

Classic Books that Really Matter

(if you Truly want to be a Marketing Leader)

Prof. dr. Rudy Moenaert

website: www.moenaert.be

twitter: @moenaert

You cannot lead in the market, if you don't lead in thinking. The books below are books I often recommend to students and business clients. The numbering does not suggest any ranking in terms of quality - I find them all very, very good. By definition, this is an eclectic and incomplete list. But you'll find out that these books contain many useful take-aways for the marketing practitioner and the business executive.

Ron Adner. *The wide lens* (2012) This is the first book that offers a managerially useful perspective on how to compete and innovate in ecosystems. Adner argues that we need to move from thinking and acting in terms of value propositions towards thinking and acting in terms of value blueprints. Such a value blueprint is "*a map that makes your ecosystem and your dependencies explicit*". To know one's dependencies, now, that's a major asset! In my opinion the best marketing and innovation book of the last decade.

Seth Godin. *Purple cow* (2002). The summary is straightforward : Tom Peters (*The pursuit of wow*) meets Ries & Trout (*Positioning*) meets Geoffrey Moore (*Inside the tornado*; see below). But his message is a compelling one: "*Be remarkable*". Godin's observation - "*Safe is Dangerous*" - should be on the desk of every business executive. Lots of fun examples. Uses the same turbo-powered language as Jack Trout.

The Disney Institute. *Be our guest* (2001). When Peters and Waterman hinted at the supreme service orientation of Disney in their blockbuster *In search of excellence*, keen business executives sought advice from Disney. This book is truly a gem, and most likely the best book on service management ever written. The core elements of Disney's business model approach are explained (the cast, the setting, the processes) and linked to the service themes.

Steven Van Belleghem. *The Conversation Manager* (2010). This book catapulted Steven Van Belleghem to stardom. Rightly so. There are very few people who provide such accessible and groundbreaking inspiration on social media and digital marketing as Steven. Following this publication, the author never looked back and produced equally innovative and successful sequels (*The Conversation Company* - 2012; *When digital becomes human* - 2014).

Julian Birkinshaw. *Reinventing Management* (2010). The greatest contribution to management thinking since the early work of Henry Mintzberg in the seventies,

and Garreth Morgan's masterpiece *Images of Organization* in the eighties. Most likely, you will not agree with everything Birkinshaw proclaims. But this book really forces the reader to think seriously about what management is all about. "*The concept of management has been gradually corrupted over the years, partly because of the success of large industrial companies and their particular model of management, partly because of the popularity of leadership, which has grown at management's expense*".

Vineet Nayar. *Employees first, customers second* (2010). This book focuses on the most important resource of a market-driven company: its employees! The title should not mislead you: "*When a company puts its employees first, the customer actually does ultimately come first and gains the greatest benefit, but in a far more transformative way than through traditional 'customer care' programs and the like*". This book, based on the author's experience as CEO of HCL Technologies, is about designing (and branding!) organizational change to compete more successfully in the 'value zone'.

Jack Trout. *The power of simplicity* (1999). You like Trout's work, or you dislike it. There's rarely a middle ground. I happen to like it a lot. *The power of simplicity* is not a scientific piece of work (it actually makes fun of it), but it opens with a brilliant observation: "*Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication*" (Leonardo da Vinci). If there was ever a book that demonstrates that marketing is about common sense, this definitely must be it. Other classics by the same author involve: *The new positioning* by Trout & Rivkin, *The 22 immutable laws of marketing* by Ries & Trout, *Marketing warfare* by Ries and Trout, and *Trout on strategy* by – you've guessed it – Jack Trout.

Scott Berkun. *The myths of innovation* (2010). This book provides one of the most entertaining reads in the field of innovation I have ever encountered. It delivers exactly what the title promises and provides the reader with a fresh view on innovation. "*Innovative ideas are rarely rejected on their merits; they're rejected because of how they make people feel*".

Nagle, Hogan & Zale. *The strategy and tactics of pricing* (5th ed., 2011). The authors are experienced consultants, and have integrated the scientific evidence and their vast experience into a very accessible handbook on the subject. I particularly liked the 3rd edition (2002) - the section on price-sensitivity analysis in that edition is a must read for every marketer.

Geoffrey A. Moore. *Inside the tornado* (1995). Old wine in new bags? Here's your quintessential example in publication country. Moore adopts the old innovation adoption curve, combines it with some peculiar aspects of high-technology management (reframing the economic concept of network externalities), and provides lots of examples from B2B markets. The result: a truly great read on the subject of technology marketing.

Dan Ariely. *Predictably Irrational* (2008). What can I say? Whatever does not kill you, only makes you stronger. An accident at a young age left the author severely burnt. Ever since that moment, he maintained a distance from society, but remained intrigued by its members. This book on behavioral economics is one

of the best books I have read the last ten years. Astonishingly good! Another outstanding read on irrationality is *Sway* by Ori and Rom Brafman.

W. Chan Kim & Renée Mauborgne. *Blue ocean strategy* (2005). If you have read their former blockbuster articles in the Harvard Business Review, don't read this book (and buy for instance Kumar's *Marketing as strategy* or McGrath and MacMillan's *Marketbusters*). If you haven't read those articles, then this book will offer you an insightful journey into the field of competitive differentiation and value mapping. It is a modern day classic, and you cannot show up at a professional marketing reception without at least knowing the contribution of this book.

Eric Ries. *The lean startup* (2011). It may seem ironic, but the field of innovation requires re-invention. Merck's head of research stated as recently as 2013 that "We do 21st century biology in our laboratories and then do clinical trials that Hippocrates would have been quite comfortable with." This book by Eric Ries has become a cult classic in the field of innovation. In essence, he shows how constant experimentation improves innovation.

Jean-Noël Kapferer. *The strategic brand management* (5th ed., 2012). An exquisite reader on the subject of branding. A little more synthesis would have been appreciated. Science-based, and many European examples. Equally rewarding books on the subject of branding, with less European examples, concern David Aaker's *Building strong brands* and Kevin Lane Keller's *Strategic brand management*.

Lawrence Friedman. *Go to market strategy* (2002). A down-to-earth practical guide on channel strategy. It extends his earlier thinking (*The Channel Advantage*) into a hands-on perspective on channel management. An equally good read on the subject is provided in Kasturi Rangan's *Transforming your go-to-market strategy* (2006)

Clayton M. Christensen. *The innovator's dilemma* (1997). The subtitle says it all : "When new technologies cause great firms to fail". Surely, it has been done before (e.g., Abernathy's 'Productivity Dilemma'), but it is entertaining and fact-based. This book propelled Christensen to stardom in the business community.

Chip Heath & Dan Heath. *Made to Stick* (2007) Following in the footsteps' of Malcolm Gladwell's huge blockbuster "*The tipping point*", these authors investigate how messages can be made more sticky. Read this book! Study the SUCCES methodology! Apply its insights! You will never forget the curse of knowledge. And you'll read the nicest business sentence of the last decade: "Abstraction is the luxury of the expert"...

Dan Pink. *Drive* (2009). This book grabs your attention immediately. He cleverly intertwines scientific studies with common observations to build a theory of motivation for the modern professional. The key dimensions of passion? Autonomy, mastery and purpose. Expect some great oneliners, e.g. 'Mediocrity is expensive'.

Rudy Moenaert & Henry Robben. *Marketing met Ballen.* (2016) I'll let you be the judge on this one ☺. The book discusses marketing leadership, using the

DMR-framework (Discovery - Management - Respect). Its basic aim: to help restore the power of marketing in organizations. The book is in Dutch; we're planning an English version in 2016/17.