

SHOTGUN MARKETING BLOG

Accidental Branding

By Chris Houchens

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David Vinjamuri recently sent me a copy of his new book, Accidental Branding which is excellent. Long time readers of this blog know that I declare that brand strategy is always deliberate, but that brand image is ultimately created by the end consumer. There are no accidents in branding -- only incidents of companies not cultivating the brand and helping their customers develop it.

David's book title comes from the fact that all the companies he profiles are strongly associated with an individual. These individuals have seen their brands develop over time and have a personal journey with the brand that is intertwined with their lives.

What David tries to show is that all these brands have developed a (sometimes small) group of dedicated followers who stuck with the brand even through rough times. Since the brand/business is so personal to the owners he profiled, there is an innate sense of quality and pride that leaks out and the brand authenticity is built in.

The companies that he profiles are all brands that you've heard of like Columbia Sportswear and Baby Einstein as well as lesser known but popular brands like Clif Bar and the Art of Shaving. My favorite chapters of the book were his discussions with Craig Newmark of Craigslist, Roxanne Quimby of Burt's Bees (he also talked to Burt), and my fellow Kentuckian -- John Peterman of J. Peterman.

The book is not a typical business book (see change this manifesto). It consists of several good stories that are enjoyable even if people don't care about branding. David doesn't preach mantra in the stories. He just lays them out well and lets you learn what is obvious to you. He does begin and end the book with some of his own gleanings from his visits. Another great thing about the book is that you don't have to read sequentially (I didn't), but just take the stories and ingest them one at a time.

If you're beginning to build a brand or stepping back to take a new look at a current brand, this would be a good book to start reading.

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