

Marketing

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ADVICE FROM A REAL BRAND GURU

By Eric Blais

Brand Portfolio Strategy: Creating Relevance, Differentiation, Energy, Leverage, and Clarity
BY DAVID A. AAKER (Free Press, 2004)

It's fair to say that David Aaker wrote the book on branding. In fact, he has published 11 books on the subject, from *Managing Brand Equity* (1991) to *Strategic Market Management* (2001). While so many books on branding make for good bathroom reading, Aaker's book belongs on your office bookshelf. Using detailed case studies, Aaker demonstrates how successful brand portfolio management works. He makes sense of the often confusing and misused branding jargon we hear too much of these days: master brands, endorser brands, branded energizers, etc.

Some will argue that his latest work recycles ideas from his previous books. Aaker himself acknowledges that it includes about 20% of the content from his past work. Others will see this book as one more in a series that enhances the profile of Aaker's consulting firm Prophet. However, most will agree that in an industry known for its liberal use of the word "guru," Aaker deserves the label. His academic approach to brands (he is a former professor at the Haas School of Business at the University of California-Berkeley) and how they are ultimately linked to business strategy offers a road map to structuring a brand portfolio strategy.

From *Lovemarks* to *Purple Cow*, there is no shortage of ideas and constructs about brands. Aaker's jargon might not be as sexy, but his insights and practical advice are indispensable to anyone who creates and nurtures brands.

Eric Blais, executive vice-president, chief intelligence officer at Toronto's MacLaren McCann, writes monthly on the 10 must-read books for marketers