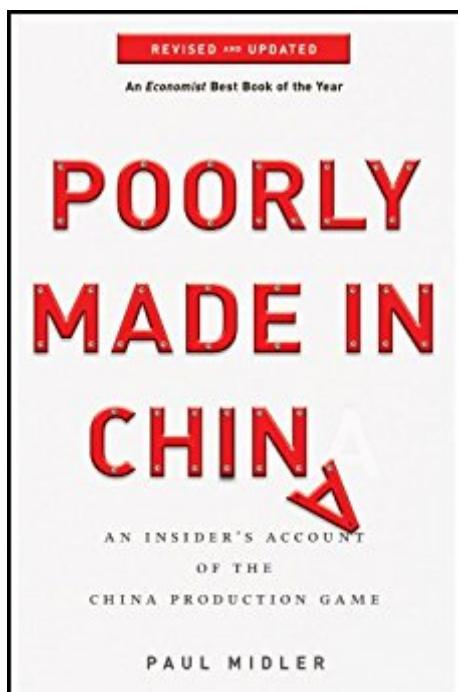


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# Poorly Made In China: An Insider's Account Of The China Production Game



## **Synopsis**

An insider reveals what canâ€”and doesâ€”go wrong when companies shift production to China. In this entertaining behind-the-scenes account, Paul Midler tells us all that is wrong with our effort to shift manufacturing to China. Now updated and expanded, *Poorly Made in China* reveals industry secrets, including the dangerous practice of quality fadeâ€”the deliberate and secret habit of Chinese manufacturers to widen profit margins through the reduction of quality inputs. U.S. importers donâ€”t stand a chance, Midler explains, against savvy Chinese suppliers who feel they have little to lose by placing consumer safety at risk for the sake of greater profit. This is a lively and impassioned personal account, a collection of true stories, told by an American who has worked in the country for close to two decades. *Poorly Made in China* touches on a number of issues that affect us all.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

It's not remotely perfect, but it's very readable with well chosen anecdotes that drive the point home. Ideally there would have been more data to drive the author's point home, however, I think it's

effective nonetheless. I found this is valuable if for no other reason than understanding cultural differences when doing business with Chinese manufacturing business. Final point I was shocked how well this reaffirmed my own personal experiences working for a particular Chinese run computer hardware company. I had assumed the negotiating style was an isolated case to that particular ownership group, but I found the same tactics and behavior in this book. .

This book was recommended to me by a fellow expat living and working in China. Having been in China for the last 8 years, I was skeptical that a Caucasian American would understand the inner workings of the Chinese culture and language well enough to write a comprehensive enough book about the manufacturing sector in China. However, I found Midler to be extremely smart and knowledgeable about China and its people. I found the book to be somewhat dated, as Midler was talking about the exchange rate being 8RMB=1USD and the wages as being extremely low. However, the basic behavior of the Chinese factory owners and the typical "customer service ethic" have not changed much. Although with the worsening worldwide economic condition, Chinese factories are a little more service-oriented than before, as they're trying to get enough orders to stay afloat. (Read: will kiss the Western customer's ass a little bit more than what the book suggests.) I like the way the chapters are laid out - one anecdote is followed by an analysis of the events through Midler's knowledge of the Chinese culture, language and history. Generally, Midler is accurate in his interpretations, and this is what I find most impressive, as Midler clearly shows his vast knowledge of the Chinese production game through his analyses. Buyers who want to import from China will NOT have their fears assuaged by Midler's book. There ARE reputable factories out there, but mentioning them in this book will only detract from the entertainment value of "Poorly Made in China". This is a good read and a nice primer for those who want to learn more about China. But, as the book clearly demonstrates, if a buyer REALLY wants to get into China, it's better to call on someone like Midler, instead of going about it blindly...unless he's thinking about writing his own book about the trials and tribulations about doing business with Chinese factories.

The author is an MBA who speaks Mandarin and lives in China. He works as a "middleman" between American importers and Chinese manufacturers. The first (approximately) 200 pages consist of entertaining anecdotes of his experiences in dealing with Chinese manufacturers. It is primarily a story of dishonesty and cunning--not incompetence-- on the part of the Chinese. Subtly, by these anecdotes, the author draws us further into the question of WHY the Chinese manufacturers behave as they do towards Americans and other importers of their products? The

remaining (approximately) 50 pages provides a convincing answer. Everywhere one turns these days, we are told that the Chinese are the new master race, that China will bury the US and dominate the world, etc. This book is the furthest thing from a political polemic, but an incidental effect of reading it leads one to question how China could ever manage that?

This book was recommended to me by a colleague when a client asked me to transition their manufacturing from South America to Asia. I had served a number of Chinese manufacturers as clients and was familiar with their approach to business generally. But I had no previous experience negotiating an ongoing manufacturing contract. I will say up front that as a book goes, this one leaves a lot to be desired. It is somewhat repetitive. A tighter edit would have made for a better read. While the "case study" featured in the book is illustrative, it left me wanting many more. I would be delighted if this writer would track down others who have had experiences that echo or validate his and issue and expanded edition of this book. I would also like to have more explicit advice on how to manage certain realities of doing business in China. Lastly, a clearer sense of what characteristics were changing over time with the business landscape versus what characteristics were clearly cultural and unlikely to ever change would have been helpful. All that said, my understanding is that the author is not a professional writer nor a sociologist. And he has pulled together connections here about business in this unique space that most of us would miss: a critical one in the work I had been engaged to complete was that an ongoing contract opened my client up to unnecessary risk unless we took care to engage unusually stringent QC measures. Of the many texts I referred to on the topic -- and professionals I spoke to -- Paul Midler in *Poorly Made* was one of the only voices that didn't sugarcoat anything. The book gets 5 stars for that.

Midler's examples are vivid, funny -- and sometimes quite alarming. He's a great story-teller. Who knew that the cultural clashes over shampoo bottling could reveal so much about both the U.S. and China? The only reason not to give him five stars is that he's often too quick to blame all each new crisis on Chinese ethics (or the lack of them). In fact, I think the Americans often negotiated contracts that were bound to blow up. Part of the blame should go to American arrogance, greed or naivete, especially in hunting for rock-bottom prices without thinking about what was likely to happen next. But if you savor his reporting -- and do a little bit of independent analysis of the facts on your own -- you'll get great value out of this book.

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