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# In Sam We Trust: The Untold Story of Sam Walton and Wal-Mart, the World's Most Powerful Retailer

*Bob Ortega*

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**In Sam We Trust: The Untold Story of Sam Walton and Wal-Mart, the World's Most Powerful Retailer** Bob Ortega
Wal-Mart is the largest retailer in the world, the biggest private-sector employer in North America, and one of the most dominant and influential corporations anywhere. But until now, no journalist has thoroughly investigated all of the company's controversial practices and told the true, unvarnished story of founder Sam Walton's life and his particular genius. **In Sam We Trust** is Bob Ortega's illuminating and authoritative account of the world's biggest and most powerful store, and of how Walton's way of thinking is transforming America's business practices, workplaces, and communities.

Sam Walton built the greatest retail empire in history by steadfastly holding true to his vision of making profits by bringing low prices to the masses. A flinty workaholic obsessed with his stores at the expense of his personal life, Walton developed a ruthlessly efficient strategy that enabled Wal-Mart to surpass Sears, outsmart Kmart, and crush small-town mom-and-pop stores. He revolutionized retailing by creating innovative information and distribution systems that were years ahead of the competition.

By encouraging employees to become shareholders in his company, and through the sheer force of his charismatic personality, Walton created a corporate culture unlike any other. So complete was Walton's power over employees that even when he threatened to shut down stores or fire workers to keep unions out, he could win people's trust with promises to treat them better. Wal-Mart workers still pledge to work harder and better by uttering the phrase "So help me Sam."

Meanwhile, back on Main Street, Wal-Mart's unmatched success has raised troubling questions about the company's impact on communities and its treatment of workers. Activists have been waging increasingly impassioned campaigns to keep the colossus from invading towns and suburbs and threatening local businesses. Thousands of miles away, some of Wal-Mart's suppliers have been caught using child labor, and pitchwoman Kathie Lee Gifford has become embroiled in a national controversy over her line of clothing.

Bob Ortega, a veteran Wall Street Journal reporter who has covered Wal-Mart more extensively than perhaps any other writer, has investigated Wal-Mart and the way it does business. He shows how the company's relentless bottom-line mentality has been both a boon and a bane to workers and their communities. In this balanced and thorough work of business history, Bob Ortega tells a remarkable success story that illustrates the glory as well as the underbelly of American capitalism. Ultimately, **In Sam We Trust** raises important questions about the social responsibility of America's most powerful corporations.

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