

STEFAN'S BRANDING BLOG

Accidental Branding

By Stefan

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I like to see the idea of [branding as a fair exchange of value](#) surfacing in various places and minds (I wasn't the first one to think of it, but I love it.) I also like a nice story--or more. That's how I found myself holding my breath while reading a book on accidents. Fortunately, those were [accidents in branding](#), in the form of brand stories told by a good [raconteur](#) (and teacher of brand-related things, just like myself) who met the respective interesting brand founders, got them talking and did his share of research on the side.

So here's a few takeaways from *Accidental Branding*:

1. Empathy. "Be your own customer." Either walk in someone else's shoes and do it well, or if you can't, think of something you'd use and love yourself.
2. Focus. "Don't appeal to everyone, but get delighted, raving fans." Pleasing everyone is the safest way to kill valuable ideas, products and services of any kind.
3. Trust. You can't beat the trustability of a business owner who says: "My exit strategy is death."
4. Passion. "The clerk... seemed more interested in making sure I understood how to shave properly than he was in selling me shaving balm."
5. Familiar symbols are powerful "Once people understood that a mother who was the world's most demanding boss ran Columbia, they believed that the products could be both tough and inexpensive."
6. Creative tension. "Every good entrepreneur... feels like the wolf is just outside the door, no matter how successful his or her business."

A word of warning in the end. Two, actually:

1. Only a handful of accidents are fortunate. Failure is the rule when starting a business, everywhere in the world. Be prepared to face it, if you start up something.
2. Big brands are built and driven differently. They're less sexy than many small ones, but they dominate the market--it's in the way of nature for the mediocrity to be more prevalent. Don't get carried away by the breeze after reading this book, if you're involved with a big one. But do keep that breeze awake if you dream of starting a brand of your own--it's your only chance to succeed.

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