



The Machine That Could: PNGV, A Government-Industry Partnership

Robert M. Chapman

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In 1993, amid concerns that the U.S. auto industry was losing ground to Japanese competitors, the federal government and the Big Three U.S. automakers (Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors) entered into a unique alliance: the Partnership for a New Generation of Vehicles (PNGV). The PNGV, which also involves universities, suppliers, and other participants, arose from the belief that providing industry with access to technologies generated by federally supported research would allow automakers to develop a high-efficiency, environmentally friendly car--attaining up to 80 miles per gallon--that would still match or surpass today's vehicles in performance, cost, and safety. In its launch phase, the PNGV faced considerable skepticism, as well as stiff political and organizational challenges. This report tells the story of the program's beginnings, how it has dealt with these challenges, and its progress to date, which, as of 1998, remains ahead of schedule. It also details lessons that may be useful to managers of similar partnerships in the future. The author was the government's first technical manager of the PNGV. His account was developed from notes, recollections, and interviews with former colleagues.

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