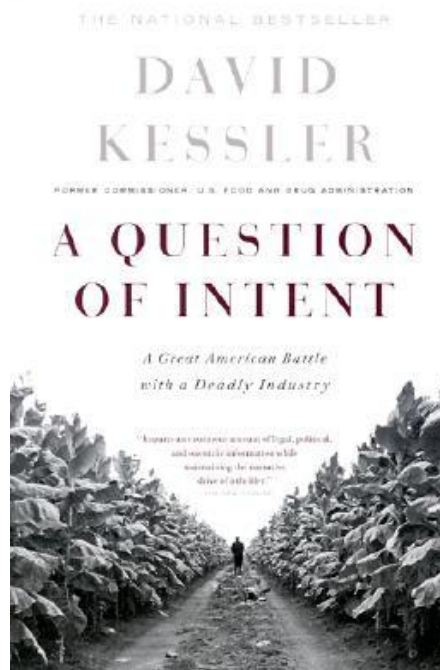




A Question Of Intent: A Great American Battle With A Deadly Industry

David A. Kessler

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Tobacco companies had been protecting their turf for decades. They had congressmen in their pocket. They had corrupt scientists who made excuses about nicotine, cancer and addiction. They had hordes of lawyers to threaten anyone—inside the industry or out—who posed a problem. They had a whole lot of money to spend. And they were good at getting people to do what they wanted them to do. After all, they had already convinced millions of Americans to take up an addictive, unhealthy, and potentially deadly habit.

David Kessler didn't care about all that. In this book he tells for the first time the thrilling detective story of how the underdog FDA—while safeguarding the nation's food, drugs, and blood supply—finally decided to take on one of the world's most powerful opponents, and how it won. Like *A Civil Action* or *And the Band Played On*, *A Question of Intent* weaves together science, law, and fascinating characters to tell an important and often unexpectedly moving story. We follow Kessler's team of investigators as they race to find the clues that will allow the FDA to assert jurisdiction over cigarettes, while the tobacco companies and their lawyers fight back—hard. Full of insider information and drama, told with wit, and animated by its author's moral passion, *A Question of Intent* reads like a Grisham thriller, with one exception—everything in it is true.

A Question Of Intent: A Great American Battle With A Deadly Industry Details

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Mfalco65 says

I read this book shortly after seeing the film "The Insider." It proved to be a great compliment and somehow, I found myself more compelled with the investigative spirit and rich details of Kessler's book. He provided such thorough evidence and a compelling case for the wrongs perpetuated by the tobacco industry and the fight to make them atone for their sins.

Karen Kinsella says

Gripping, well organized and written. An accessible but comprehensive account of Commissioner Kessler's and FDA's effort to establish regulation of the tobacco industry. Gives the reader a good feel for how agency rule making tends to be driven far more by political pragmatism than a case's merits. The description of the court appeal process was unfortunate and revealing. Particularly interesting to me was the discussion of attorney ethics in Chapter 47. Tobacco industry legal counsel were not only advising, but in many cases had completely taken over research and other industry functions, destroying and hiding adverse findings. This sort of thing has been, in my experience, a common practice in many industries, and has prevented the public, and agencies empowered to protect it, from learning about health-impacting product hazards. Although usually cited as the required standard of legal care in an adversarial legal system, Kessler raises and briefly discusses the ethics of this legal practice. Worth the price of admission, and lots of references for further mining the topic.

Vicki says

Okay, I told myself I would only review books I'd read in the last 9 months or so (don't want to fake a literary lifestyle that I'm not actually living), but even though I read this years ago I'm going to review it because it's still on my bookshelf, and because it was AWESOME.

I read it for a graduate poli sci class, and even though it was 400 fairly dense pages, I was sucked in. Staying up until 3:30 sucked in. It's a policy/thriller; the true story of the battle to regulate cigarettes as drugs, as told by then-Commissioner of the FDA. I'd try to explain why it's fantastic, but just read it if you care at all about this kind of stuff.

Brooke says

This is an incredibly interesting book that reads like fiction but is totally fact. It's all about the FDA's quest to regulate tobacco and the war that the cigarette companies wage. It's just really informative and very fun to read... especially if you like reading about government policy but often find it very dry!

Seeking Sister says

If you are interested in learning about the power of the tobacco industry and the questionable ethics of the men (and women) we elect to write laws and protect our interests, I would encourage you to read this book. It is difficult to avoid anger when reading about the complicity of congressmen, in protecting a dangerous and harmful practice. Concern for public health and safety took a back seat to profits and power. The author was head of the FDA for a number of years. He played an instrumental role (along with many others) in changing the face of the industry and revealing the corruption throughout.

Converse says

This book recounts Kessler attempt as head of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to regulate cigarettes as a drug. I'll cut to the chase; the Supreme Court voted 5 to 4 that the FDA didn't have the authority to do this. I got to page 346 when I lost interest, so I would by no means say this is a bad book. Kessler does talk about more than cigarettes, but that is the focus. The title, "question of intent," gets to the legal aspect of the FDA's case; the intention of the producer to change the functioning or structure of the body is part of the legal definition of what makes a substance a drug. Slowly, through leaked documents and industry sources (the FDA couldn't issue subpoenas, so the process was slow) the FDA established to Kessler's satisfaction that the industry was intentionally manipulating nicotine levels to keep smokers smoking.

Anthony Faber says

Interesting real life mystery of how the FDA (the author was the head of FDA) managed to find out what the tobacco industry is really doing with nicotine levels in cigarettes, by surmounting a great wall of non-disclosure agreements.

Suzanne says

I read this for a school course, and really enjoyed it. It reads like a thriller novel but with enough details and evidence to please the nerdiest of book nerds.

Rachel says

Holy Moly!

After 10 years of working in tobacco control, I really thought I knew the ins and outs of the evils of the tobacco industry. My knowledge had only scratched the surface.

The level of murder, manipulation, cover-ups is truly mindblowing.

I rarely read nonfiction, and I almost never read things that are work related. This was recommended by someone who is a pulmonologist, a lawyer and a former NJ Commissioner of Health. When he said it reads like a novel, I thought, "Yeah, sure, to YOU - uber-intellectual-brilliant guy".

But in fact, even regular folk like me couldn't put it down.

My only critique is that Kessler struck me as a self-proclaimed perfectly-intended faultless superhero. I'm on his side 100%, but even when he tried to not seem cocky, he seemed a little cocky. I guess he earned it.

Once you've read it, email me and I'll tell you how to lobby your NJ legislator for more tobacco-control funding.

Daniel Ginsburg says

This book is a bit dated, but it's still a good read. I read it as part of an MBA class on business ethics. It's kind of like a combination of a detective novel, a chapter from a history book, and a legal thriller all rapped up in one. As one chapter ends the book grabs you in and gives you no other option but to keep reading - be careful!!

Sarah says

One of my favorite books. Not only about tobacco but also tells a great story on how the recommended daily calories on nutrition labels were selected (spoiler alert: the meat and sugar lobby had a big influence - shocker). Written in an engaging style, Kessler illustrates how the FDA is pushed around by the political and corporate interests.

Janna says

I read this book in my media studies class in college. It's giant and amazing. David Kessler was the former FDA commissioner, and this book is his retelling of the battle against big tobacco. This book came out the same year as the film *The Insider* and makes a great companion to the missing pieces of the movie. If you like American history, scandal, whistle blowing, and the legal system -- you'll like this book.

Eric says

Reading this book in my Ethics class. Fascinating autobiography on how Kessler (head of FDA at the time) took on the tobacco companies - still reading it, but it has caught my attention much like a good fiction book would.

Linda Howe says

Insightful and thought-provoking

This book on the FDA journey to regulate tobacco provides great insight into the challenges faced by those in our government committed to following their conscience. The bravery to follow through on a politically-charged topic is inspiring, as is David Kessler and those who worked on this mission.

Josh Horn says

As both a lawyer and doctor Kessler was well qualified, though young (only 37), to head the FDA, and the impact his administration had on public health is a testament to his effort and leadership abilities. Not only has Kessler intimately detailed the FDA's course of exploring tobacco regulation, but his writing imparts the gravity of those decisions, making the book both rich in detail and intoxicating narrative. As someone who was in elementary school during Kessler's administration, the substantial changes he brought to the FDA have been considered "background" to the events in my life, but this book illustrates the tremendous effort and intellect it required to obtain those protections which I took for granted. No doubt the book is biased, as any autobiographical work is, though Kessler presents the truth, or nearest thing to it, as he discovered through his team's thorough investigation of the tobacco industry.

Brady says

A book about the insidious workings of the tobacco industry. It'll piss you off!

Tano says

This is a great book, providing an in-the-trenches look of the efforts of David Kessler & the FDA to combat the tobacco industry. Very impressive read for anyone who is against said industry, and probably good background reading for anyone who works for it.

I'm personally glad I read this book, it elevated my distaste for the tobacco industry to an even higher level.

Wrensmom says

Great book. I already loved David Kessler, and now I love him even more :)

Heather G says

David Kessler is my public health hero. Book reads like a thriller in some spots and is quite entertaining. Scary look at the influence of industry and politics on public health issues. Shows how manipulation of public opinion is orchestrated. Take away point: don't smoke!

Elizabeth says

I enjoyed this book a lot. It was pretty entertaining and informative and really highlighted how politics at all levels affect policy. I particularly enjoyed all the random facts about the tobacco industry and how they conceptualized and manipulated their product and was pretty appalled (but not entirely shocked) at how the industry was able to dodge regulation for so many years.
