

EGGHEAD MARKETING

David Vinjamuri's 'Accidental Branding' Profiles

Purposeful Entrepreneurs

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I've been mulling over a few chapters of David Vinjamuri's upcoming book 'Accidental Branding'. Very worth reading. What jumps out is a common lesson: *so much of what they taught me in business school is wrong or incomplete*. There's not a business listed that wouldn't get shot down by the peanut gallery in an entrepreneurship class.

Vinjamuri covers entrepreneurs ranging from J. Peterman to Craig Newmark (yep, the Craig with the List). 'Be your own customer' is one of the key common threads identified. Each entrepreneur profiled created a product based on a focus group of one: What product would I use? What would provide value to me as a customer?

As marketers we struggle with questions of what our customers really want. By being your own customer you handily avoid that problem. I recall a b-school entrepreneurship class that roundly ridiculed an entrepreneur named David Thibodeaux for creating a line of gourmet peanut butter based on his own taste. No market research, no market sizing, just a vision that there was something better than Jif out there.

Of course, another characteristic of accidental brands is that they take a long time (10-20 years to hit \$20MM) to build. If you're looking for a quick cashout, that could be a deterrent. But if you really love peanut butter, 10-20 years can fly by.

What do you love enough to do for 10-20 years? The brands may have been built accidentally, but the choices these entrepreneurs make are both personal and purposeful.

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