



[MEGA POST] The 30 most important takeaways from the three best marketing books released in 2018...

Posted by [Derek A. Lackey, Editor](#) / January 08, 2019

It was another incredibly interesting year of turmoil, change and debate in marketing land.

On the face of it our industry seems to be swaying towards anti-intellectualism and vain 'thought leaders'. We often focus on tactics more than timeless principles, and fail to learn from the past.

But if you scratch under the surface, there are enough reasoned, intelligent, evidence led marketers fighting the good fight.

People like Ritson, Alps, Binet & Field and Edwards are at the top of their game and not afraid to call bullshit. Unfortunately there's plenty of bullshit to be called. Though we can debate the merits of our current media landscape, it's hugely helpful to have access to this calibre of marketing thinkers via Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube lectures, online articles, courses and of course books. And holy shit what a truly golden year it was for marketing books. Three stone cold classics were released.

Firstly, Les Binet and Sarah Carter celebrated 50 years of account planning by releasing 'How Not To Plan', an epic read consisting of the best advice from their renowned Admap columns.

Secondly, Wiemer Snijders did marketing a great service by getting some of the brightest marketing minds to contribute to 'Eat Your Greens'. And then at the back end of the year, Binet & Field came back with their long awaited follow up to Media In Focus, 'Effectiveness In Context', a guide for planning effective marketing that's full of excellent research and advice.

I once heard of a famous 'social media guru' offering day long classes that cost 5000. For less than 100, these three books give the greatest bang for buck that any marketer could want. Seriously, if you haven't bought all three, make it a resolution to do so. And read them cover to cover.

When I read great books, in order to cement some of the learning in my own head, I try to take notes during and after reading. What follows is 30 of the most important things I jotted down. Interestingly, there's plenty of overlap too.

At the beginning of one of the books, there's a great quote:

"Always read something that will make you look good if you die in the middle of it"

These three all achieve that status.

Enjoy.

(Note: Each quote is taken directly from the book. For some, I've used slight editorial licence to help contextualise it. The paragraph after each quote is my attempt at a brief explanation using my own thoughts and some snippets from the book. Please excuse my horrendous photography skills!)

How Not To Plan



1) "To maximise growth and profitability, talking to your existing customers isn't enough."

Reach is strongly correlated with effectiveness. Too often we focus on increasing purchase frequency and driving 'loyalty'. Loyalty does exist, but it's more a function of inertia. If you want unfailing loyalty, get a dog. Penetration is a far better goal generally. Don't be seduced by the loyalty myth.

2) "Conscious beliefs have less influence on real people's behaviour than most marketers think."

When asked in a survey, people will tell you they're fully in control, but we tend to make most purchase decisions in a low involvement, system 1 manner. So it's better to presume that most people don't have strong beliefs about brands. Focus on driving emotion, fame and social proof. Real people don't think about consciously about brands much.

3) "One of the great lessons in marketing is that things don't always need to make sense."

In our search for rationality and repeatability, we've become far too concerned with making sense. We're in danger of reducing everything to logical and measured, stripping out all the magic. Often, the most brand value is created from things with no logic or function. It's more important to be distinctive than truly different. So nonsense sells. It's sensible not to make sense. Just ask PG Tips' monkeys, Sugar Puffs' Honey Monster, Cadbury's gorilla or the Smash Martians. Variance in creative builds mental availability.



4) "Most of us want brands to make our lives easier, then get out of the way."

When you're working for a company, it's easy to fool yourself into believing that everyone outside the company feels strongly towards it. But most people don't care about most brands. Most brands are heuristics, they help us shortcut decision making in a way that 'satisfices'. People don't want 'relationships' with most brands, no matter what your social media agency might say. Brand 'lovers' might have had many books written about them, but they'll always be the exception to the rule.

5) "Marketing that appears effective in the short term can lose you money in the long term."

In an era of short-termism, many brands have engaged in scorched earth direct response tactics, particularly with digital. Incessant retargeting with high frequency might look good on a spreadsheet, but it's annoying and can ruin your brand in the long term. Don't be fooled by short term response measures. Use the 60:40 rule of brand building:sales activation. And remember, excessive activation damages brands.

6) "We don't understand our own thoughts, feelings or behaviour. We all

lie sometimes."

Focus groups are like watching dolphins in captivity. People's behaviour changes when they know they're being examined and watched, and group dynamics have a big impact. We're notoriously bad descriptors of our own behaviour. This isn't to dismiss focus groups, but make sure you're very careful with how you use them. Pay attention to how people say something and also what they don't say.

7) "Never assume your problem is unique."

Most markets are pretty similar, many brands are more alike than they'd care to admit. We have a tendency not to learn from history, and thus we're doomed to repeat it. Others will have faced this problem before, so know your 'case history'. Look at similar brands, learn from those who have gone before and have some humility. Steal with pride from other areas and try to find consilience between disparate areas.

8) "Sometimes new technology does make the old one extinct. But more often than not, the two find niches or work in symbiosis"

Think in a...

[Read The Full Article](#)