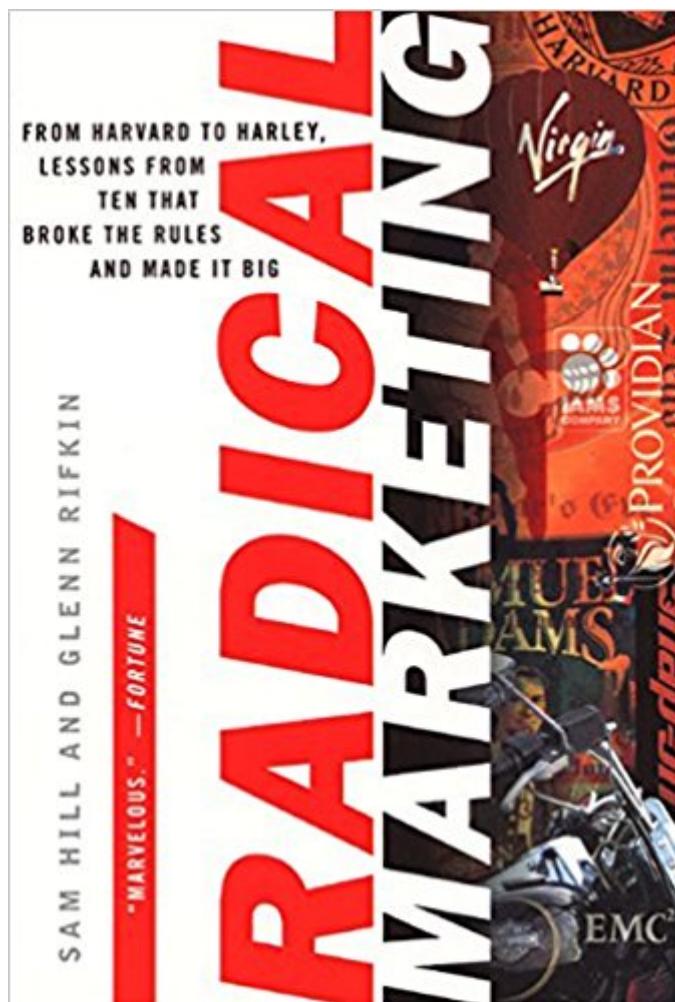


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Radical Marketing: From Harvard To Harley, Lessons From Ten That Broke The Rules And Made It Big



Synopsis

How did the Grateful Dead use its fanatical following to build a \$100 million brand that still thrives today? How did upstart Boston Beer Company--makers of Sam Adams--prevail over rival Anheuser-Busch without an advertising budget? And how did Iams create the premium pet food market and leap from \$16 million to \$600 million in sales in just fifteen years, while charging twice the price of competitor Ralston-Purina? The answer: radical marketing. In this fresh, provocative book, Sam Hill and Glenn Rifkin identify the marketing strategies that have enabled ten innovative companies to emerge as industry leaders. What do these organizations have in common? Each is in tune emotionally with its customer base, allowing them to glean superior marketing insight without spending millions of dollars. Each is more focused on the big picture--growth and expansion--rather than short-term profits. And, despite their current success, each started out with little more than a passion for their product. Engrossing, informative, and invaluable, Radical Marketing demonstrates how any company, large or small, can achieve unprecedented success through inventive and revolutionary tactics.

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Customer Reviews

Ten companies that symbolize radical marketing - it's a great concept...However, after reading the first three, you pretty much have a grasp of what the lessons are. Continuing on is only an exercise in reading the same story over and over, with different CEO names inserted and different products peddled. You know how it goes... Company at the brink of bankruptcy, young leader-type without a

business degree, creative solutions born out of financial constraints... Ta da! A great company emerges from the ashes. It's just that this book doesn't make you think enough. It's a great story, but it's just too easy - not enough struggle, not enough of reality. I just can't believe that everything is so peachy at all these organizations. I want the truth - I can believe that radical marketing techniques work, but I can't believe they work absolutely. I mean, IAMS just sold out to P&G, but the book makes it sound like Clay Mathile (the former CEO) would never leave IAMS because he's so married to the brand. It's a good airplane book, but it's a bit of a fairy tale.

I bought Radical Marketing because I needed some radical ideas to jump-start my company's marketing. On the up-side the authors did package up some useful information for me and I got insights into how companies in widely varying markets can put the same radical ideas to use with the possibility of good success. The book's wisdom though, is many times at odds with the situation of readers like me. For instance, the book admonishes readers not to fall into the traditional marketing trap which says just throw enough money at it and people will buy it. Of course, I'm not P&G or Quaker Oats (see the Snapple debacle recounted in the "Applying the Lessons" chapter) so I can't fall into that trap since I don't have that kind of money. And neither do, I suspect, most readers. The 10 case studies could have easily been pared down since many of the companies profiled use the same tactics. After about the fourth case study I was really struggling to continue on, thinking it would just be more of the same with a different name. Basically, it was. My advice to the authors for their sequel is to apply some of the radical advice they give and keep it to 100 pages. Less, many times, is more. And when you're forced to work with less your focus gets lots sharper.

The message is a positive one. Leaders without formal marketing training or piles of money can build successful businesses, given a strong connection with customers and a personal commitment to delivering a quality product. Like many popular business books, Radical Marketing has a strong core concept that could have been expressed fully in 30 pages or so, but was extended to book length by endless examples and anecdotes.

I find that most business books these days have little to say and take a long time saying it. As a founder of three successful businesses, I have always wondered who buys them. This book is exactly the opposite. Hill and Rifkin write the old fashioned way. They start with solid research and interviews at a dozen companies which have built legendary customer loyalty. From this research,

they distill each company's secrets of success. Ultimately, this allows them to generalize a set of practical, low-cost marketing approaches anyone can follow in their business. Most importantly, they write in direct, hard-hitting language that makes it difficult to put the book down. Its like Grisham writing about successful marketers like Harley Davidson, The Grateful Dead, and Sam Adams beer. If you want a book with solid content, home-run ideas, and engaging writing, this one's for you.

Divided into two parts - the first defining "radical" as an approach to marketing, and the second a series of ten case studies analyzing companies that 'got radical' - this book os an interesting analysis of traditional vs. new marketing. Defining traditional marketing as big, complex, aimed at the center of a mass market, separated from the consumer, and formulaic, the authors assert that newer more radical marketing methods are paying bigger dividends than old traditional advertising.Citing organizations such as Snap-on Tools, Harvard Biz School, Boston Beer Company, Virgin Atlantic Airways, and the NBA, the authors build a solid case for anew breed of marketers with more intuition and vision than marketing education. The case studies are insightful and always entertaining. In fact, the chapter on Harley Davison's recovery from near bankruptcy in 1985 to \$1.8 billion revenue and record profits in 1997 might just be worth the price of the book. Similarly, Jerry Garcia fans will love the well argued discussion of the Grateful Dead as radical marketers.The books main weakness is its lack of concrete 'next steps' for the aspiring radical marketer. It also has little to offer (outside of the case studies) for the already radical. If you read just one marketing book a year - skip this one. But, if you enjoy well-researched and entertaining case studies, 'Radical Marketing' is definitely worth a look.

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