

COMMUNICATORS ANNONYMOUS

Accidental Branding

By Lauren Vargus

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The stories of how to catch lightning in a bottle are captured in [Accidental Branding](#) by New York University professor, David Vinjamuri. The inspiration for the book came from a class project asking students to write about entrepreneurs who had created large consumer brands without any marketing training. Some of the stories that made it into the book were discovered by the students. Vinjamuri did not include any stories which he did not personally interview the entrepreneur. Each entrepreneur (1) is an individual who is not trained in marketing that must create the brand, (2) must experience the problem the brand solves and (3) must control the brand for at least 10 years. This twist lends authenticity in the book and the inside scoop to winning personality.

Right out of the gate, Vinjamuri talks about his battle with the status quo marketing practices. Like Vinjamuri, my students are working professionals, not MBAs. Using this lens, he and his class identified traits not taught at Harvard Business School:

- **Do sweat the small stuff** - "I learned from these entrepreneurs that it is just this attention to detail that makes these brands authentic." Ensure you know every way the consumer will interact with the brand.
- **Pick a fight** - "Defining the "other" ...helps define the brand." Draw a line in the sand to demonstrate passion and trust.
- **Be your own customer** - "Accidental brands are almost always created when people solve their own problems."
- **Be unnaturally persistent** - "Unless you are extraordinarily lucky, though, your path to success will start slowly and involve a period of significant questioning and self-examination."
- **Build a myth** - "The trick in building your founding myth is selecting the facts that you want to tell and deciding how best to share them."
- **Be faithful** - "You just need to stay connected to the values that got you to start your business in the first place." ***dig this one

The book begins with the story of the eccentric storyteller, J. Peterman then introduces you to the contrarian, tinkerer, visionary and strategist, pugilist, perfectionist and anarchist. I will be using this book in an upcoming class and encourage all of my readers to [rediscover accidental branding genius](#).

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