

Marketing

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AVOIDING THE THOUGHT THAT HAS BEEN THOUGHT BEFORE.

By Eric Blais

Beyond Disruption : Changing the Rules in the Marketplace BY JEAN-MARIE DRU (Wiley, 2002)

Cynics might apply Dru's framework this way to sum up his book:

Convention: "Creative" agencies develop proprietary processes to mask their lack of strategic discipline.

Disruption: True thought leaders think different without a rigid process.

Vision: Deliver TBWA's credentials presentation in book form.

On the surface, disruptive thinking (breaking the convention of advertising, marketing and business) isn't much different than "thinking outside the box". Yet this is a book CAMPAIGN magazine in the U.K. called "the must read marketing book".

Beyond Disruption is a book about avoiding the thought that has been thought before and that alone, in my view, makes it a must read. So what if it's also a way to elevate TBWA's reputation for innovative strategic thinking? One of Dru's business partners says it plainly: "Our objective is to be seen as smart thinkers that happen to do great ads. Not by accident."

The follow-up to Dru's initial book which introduced the concept of disruption (Disruption : Overturning Conventions and Shaking Up the Marketplace, Wiley, 1996), Beyond Disruption is about knocking a category out of its complacency and taking it forward by throwing away the rulebook and starting from scratch.

One of the most interesting section – Disrupting Marketing Conventions – could be the basis for an entire book. Written by David Hackworthy, the head of TBWA's planning department in New York, it challenges conventional marketing practices. If you're pushing for customer-centric thinking in your organization believing that everything starts with the consumer, consider this disruptive approach: brands are customer-informed, but they are idea-led. If Starbucks had asked consumers how they want their coffee, it's doubtful that they would have requested a double short caramel skim cappuccino. By also quoting Henry Ford's famous remark "If I had asked the public what they wanted, they would have asked for a faster horse", the author reminds us that disruptive marketing isn't so new after all. And that's what makes this book so much more than a clever way to package an agency's credentials.

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