

Bandwidth: The Untold Story of Ambition, Deception, and Innovation That Shaped the Internet Age and Dot-Com Boom

Dan Caruso

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The insider's history Bandwidth filters the meteoric rise, fall, and resurgence of fiber-optic telecommunication companies through the lenses of industry leaders.

Part memoir, part technology history, Dan Caruso's *Bandwidth* is about the rise of fiber optics—the backbone of the internet—shared from the perspective of someone who forged his career in the midst of a technological revolution.

Modern computing, cellular connections, and the commercial internet all rely on bandwidth, Caruso notes. Showing how the industry was revolutionized after copper wires were replaced by fiber-optic cables, his book recounts how the internet and telecommunication companies came together around the technology and co-evolved in subsequent decades. At the time, Caruso was an ambitious engineer with a knack for analytics; he entered the telecommunications field just as it was primed for reinvention. Called the “Bear of Bandwidth,” he weathered the chaos of the early 2000s and doubled down on the disruptive potential of fiber optics; his story is a microcosm of the modern history of the industry.

Covering insider events—such as the board meetings where business leaders like Jim Crowe of MFS Communications first began to experiment with the power of the internet in the 1980s and the corporate raiding and consolidation of fiber optic networks in the twentieth-first century—the book is full of insights on the strategic battles, regulations, and business decisions that formed the extant telecommunications system. Almost four decades of industry change are represented, beginning with AT&T's 1983 breakup into a system of seven regional Bell corporations, leading to the massive bandwidth bubble and bust, and ending with the tenuous stability of the 2020s, where four behemoths dominate the existing fiber networks. Each stage along the way is chronicled in neat chapters that highlight macro changes, as with the buying spree and consolidation that followed the bandwidth bubble.

In addition to the clarity and substance of this timeline of the telecommunications and internet technology industries comes the story of Caruso's development from an eager university graduate to a titan of industry. Indeed, his career moves and adaptations are addressed to complement this tale of an industry's growth, and his economic and cultural readings of the industry are edifying. Throughout, bare facts mix with taut descriptions of his reactions to industry changes, as with the anxiety that surrounded Y2K and adrenaline-fueled corporate acquisition negotiations. Conferences, investment deals, and IPO launches are fodder for high drama, as with a scene wherein Caruso meets investor Marc Ganzi and engages in drawn-out takeover discussions. Meticulous awareness is evinced, as is Caruso's respect for corporate hierarchies. His career transformations are relayed in an authentic, personable manner.

A mix of memoir and industry history, *Bandwidth* covers the infrastructure essential to modern technology with clarity.

WILLEM MARX (January 9, 2025)

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