

Books that are noteworthy

Mark M. Michalski

This Is Marketing: You Can't Be Seen Until You Learn to See. Seth Godin. 288 p. 2018.

What Peter Drucker means and is to management studies, so Seth Godin is to the field of marketing. The Financial Times might have summed it best introducing his book: "This Is Marketing (a)s a very accessible way into Godin's thinking. Godin writes in jargon-free,...(crisp, clear and concise) prose. His book is interesting and useful for anyone who wants an insight into how, and why, we buy things or change our habits in any way." Therefore, book is deservedly a bestseller. His previous one, was called Your Turn. Another, illustrated and shareable and thought-provoking. Some five years ago, he created the altMBA, a life-changing, 30 day workshop, helping participators and making it entirely possible to change your life. He is in the Guerrilla Marketing Hall of Fame, the Direct Marketing Hall of Fame and Marketing Hall of Fame. Godin has several web sites and offers wealth of reading for free, some are ebooks on the placebo effect and education. He appeared on five TED talks, tirelessly visits universities and public fora and (highly selectively) helps some people pro on - those who find his appeal and attract his attention.

Seth Godin has been teaching, innovating, and inspiring millions of students as well as practitioners of marketing, entrepreneurship and startup business through his omnipresence via social media, writing, teaching and tireless personal appearances. His one of the most successful - and now also - most famous blog, is boasting two decades of uninterrupted online presence. Godin himself is not shy to tell the story - and he also said it at the Catholic University Heritage Hall lecture last spring - that his early blogs were not so good. Not even "so, so". His writing however, after circa eight thousand blogs assuredly improved, and perfected in clarity, style, and yes: growing audience of fans, and faithful followers. As an author of 18 international bestsellers that have changed the way we think about marketing, future of work, his books were translated into some 40 languages. A few titles: Unleashing the Ideavirus, Permission Marketing, Purple Cow, Tribes, The Dip, Linchpin, Poke the Box, and All Marketers Are Liars. It is interesting that his All Marketers Are Liars became quite controversial. After some reflection Godin in an updated edition has cleverly modified its title, with crossed last two words: Are Liars, and replaced by: Tell the Stories, which gave him not only more new publicity, but also confirmed that controversy may be an ally in marketing. Seth Godin keeps on writing one of the most popular marketing blogs in the world. He seems not to tire to tell his audiences around the world how the marketing is changing our world for better. A few years ago, he has found the altMBA, and is the founder and former CEO of Squidoo.com, the former VP of Direct Marketing at Yahoo!, and the founder of the pioneering online startup Yoyodyne, among many other, countless start-ups and initiatives.

Godin posts on his website (www.sethgodin.com) not only blogs, but news and updates, social media with lots of interesting podcasts (see also: Akimbo.link), seminars, udey courses and lots of engaging, worth your time content. With publication of This is Marketing, Godin offers the essentials of his cumulative experience and wisdom in accessible, fun to read, package. He states famously: Don't find customers for your products - find products for your customers. His big idea? Great marketers don't use consumers to solve their company's problem; they use marketing to solve other people's problems. They don't just make noise; they make the world better. Truly powerful marketing is grounded in empathy, generosity, and positive emotions. He has a talent to eclectically synthesize precious - often common - knowledge of others to adapt to his not always new, but rather novel way of thinking. His recent book tells us how to identify our smallest viable audience; how to draw on the right signals and signs to position our own offering. How to employ trust, empathy and permission to target audience, how narrative narrows and nears us to our neighborly audience. The book grew out of his highly popular 100-day seminar (see: www.themarketingseminar.com) to which he admits a limited number of students to lead it personally with staff support. With more than tens of thousands marketers who already have taken (and some re-taken it), they learned and used his Seminar to make a difference. This is Marketing offers a unique approach that we might apply for long time. In his brief video (or: vlog) Godin asks: if you think that you may make things better by making better things -- Godin is here for you. So not only read the book, take some time to get to know one of the most brilliant and prolific thought leaders of our early 21 century.

Below is a sample of Internet-based endorsements, I find some of them amazingly accurate:

As someone who works in Marketing and Communications, I thoroughly enjoyed reading, learning and getting some reinforcements on things I already knew. This is a book about roots. About anchoring your work deeply in the dreams, desires, and communities of those you seek to serve. It's about changing people for the better, creating work you can be proud of. And it's about being a driver of the market, not simply being market-driven.

It seems to me that his approach is a game changer. The moment that the marketer will take a 'humane' approach, will actually understand the psychology of its target audience and also will be aware that not everybody is their target, Godin promises that only good things will happen. And I tend to agree.

It's hard to write about marketing consistently (as Godin does), especially as it is always changing and slippery enough to define in general terms as is. Initially, I felt that this book was so similar to all of Godin's other books.

By the end however, he had me, and I can honestly say I enjoyed this book.

It reminded me of a mini skirt—long enough to cover the subject, and short enough to keep it interesting. Using examples from Apple to Elon Musk, Godin discusses marketing as an elusive fish, which, when caught correctly, makes all the difference in a brand's success. I found this book encouraging, and recommend it to anyone running a brand. "And if you're having trouble making your contribution, realize your challenge is a story you are marketing to yourself.

It is the marketing we do for ourselves, to ourselves, by ourselves, the story we tell ourselves, that can change everything. It's what's going to enable you to create value, to be missed if you were gone.

With the rise of the internet and the fall of the monolithic mass media, marketers can no longer rely on advertising alone. Instead, they should take an approach to marketing that identifies people's underlying needs and desires, develops a product that can fulfill them and uses value-positioning and storytelling to cultivate a core group of fans who are receptive to trying new things and can provide the product with its smallest viable market.

Take the product you're trying to market and pick two opposing pairs of values. Then, draw an XY graph and write one pair of values on the opposite ends of the X axis and the other pair on the opposite ends of the Y axis. For example, on the X axis, you might write "affordability" on one end and "exclusivity" on the other. Then, on the opposite ends of the Y axis, you might write "sustainability" and "extravagance." Now you can see the various territories you can stake out between the extremes of these four values that your customers might espouse. Try picking different locations on the graph and asking yourself, "How could I position the product here? What would make the product speak to this combination of values?" This will help you find a unique positioning for your product.

As you've learned, the task of marketing begins before a product or service is even conceived, let alone built or developed. Rather than coming after the fact, it needs to guide the design, manufacturing and implementation process from the very beginning.

If you're intrigued by this idea and want to delve into it deeper, check out our blinks to another book by Godin, *Purple Cow*, where he argues that the path to successful marketing begins with the creation of remarkable products and services, which he calls "purple cows." These can then be marketed to a target audience through innovative strategies, which you'll also learn about.

So saddle up on your electronic horse and get ready to lasso your own Purple Cow!

Lesson One: Find your smallest viable audience. Grabbing attention is hard and it costs money. Seek for the smallest market you can live with. Be specific. Trying to catch the whole market will make your brand and business bleak. "It's not for you", you say and go away as long as there is an audience that likes it the way it is.

Lesson Two: The best marketing speaks to the narratives your audience tells themselves about status and affili-

ation. Tell stories to your audience. People interacting with your business must experience a story that transforms them in some way. It touches either their status or their affiliation to their tribe. It brings emotions and willing to share the story with others.

Lesson Three: Pattern match for early growth. Your smallest viable audience has habits. They have patterns they are used to. You may want to try to interrupt those patterns with better service or product. Instead, look to match those.

Lesson Four: Brand marketing vs Direct marketing. When you put a billboard on a street you do brand marketing. Running a Google Ads campaign is direct marketing.

Brand marketing changes culture. It can't be measured. It is expensive, strategic and long running. It makes your brand a part of a culture. Direct marketing interacts with people. It can and must be measured. It converts money to attention. Some of the attention goes to action, which, in turn, can convert to new client. Direct marketing is the way for early growth, but it is hard to make it cost efficient. If you do not target your audience, do not tell a story of status and affiliation and do not match patterns your funnel will be too costly to make sense.

Lesson Five: Price is personal. Price is the only way to compete without good marketing strategy. And this is the worst way to compete. People will to pay different prices depending on what they seek. It is not the product they buy, it is the experience that it gives them. Seth refers to the classic to demonstrate this: you do not buy a drill, you buy memories that emerge from photos on the wall. Price depends on status and affiliation.

This book isn't really anything new--marketing is really about what customers want, not what you have to sell--but, like any good Shakespearean adaptation, this book provides the info in a way that can be digested with relative ease in the current times. I particularly liked the business plan model. Virtually a handbook for approaching marketing today in a realistic way. Not overhyped or overly confident. Marketing means uncertainty and this book strikes the right balance, at least for me. I love that my biggest takeaways from this book are not marketing strategies but rather questions to ask ourselves and strive for - what's your contribution? What change are you making?

Reasonable ideas, but in feel like the book could have been edited down substantially. It gets quite repetitive, explaining the same ideas in slightly different ways from chapter to chapter. I think the best way to read this would be to treat it more like a book of koans or poems — read one section a day or as occasional bathroom reading.

One of the problems in modern-day marketing, especially with the coming of digital marketing that is always on, is that everything starts to be about the short-term, quick win. But that's not marketing, that's running ads. And running ads, most of the time does not give you the lasting returns you want for your brand/company. I've always been convinced that there is another way to do this, to actually sell things to people and make them happy with that transaction. This book is about a lot of other things, but it's also about what the above. Godin explains how to

do exactly that, and in a delightfully digestible way. I'm just as surprised as anyone else that I loved a marketing book so much. As a journalism school grad, I will always be rather slow to accept most books about marketing. As much as I see the value of understanding marketing, most of the books I pick up are focused more on encouraging you as the marketer to understand what makes you so special than on encouraging you as the marketer to try to understand what your audience wants.

A real genius in marketing and sociology. Care about your customers, give them quality, give them something to talk about, make sure that if you leave, they won't need you, but they'll miss you. Keep using a marketing tactic if it's still working, even if you're bored by it.

Really amazing book. This book signifies a shift in marketing, in how we interact and connect with people for change to happen. Whether that change is to make a sale or to increase newsletter signups, this book has a compelling message about why you should focus on a small audience and grow that community. It also comes with a unique code to join a community of peers from across the globe who are changing the status quo in marketing. This takes it back to basics, and then reapplies the basics as complex, important topics that marketers should understand. Who are you marketing to? What are you trying to get them to do? What is the best way to do that? This is the process that marketing experts must understand if they're going to put together a truly epic strategy, and Seth's book captures that perfectly.

The Human Advantage: The Future of American Work in an Age of Smart Machines. Jay W. Richards. Crown Forum, 2018. 261 pages.

Dr. Jay Richards is author of many books including such bestsellers as *Infiltrated* and *Indivisible*. He is also the author of *Money, Greed, and God*. A winner of a 2010 Templeton Enterprise Award; he is co-author of *The Privileged Planet* with astronomer Guillermo Gonzalez. He co-authored with Jonathan Witt, *The Hobbit Party: The Vision of Freedom that J.R.R. Tolkien Got and the West Forgot*. Jay serves as a business Professor in the Busch School of Business at The Catholic University of America. He holds many positions, such as a Senior Fellow at the Discovery Institute and executive editor of *The Stream* and in recent years has served as Distinguished Fellow at the Institute for Faith, Work & Economics, among many other activities.

His favorite quote (posted on his CUA website) states that “we need a maximum of specialized economic understanding, but also a maximum of ethos so that specialized economic understanding may enter the service of the right goals.” He attributes much of his inspiration to pope emeritus Benedict XVI.

The *Human Advantage* opens with a short overview of economic history. Jay then addresses “the real challenge of our time: the rapid disruption of jobs, firms, ways of life, and whole industries.” In today’s world, where technology is a king and innovations let machines take more and more menial jobs, Richards considers the age-old, luddite-type question, but finally offers an optimistic view that most jobs will not disappear, but get transformed and help us harness society and thereby transform us as well.

We live – to use Clayton Christensen favorite term - in an age of continual disruption, perhaps the most disruptive yet. Josh Herring in his thoughtful review stated that “this disruption holds the key to flourishing. Richards argues that no machine will ever contain the virtues which drive human success: “The story of the future is about the five virtues of happy and successful people, each of which matches a feature of the information economy.” Courage, antifragility, altruism, collaboration, and creative freedom are the uniquely human virtues which Richards contends the wise will cultivate to best prepare for this exponentially disruptive market. “Virtue – always the unsung hero of the American Dream – will be more vital than ever in our higher-tech future.” Richards concludes with three chapters meditating on the nature of happiness, the cultivation of virtue, and the differences between human intelligence and machine intelligence.

Perhaps one of the more frightening things about artificial intelligence is not so much what will do to us, but what we will do with it to ourselves. We humans are fortunately unique, capable of self-reflection, human folly and luckily whimsical feelings with passions and abstract, often illogical humors making it impossible for robots to imitate us thanks to creative freedom and the above uniquely human imperfections as well as even more important: heroic virtues. This is it seems one of the key messages of the Jay Richards’ book. The author amply demonstrates that we do not need to be afraid of the unknown future, as long as we are bold to build better tomorrow and communicate creatively virtues and values.