

Pay without Performance: The Unfulfilled Promise of Executive Compensation

Lucian Bebchuk



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The company is under-performing, its share price is trailing, and the CEO gets...a multi-million-dollar raise. This story is familiar, for good reason: as this book clearly demonstrates, structural flaws in corporate governance have produced widespread distortions in executive pay. *Pay without Performance* presents a disconcerting portrait of managers' influence over their own pay--and of a governance system that must fundamentally change if firms are to be managed in the interest of shareholders.

Lucian Bebchuk and Jesse Fried demonstrate that corporate boards have persistently failed to negotiate at arm's length with the executives they are meant to oversee. They give a richly detailed account of how pay practices--from option plans to retirement benefits--have decoupled compensation from performance and have camouflaged both the amount and performance-insensitivity of pay. Executives' unwonted influence over their compensation has hurt shareholders by increasing pay levels and, even more importantly, by leading to practices that dilute and distort managers' incentives.

This book identifies basic problems with our current reliance on boards as guardians of shareholder interests. And the solution, the authors argue, is not merely to make these boards more independent of executives as recent reforms attempt to do. Rather, boards should also be made more dependent on shareholders by eliminating the arrangements that entrench directors and insulate them from their shareholders. A powerful critique of executive compensation and corporate governance, *Pay without Performance* points the way to restoring corporate integrity and improving corporate performance.

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Louis Trent:

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