssey of Invention:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. He should have written a different book!!!By Patrick T. RobinsonI read this book awhile ago, and have since come to realize that he should have written a different book.In one chapter he talks about how he is sidetracked into doing some Contract work for the United Nations to make some money. He is running low on funds while trying to design this new bathroom scale, and returns to his previous job with the United Nations. He goes to work defining the Low-income housing policy for a single African country. In a matter of months

he went in and discarded the existing housing policy, (which was huge, bureaucratic, and ineffective), and put into its place a simple policy that moved most of this effort into the private sector. It defined the government's role to support the private sector such as protecting private ownership, enforcing contracts, subsidizing rent, all to support the private sector. The end result was the United Nations accepted the proposal, not only for that country, but as its world wide policy for government assisted housing! In a few months Solly Angel had crafted a policy that will (most likely) positively affect millions of lives all around the world. Instead of horrible government tenements (of the sort that large American cities are tearing down because they are so awful for the poor that live in them), the private sector would be encouraged to provide affordable and quality housing for the world's poor because experience has shown that the private sector is better at providing housing than the government. That should have been the topic for this book. Amazing how he had world wide influence and he wrote a book about trying to build a bathroom scale!!! I still enjoyed the book..... Pat Robinson 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Unique and rewarding reading By Midwest Book Review Author Solly Angel envisioned a travel scale weighing a pound back in the mid-1980s - and decided to bring it to market as a reality. His evolution from idea to invention to marketing and design follows his thought processes in an unusual series of insights into the inventor's mind and achievements. Angel had no mechanical skills to aid him in realizing his vision, which makes his story of an inventor's achievement truly a remarkable series of insights. The Tale Of The Scale: An Odyssey Of Invention is unique and rewarding reading -- especially for anyone who has ever wondered about taking their own ideas, concepts and inventions into the marketplace. 3 of 6 people found the following review helpful. wait for the cliff notes version By el duderino I picked up this book because I was interested in the trials and tribulations of product development. It turns out that half the book is about Solly Angel's life, which I had no interest in spending time with. Regarding the product development portion of the book.... I am astounded that anybody with a degree in architecture design would make the lame brain mistakes that Angel makes from the get-go. I only read half the book, but my advice to those whose interest is in product design is to flip through and read a bunch of pages to get a feel for it before buying it.

In the mid-1980s, Solly Angel had a technological mini-vision. He saw in his mind's eye a quarter-inch thick personal scale weighing a pound--a travel scale--and he decided to make it a reality, to bring it to market. The Tale of the Scale is a rare first-person account of the process of invention and design as it unfolds in the remaking of the familiar bathroom scale. It is rare because inventors seldom have the inclination to articulate their thought processes and to recount their experiences in great detail. Written by an inventor, the book stands apart from recent books about inventors. Angel, an urban planner by profession, had no mechanical skills as he embarked on his journey. The Tale records his transformation, over the course of a decade, from a bungling ignoramus to an expert on thin scales. Readers know as much about scales--or about invention for that matter--as Angel does at the beginning of the journey. Listening to Angel's unfolding story, they learn about the intricacies of invention and design as Angel finds out about them. The Tale of the Scale is truly an odyssey of invention. The pursuit of the thin scale takes readers to fascinating places--from Bangkok to Rolling Hills, California, from Groningen in the Netherlands to Murrhardt in Germany, and from New York to Tokyo. But the places Angel explores are not only visually different. They are realms of knowledge inhabited by people with diverse yet complementary outlooks on the invention process--engineers, designers, lawyers, product development specialists, corporate functionaries, and friends who philosophize on the deeper meanings of one's life pursuits.

From Booklist Daydreaming about inventing a better mousetrap is common enough, but the dreamer who converts fantasy to reality is rare. Rarer still is the inventor with the reflective acumen to illuminate the process; that Angel has this ability makes the account amazingly exciting--not a quality usually associated with consumer-product development. To an extent, his bright idea--a slim scale for travelers--is incidental to the story, which dramatizes the collision between creative concepts and their marketability. By the denouement of Angel's saga, he has journeyed from Germany to Israel to Japan (with detours to Rockford, Illinois) negotiating with suits, fabricating parts, and patenting his weight sensor, an absorbing subplot in itself because the author is an urban planner, not a mechanical engineer. This contrast between occupation and obsession hints at the drive and belief propelling inventors, and for the decade Angel devoted to his effort through the mid-1990s, he opens a psychologically revealing window about how small successes nourished his faith in his dream. An immensely entertaining and instructive chronicle. Gilbert Taylor Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved "Angel takes us into the machine shop and boardroom, and lets us in on moments of exhilaration and crushing disappointment.... This--and not the romantic vision of the lone inventor toiling at his workbench--is the reality of product development. There are towering savants and there are revolutions, but most progress usually happens by committee, inch by inch."--Christian Science Monitor "In this fun yet informative book, readers follow Angel through the trials and tribulations of building a prototype, applying for a patent, finding a manufacturer, and finally marketing the product. It's particularly interesting to watch Angel find his way around challenges--his first scale cost nearly \$500 to build--and meet all the people that he encounters in trying to see his project through."--Science News "It all seems so simple: think of a brilliant new idea,

manufacture it, and everyone lives happily ever after. Reality is much more painful. In this book, Solly Angel tells a compelling case history of the seemingly never-ending hurdles that lie between the creation of a brilliant concept and its actual realization as a product that can be sold in stores. There are many lessons to be learned in this fascinating diary." --Don Norman, Nielsen Norman Group, author of Emotional Design

"The Tale of the Scale is a wholly engaging adventure story set in the world of invention, engineering, and manufacturing. It provides a rare look into the mind of an inventor and entrepreneur at work. No reader of this book should ever be able to look at a bathroom scale again without thinking of Solly Angel's personal quest." --Henry Petroski, author of The Pencil

"An immensely entertaining and instructive chronicle.... Daydreaming about inventing a better mousetrap is common enough, but the dreamer who converts fantasy to reality is rare. Rarer still is the inventor with the reflective acumen to illuminate the process; that Angel has this ability makes the account amazingly exciting--not a quality usually associated with consumer-product development. To an extent, his bright idea--a slim scale for travelers--is incidental to the story, which dramatizes the collision between creative concepts and their marketability."--Booklist

"The fruit of Solly Angel's vision is not just his against-the-odds feat of design and engineering but also this absorbing account of the eureka's and frustrations involved in his long voyage of discovery." --Ross King, author of Brunelleschi's Dome: How a Renaissance Genius Reinvented Architecture

"An architect with a brilliant idea for a domestic product devotes more than ten years of his life to realize his dream. He gradually learns, from many mistakes and disasters, how to overcome the deep conflicts between aesthetic ideas and physical and commercial reality. This book, which is written clearly, modestly and philosophically, is both inspiring and informative. I know of no other book that reveals the intelligence and the devotion that are needed to integrate engineering and aesthetics." --John Chris Jones, author of Design Methods and The Internet and Everyone

"Against the odds, Angel makes The Tale of the Scale interesting. His determination is impressive. His sense of humor stays alive even in the direst circumstances and he is easy to identify with. His early vision of making a million dollars soon fades, but this doesn't stop him. A rueful book, and a much more rewarding read than might be supposed."--New Scientist

About the Author
Solly Angel is an internationally recognized authority on housing policy in developing countries. He is a senior policy advisor to the UN, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank. He teaches urban planning at New York University and at Princeton University. He is a co-author of A Pattern Language and the author of Housing Policy Matters.