

Marketing

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THE 10 MOST IMPORTANT BOOKS MARKETERS SHOULD READ AND WHY

Eric Blais, executive vice-president, chief intelligence officer at Toronto's MacLaren McCann, is well known for his enthusiastic consumption of books on marketing. We invited him to share his choice of the 10 best. Each month for the next 10, we'll carry a mini review, in no particular order, of Blais's "must reads" for marketers.

Search "marketing" books on Amazon.ca and you'll be offered almost 20,000 titles. How then does one narrow the list down to the 10 most important books marketers should read? Take away books written for self-promotion published by so-called "vanity publishers" and you're still left with an impressive library.

There are plenty of catchy, thought-provoking marketing books listing rules, sins and laws. Many of them are entertaining, some are insightful, but few are inspiring. My short list is composed of books I actually use. Books with models, theories and actionable ideas you can apply in marketing decision-making. They're business tools in book form. Not all are marketing books, but all are books marketers should read.

Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies

BY JAMES C. COLLINS & JERRY I. PORRAS (HarperCollins Canada, 1994).

This is one of those classic business books you refer to as you would a dictionary. Collins and Porras of Stanford's Graduate School of Business set out to define what makes visionary companies- "premier institutions, the crown jewels in their industries, widely admired by their peers and having a track record of making significant impact around the world. Visionary companies display a remarkable resiliency, an ability to bounce back from adversity. As a result, visionary companies attain extraordinary long-term performance."

The authors' extensive research into 18 visionary companies not only provides valuable insights into some of America's most successful organizations, it shatters a dozen common myths. Myth #2: Visionary companies require great and charismatic leaders. Reality: A charismatic leader is not required and, in fact, can be detrimental to a company's long-term prospect. Myth #10: The most successful companies focus primarily on beating the competition. Reality: They focus on beating themselves.

Built to Last is also about the principles that guide great organizations: Cult-like Cultures, Try a Lot of Stuff and Keep What Works, and Good Enough Never Is. Of all the success factors discussed in *Built to Last*, BHAG is the concept that has achieved the most "traction" to use an overused buzzword. Big Hairy Audacious Goals "which engage people, reach out and grab them in the gut" are the tangible, energizing and ambitious goals visionary companies set for themselves.

If brand strategy stems from corporate vision and strategy, then *Built to Last* is an essential tool for any marketer looking for a checklist of what drives visionary organizations.