

Summary of:

The New Marketing: Social Media, Email and the Art of Storytelling

The New Marketing is a guide for navigating the transition from yesterday's approaches to branding—where companies crafted brand messages and broadcasted them to the world—to new approaches for the age of email and social media, where branding has become an interactive co-creation with a user community. The goal of the book is to show how any organization can strengthen its brand and build its community through intelligent use of email, social media and storytelling.

As one would expect from a book with 'storytelling' in its title, a variety of enlightening stories bring the author's arguments to life. While some of the brands cited are well known, many examples recount the everyday practices of companies that have neither trendy products nor large marketing budgets—businesses anyone can relate to.

Concept 1: The notion of branding has changed dramatically in recent years. In today's interconnected world, branding has become an interactive co-creation with a diverse group of stakeholders. A brand is no longer what the company tells the world it is, but rather what the larger community decides it is.

Forward-thinking companies understand that they have lost control of the brand message. Rather than fear this loss of control, they embrace it as an opportunity to build a broader base for crafting and sharing the brand story. Using email, their websites and social media, they engage interested parties in an ongoing, open dialogue that defines the brand's identity.

Concept 2: Storytelling is the most effective form of communication, for brands as well as leaders. A portion of the book is dedicated to an explanation of why storytelling is such a powerful tool, and how to use it effectively in the world of e-marketing.

The author has spent much of his career coaching business leaders, and one of the book's chapters addresses the similarities between a leader's self-expression and a brand's message. In fact, leadership and branding are comparable in striking ways. Successful leaders and successful brands connect with their audiences and build their communities. They tell stories of who they are and why others should follow.

While the internet does change some of the rules of marketing, many of the core concepts of branding remain the same. Independent of any technology, the key to any brand's self-expression is learning to tell, embody, and spread its stories of identity. As such, the core elements of the author's leadership coaching—self-knowledge, authenticity, telling one's personal stories of identity, finding a straightforward and natural voice—are all notions that apply to building a brand in today's world.

Concept 3: Email and social networks provide unprecedented scale and leverage. In particular, user-generated stories

are powerful marketing vehicles, and today we have ways to uncover and spread them as never before. The dynamic of 'friends-telling-friends' has enormous potential for brand building; it is word-of-mouth with massive scale. Smart marketers are finding innovative ways to get users to share their personal tales with the community.

Concept 4: Community management is becoming a 'mission critical' function. In customer relationships, the new world order is about community, conversation and story sharing. We should no longer be asking ourselves how we can reach customers or prospects with our sales and marketing messages.

A more appropriate question for today is: How can we use the entire spectrum of communication technology to aid us in creating meaningful and ongoing conversations with our community?

In today's world, companies should seek to facilitate the brand conversation, not to dominate it. Marketers should treat community management as a process of relationship building and prospect management. In the long term, relationship building allows a company to understand its customers, and it fosters trust among all stakeholders.

Concept 5: In the world of e-marketing, transparency pays. We live in a world of extraordinary openness and access to information, a world where it is increasingly important to tell a straight and honest story. People today are cynical about anything that looks fake and someone is always ready to blow the whistle on any brand story that proves to be unauthentic.

The companies that thrive in this new world will be those who consistently deliver what they promise and engage a broad user community in an ongoing and productive dialogue. Organize a truly open community around your brand. If your product or service is outstanding, your customers now have the power to let the world know. Every organization should learn to see the loss of control over its brand messages, the necessity of co-creating their story with a wider community, as an opportunity. If your messages are clear and authentic, if the experience you provide to consumers is first-rate, you can let users speak for you. Let them tell their stories. Embrace transparency and let it work to your advantage!

Chapter-by-chapter contents:

Chapter 1 is an introduction that tells the story of how this book came to be.

Chapter 2, 'The power of story', is a discussion of some of the reasons why storytelling is such a powerful communication tool. Since the beginning of time, humans have loved to share their stories. Today, the internet in general—and social media and email in particular—provide vehicles for spreading stories as never before.

Chapter 3, 'Leadership and branding: the similarities', explains why the principles the author has developed in his leadership coaching also apply directly to marketing and branding.

Chapter 4, 'The current state of branding – some trends', enumerates five trends that are changing the world of marketing in general, and internet marketing in particular.

Chapter 5, 'Managing the community', provides ideas about how any organization can use the powerful combination of email, social media and storytelling for managing interaction with its brand community.

Chapter 6, 'The Case of Filofax' is an interview with product manager Jessica Stephens, a conversation that touches on many of the book's major topics.

