

THE BIG STORY

THE YEAR OF READING SERIOUSLY#

How one year of concentrated consumption of business books can change your business forever#

STORY BY INVISION MAGAZINE

A# At INVISION, we believe that the same way that most great writers are voluminous readers of literature, most great businesspeople are avid readers of business books. ¶

That's why this month, we're challenging you to undertake a very special project — dubbed "the Year of Reading Seriously" (or YRS for short). ¶

The YRS is a journey that will take you exciting new places. One where the same-old, same-old simply won't do. A state where your goal isn't merely satisfying clients, it's making them wildly passionate about your service. It's a vision quest to become a smarter marketer, a savvy retailer, and a competitor who stands out from *any other* in your market. ¶

To reach this destination, you will read 52 books in the course of a year. You'll create a vast mental library of business-changing ideas for your future. ¶

What will it take? Reserve five hours a week to read the average 250-page business book. Then save an extra hour for taking notes. (Include favorite passages from the books, plus any ideas about your business — directly related to the book or not — you had while reading.) Over the course of the year, you'll rescan these notes regularly to ensure the lessons you've learned have stuck. ¶

Can't squeeze six hours per week from your schedule? Understood. Instead, commit to a half-YRS (a book every two weeks) or even a quarter-YRS (a book every four weeks). The fact is, *whatever* focused reading project you undertake will pay huge dividends. Guaranteed. ¶

To get you started, the INVISION team has summarized the best advice from a few favorite business books we've read in recent years. Then we asked eyecare pros to write about books that impacted them. Finally, we'll give you a YRS reading list with 52 suggestions from a wide range of business disciplines. ¶

Ready to permanently reset your business outlook? Let the YRS be your catalyst. The journey of ten thousand pages begins with but a single word, and your Year of Reading Seriously begins ... right ... *now*. ¶



THE 22 IMMUTABLE LAWS OF BRANDING

How to Build a Product or Service into a World-Class Brand

by Al Ries and Laura Ries | PUBLISHED: 1998

Summary by David Squires

While this classic book is written from a macro perspective with case studies featuring national consumer brands, its principles still apply well to smaller markets. If you're the only horse in a one-optometrist town, you probably won't need these principles. Be a generalist and love all, serve all. But if you're in a competitive market and want to differentiate yourself with a strong professional brand, the laws in *Immutable Branding* can help you achieve your goal.

THE LAW OF LEADERSHIP/CREDENTIALS

It's better to be first than to be better. If you are first (or biggest, or highest-rated), make sure that is *always* mentioned in your marketing — for example, "Raccoon City's Original Optometrist Since 1933." If you're not first — don't worry, there are 21 other laws in this book that can help you overcome this disadvantage.

THE LAW OF THE CATEGORY

If you can't be first in a category, set up a new category you *can* be first in. If you're entering a market, don't ask yourself "How is my new

service better than the competition's?" Instead, ask "First *what*?" Are you the first OD offering mobile exams in your town? The first vision-improvement clinic for athletes in your county? First eyewear atelier with monthly trunk shows and visits from top designers?

THE LAW OF THE OPPOSITE

If you're shooting for second place in a market, your strategy is determined by the leader. Your goal is to turn their strength into a weakness. Too many potential No. 2 brands try to emulate the leader. This (usually) is an error. You must present yourself as the *alternative*.

Beck's couldn't be the first German imported beer in America. So it repositioned Lowenbrau by saying, "You've tasted the German beer that's the most popular in America. Now taste the German beer that's the most popular in GERMANY." How can YOU position yourself against your market's leader?

THE LAW OF FOCUS

It's the ultimate marketing sacrifice. You "burn" your way into customers' minds by narrowing your focus to a single word or concept. Federal Express was able to claim the word "overnight" by sacrificing its product line and focusing on overnight package delivery only. By chasing after everything, you stand for nothing. One word you *can't* claim? Quality. *Everybody* thinks they stand for quality. And, as a result, nobody does.

THE LAW OF EXCLUSIVITY

Two companies cannot own the same word in the prospect's mind. How could you own "contact lenses" in your market? You could ensure that you have the widest selection. Or offer unlimited free trials so people can see which product is best suited for them. Or provide training sessions for customers who have never worn contacts. Or you might become the Ortho-K specialist in your area. (In a crowded market, could you own the word "Ortho-K"?)

THE LAW OF THE NAME/GENERIC

Don't include generic terms in your brand name. Intelligent Chip Company is a lousy brand name, but Intel Corp is a great one. In optical retail, Warby Parker is an example of avoiding the generic — there's not an "eye," a "vision," or an "opt-" to be found in the

company name. And if you expand your brand into a new area, create a new name instead of trying to milk the old one. Want a kids' practice? Don't call it "Zimmerman's Children's Optometry" if your last name is "Zimmerman." Instead, come up with something completely different — O. Crisp's, or 20/20 Roger, or maybe even Dr. Z's.

THE LAW OF CANDOR

When you admit a negative, the prospect gives you a positive. Candor surprises people, and gets them to lower their guard. Let's say your ad begins, "OK, we admit it. We have the most expensive eyewear in town." The prospect thinks, "Most expensive? Well, they must be *really* good!"

THE LAW OF COLOR/SHAPE

Pick your brand color according to the emotion you want customers to feel, not your personal preferences. (But if you have a main competitor, use the color opposite of theirs.) Stick to that color exclusively. Men tend to prefer cooler colors, women warmer ones. People in warm climates prefer bright colors, those in cooler climates prefer muted ones.

THE LAW OF PUBLICITY AND ADVERTISING

The birth of brand is achieved with publicity, not advertising. (And publicity comes much more easily when you're first in a category, as mentioned above.) If you're the first sports vision clinic in your area, your first year's budget should be spent on publicity — getting coverage in local media, free services to attract well-known clients. Once you've gotten on people's radars, your strategy changes, and advertising becomes more important than publicity.



ALSO READ THE 22 IMMUTABLE LAWS OF MARKETING

by Al Ries and Jack Trout
PUBLISHED: 1993
UPDATED: 2002



BE OUR GUEST

Perfecting the Art of Customer Service

by the Disney Institute
with Theodore Kinni

PUBLISHED: 2001

Summary by Dr. Tanya Gill

Dr. Tanya Gill of Oakland Vision Center in Oakland, CA, recently visited Disneyland with her young nephews and was inspired to read the Disney Institute's *Be Our Guest*. "Disneyland is — in fact — a magical place," she says. "How can we bring that magic into our eyecare businesses? 'Practical magic' — which is Disney-speak for customer service — is really the art of connecting all of the little pieces to make up the whole. The book takes you on that journey. Here are some of my favorite and easy-to-incorporate points."

CREATE AN EXPERIENCE

We are now in a new age of competition called the Experience Economy. Frames, lenses, contact lenses and medical services are simply props to engage the patient in this new era. Patients are looking for value — but it's the value of the experience that lingers in their memory.

SPEAK TO THE HEART

We get so wrapped up in the daily tasks of our jobs, sometimes we lose sight of the bigger picture and our common purpose. I recently asked my receptionist what she did for her job. She thought about it and said "I answer phones and schedule appointments." She was correct, but when I told her "your new job description is to help our patients see more clearly," her face lit up, she smiled, and said, "Yes, that feels *amazing*!" Motivate people by speaking to their hearts instead of their brains.

BE FRIENDLY UP FRONT

You never get a second chance to make a first impression and it's usually your front-desk person

who makes or breaks this. The Disney not-so-secret tip for providing friendly service is to hire friendly people. Make sure your front-desk staff is naturally friendly.

CLEAN SELLS

Everything speaks to customers. A cluttered office definitely gives a different impression than a clean, organized one. Think about the difference in appearance and feeling you have when you walk into an Nike store versus a Payless shoe store. Maybe it's time for a spring cleaning or a remodel?

A CAN-DO CULTURE

"My way or the highway" isn't always the best answer if you're trying to grow a business. Foster a sense of ownership and expand the pool of creative input by regularly encouraging employees to contribute ideas.

SWEAT THE DETAILS

Creating magic is a lot of work, and it's entirely dependent on attention to details. Dusty eyeglass lenses in your dispensary? A messy nest of exposed computer wires? Forgot to say goodbye and thank you to your patient as they were leaving? These are the details, and they constantly need attention.

THINK VISUALLY

Language is not always spoken. Other common languages include color, shape and form. How about painting one of those boring white office walls a bright color to make it pop? Maybe tear down an eyewear brand poster and replace it with a piece of art that shows off your personality?

OPTIMIZE THE QUEUE

Waiting too long for the doctor is usually the most common patient complaint. Although the wait in your office is never quite as long as the line for "It's A Small World," patients still get annoyed. How can we make the wait time less annoying and more entertaining or educational? Maybe Wi-Fi in reception — so people can surf or get some work done — and a Bluetooth sound system in the exam room so patients can listen to their own music while they wait?

DECISIVE

How to Make Better Choices in Life and Work

by Chip and Dan Heath

PUBLISHED 2013

Summary by David Squires

What makes us so indecisive? And why, even when we spend so much time worrying over our choices, do we make so many wrong ones? *Decisive* attempts to answer those questions. Best-selling authors the Heath brothers (*Made to Stick* and *Switch*) point out the most common flaws in the way we make decisions, both in our lives and businesses, and present guidelines for choosing more wisely. Below, some of the book's key ideas:

KNOW YOUR ENEMIES

The four villains of decision-making: 1.) **Narrow framing:** You encounter a choice. But you frame the choice too narrowly, causing you to lose potential options; 2.) **Confirmation bias:** You analyze your options. But confirmation bias pushes you toward information that supports your original preference; 3.) **Short-term emotion:** When presented with a choice, short-term emotion (unwarranted fear, or even a bad mood because your favorite sports team lost last night) push you toward a wrong decision; 4.) **Overconfidence:** You commit to a path. But often you will be overconfident about how



"Disneyland is a magical place. How can we bring that magic into our eyecare businesses?" DR. TANYA GILL

DECISIVE

HOW TO MAKE BETTER CHOICES IN LIFE AND WORK

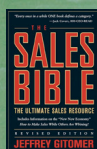


CHIP HEATH & DAN HEATH
THE BESTSELLING AUTHORS OF *SWITCH* AND *MADE TO STICK*

THE ULTIMATE ONE-YEAR READING CHALLENGE

The 52 books on this list are not necessarily the "best" business books ever. They're just really good books from a range of disciplines that we think will make you a better business owner. Items on this list range from very recent to more than 30 years old, with a prejudice toward more recent works. In many cases, listed books have updated editions, so be sure to get the latest version. Oh, one more thing: Consider this list a *starting point*. Feel free to add/subtract books to suit your interests. That's it. Start reading!

Sales Bible (1994)
BY JEFFREY GITOMER
The holy tome of modern selling.



SALESMANSHIP

Book Yourself Solid (2006)
BY MICHAEL PORT
Fill up your appointment book, even if you hate marketing.

To Sell Is Human (2013)
BY DANIEL PINK
In the new sales landscape, honesty, transparency and fairness rule.

Secrets of Closing the Sale (1982)
BY ZIG ZIGLAR
To get what you want, give your customers what they want.

Likeable Social Media (2011)
BY DAVE KERPER
At the social media party, don't be a pushy, sale-sy bore.

The Power of Visual Storytelling (2014)
BY EKATERINA WALTER AND JESSICA GIOGLIO
Use images and video to draw more customers.

SOCIAL MEDIA



The Thank-You Economy (2011)
BY GARY VAYNERCHUK
Care first, then sell later to succeed online.

Jab, Jab, Jab, Right Hook (2013)
BY GARY VAYNERCHUK
On social media, pace yourself, and pick your spots.

MERCHANDISING

Why We Buy (2000)
BY PACO UNDERHILL
The "butt-brush" effect and more adventures in retail anthropology.



Buyology (2008)
BY MARTIN LINDSTROM
A neuro-scientific view of the modern consumer.

The Paradox of Choice (2009)
BY BARRY SCHWARTZ
Fact: too much choice stresses customers out.

Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want (2007)
BY JAMES H. GILMORE AND B. JOSEPH PINE II
Authentic experiences keep customers coming back.

OPERATIONS

The E-Myth Revisited (2004)
BY MICHAEL GERBER
Organize your business to run itself. (Check out the edition for physicians, as well.)



Good to Great (2001)
BY JIM COLLINS
Be humble, and know what you're best at — then focus on that.

How the Mighty Fall (2009)
BY JIM COLLINS
Made it to the top of your market? Here's how to protect against decline.

Think Big, Act Small (2005)
BY JASON JENNINGS
Like *Good to Great*, but with a focus on smaller companies, like yours.

VISION & IDENTITY



Purple Cow (2003)
BY SETH GODIN
Your inspirational template for becoming truly unusual.

Blue Ocean Strategy (2005)
BY W. CHAN KIM AND RENÉE MAUBORGNE
Beat competition by creating a brand-new market.

Start with Why (2011)
BY SIMON SINEK
What inspires belief in customers and employees? *Your* vision.

Your Marketing Sucks (2005)
BY MARK STEVENS
Most ads are crusty, cliché-ridden nightmares. Here's how to avoid the trap.

Free Prize Inside! (2006)
BY SETH GODIN
Make your business stand out with the art of "edgecraft."

CUSTOMER SERVICE



Customer Satisfaction Is Worthless, Customer Loyalty Is Priceless (1998)
BY JEFFREY GITOMER
How to serve your butt off.

Be Our Guest (2001)
BY THE DISNEY INSTITUTE & THEODORE KINNI
More *INVISION* Brain Squad members recommended this book than any other.

Delivering Happiness (2010)
BY TONY HSIEH
Secrets from Zappos' customer-service (and corporate culture) revolutionary.

Hug Your Customers (2003)
BY JACK MITCHELL
A top retailer's guide to providing memorable experiences.

The Gifted Boss (1999)
BY DALE DAUTEN
Make people *love* working for you.

Difficult Conversations (2000)
BY DOUGLAS STONE, BRUCE PATTON, SHEILA HEEN
Stop fearing those tough talks with this insightful guide.

The Pursuit of Wow! (1994)
BY TOM PETERS
To rebuild your business, you must first destroy it.

Now, Discover Your Strengths (2001)
BY MARCUS BUCKINGHAM
Work goal: avoid what drains you, do what nourishes you.

Willpower (2011)
BY ROY F. BAUMEISTER AND JOHN TIERNEY
Your will is a muscle that can be trained. Whip it into shape now!

The Power of Habit (2012)
BY CHARLES DUHIGG
Understanding how bad habits are formed is key to eliminating them.

ATTITUDE

The Little Big Things (2010)
BY TOM PETERS
Hyperbolic, hyper-kinetic, but still inspirational.

Decisive (2013)
BY CHIP AND DAN HEATH
Bad decisions follow a formula. Here's how to end them.

MANAGEMENT



First Break All the Rules (1999)
BY MARCUS BUCKINGHAM & CURT COFFMAN
Hire talent, not experience. Build strengths, don't fix weaknesses.

Rework (2010)
BY JASON FRIED
Lot of fresh common sense for the modern business.

MENTAL SKILLS

The Way We're Working Isn't Working (2011)
BY TONY SCHWARTZ
Worn out? Here's how to work at your best ... forever.



MORE TO READ

Blink (2006)
BY MALCOLM GLADWELL ► Why first impressions matter way more than you think.

The Dip (2007)
BY SETH GODIN ► The opposite of quitting isn't continuing. It's doubling your efforts.

Drive (2011)
BY DANIEL H. PINK ► What motivates employees is much different than what you think.

The Four-Hour Workweek (2007)
BY TIM FERRISS ► OK, some dubious claims here. But useful on productivity and the power of experimentation.

Getting Things Done (2002)
BY DAVID ALLEN ► This whole-life-organizational system has become the modern standard.

Glengarry Glen Ross (1984)
BY DAVID MAMET ► What you don't want to do in sales management. But an incredible play.

Made to Stick (2007)
BY CHIP AND DAN HEATH ► Craft a story that customers believe in and won't forget.

Never Eat Alone (2005)
BY KEITH FERRAZZI ► Learn how to connect with "super-connectors" in your community.

Hey Whipple, Squeeze This! (2003)
BY LUKE SULLIVAN ► An ad exec dissects his creative process. Insightful and funny.

The Nordstrom Way (1996)
BY ROBERT SPECTOR ► Customer-

service lessons from the legendary retailer.

Don't Think Pink (2004)
BY LISA JOHNSON AND ANDREA LEARNED ► Tips for marketing that resonates with women.

Retail Superstars: Inside the 25 Best Independent Stores in America (2009)
BY GEORGE WHALIN ► Creative independent stores show you how to be different.

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the future will unfold.

NEVER OR NOT

Don't trust "whether or not" decisions. In fact, a little alarm bell should go off in your head when you see that phrase, reminding you to consider whether you're stuck in a narrow frame. If you're considering a major equipment purchase, don't frame the choice as "Should I buy this \$50,000 piece of equipment or not?" Instead, frame it as "Should I buy this \$50,000 piece of equipment or save the money for other purchases?" You'll be surprised by the number of times that simply reframing the question changes your ultimate decision.

TAKE AWAY OPTIONS

Stuck in a narrow frame? Take away one of the options with the Vanishing Options Test. Instead of asking "Should I fire Bob or not?" imagine you have to keep Bob on staff no matter what. What changes would you make if you had absolutely no choice but to continue working with this person?

NOW WIDEN THEM

To widen your options, find somebody who's solved your problem. Look for best practices in other businesses or "bright spots" from within your own life or business. Who on your staff has the fewest returns or remakes? What are they doing that might be different from other members of your staff?

CREATE A PLAYLIST

Your business probably has checklists. But does it have a *playlist*? A playlist is a ready-made list of questions you ask yourself to ensure you're generating fresh ideas and not overlooking options in a specific situation. Common example: cutting your budget in response to financial pressures. What if your playlist for budget-cutting situations asked questions like "Is it possible the budget can be cut by delaying planned expenditures rather than by paring existing expenditures?" and "Resist the urge to cut everything by a fixed amount" and "Could we cut deeper than we need to in order to

free up funds to invest in exciting new opportunities?"

DON'T DELUDE YOURSELF

Research is important. But beware confirmation bias — favoring information that supports your pre-existing attitudes and beliefs. (In addition to being highly dangerous for your business, it explains all those delusional contestants on *American Idol*. "Do you *really* think my voice is that good, Mom?") In research, too many people seek reassurance rather than truth.

TRY 10/10/10

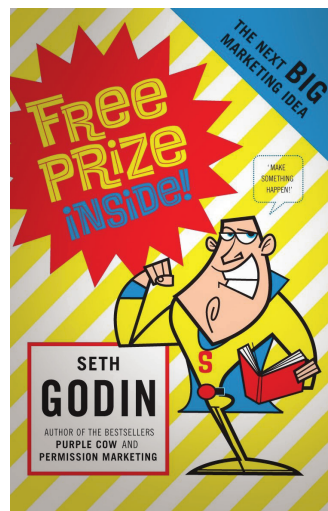
To put a decision in perspective, use the 10/10/10 framework. How will you feel about it 10 minutes from now? And 10 months from now? And 10 years from now? Conducting a 10/10/10 analysis doesn't assume that the long-term perspective is the right one. It simply ensures that short-term emotion isn't the only voice at the table.

HOLD A PRE-MORTEM

For another angle on decision-making, try prospective hindsight, also called a "pre-mortem." Your pre-mortem might begin: "It's 2018, and sadly, we've just closed the doors of our business for the last time. Our effort to concentrate entirely on low vision was a total fiasco. It blew up in our faces. Why did it fail?" Balance this (and make everybody feel a lot less depressed) with a "pre-parade," assuming a project's future success.

BE REALISTIC

Try "realistic job previews." Don't tell a prospective employee how wonderful everything's going to be. Tell them where they'll be facing problems — angry clients, long days, working weekends, that kind of thing. Revealing a job'swarts up front "vaccinates" people against dissatisfaction.



FREE PRIZE INSIDE

The Next Big Marketing Idea

by Seth Godin

PUBLISHED: 2004

Summary by David Squires

Seth Godin's *Free Prize Inside* is a modern business classic, and one of the most inspirational business books we've ever read. (Godin's *Purple Cow* is right up there as well.) In *Free Prize*, Godin introduces "edgcraft," the ultimate strategy for differentiating your business in a crowded marketplace.

WHAT IS EDGE CRAFT?

Basically, the idea is to find an edge — to take your business someplace your competitors won't dare — and then stake out your position there. Be the fastest, the slowest, the biggest, the smallest, the most *this*, or the least *that*. Ide-

ally, your edge will be something central to your product or service, but it doesn't necessarily have to be. The ideas below were all inspired by *Free Prize*, and while *very* risky, we still think that in today's increasingly crowded, ever-more-competitive markets, playing it too safely has got to be the riskiest approach of all.

EDGE 1: LOCATION

If your competitors are all in featureless office parks, why not set up in a big Victorian house on the edge of town?

EDGE 2: PAMPERING

What if you had a rule that no one was allowed to try on eyewear in your store without looking their very best? Have an in-house make-up artist. As your clients relax and are fussed over, present trays of eyewear or sunwear you think they might like. Bring back your customer's favorites when the primping is completed. (Everything your client puts on is going to look *fabulous* in front of those freshly made-up eyes.)

EDGE 3: SELECTION

"Wide selection" is a weak edge. Legions of miserable eyecare business owners try to keep *everything* in stock. Though their finances wobble under the weight of all that inventory, in the end, the old logic wins out: "If my customers want something I don't have, they'll shop somewhere else." What if you were to end the tyranny of stocking *everything* by going to the opposite edge and having a severely limited selection. What if, each month, you were to curate a selection of just a half-dozen absolutely fantastic frame styles? Give each item its own elaborate display — stand-alone case, props that tell a story, poster-sized images of the item, even a video monitor showing models wearing the eyewear. Pro-



"In today's increasingly crowded, ever-more-competitive markets, playing it too safely is the biggest risk of all." DAVID SQUIRES

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vide a single inventory choice for each style — modern, classic, traditional, vintage-inspired — and change them every month. (You can even have customers vote on your website for designs or designers they want to see next.)

EDGE 4: TIMING OF PROMOTIONS

What if you held your biggest sale of the year in the middle of the night? Or a birthday sale that lasted only 44 minutes, in honor of your 44th birthday?

EDGE 5: SERVING KIDS

Most eyecare business serve kids under 10. But what if you were to turn your kids' eyewear section into a true "store-within-a-store" — a fairyland castle, or a life-sized dollhouse, with kid-sized and kid-styled eyewear displays throughout? (Better yet, create an entire store based on that principle.)

EDGE 6: ADMISSION POLICY

As Groucho Marx said, "I do not care to belong to a club that would accept someone like me as a member." Like most of Groucho's jokes, this one has a big kernel of truth. Get some promotional pop from this kernel by admitting only a select few customers to your store. What if someone could get into your store only with a written reference from a previous customer?

EDGE 7: THOROUGHNESS OF EXAMINATIONS

How long is the average eye exam in your market? Double it. OK, triple it. No wait, quadruple it. If there's a test out there that will help your clients work better (or play better), offer it.

EDGE 8: TIME IN STORE

Tell people that, at your dispensary, an "Eyewear Compatibility Profile" is required for all clients. As part of this process, you'll gauge head shape, skull irregularities, skin tone and ear size as well as style preferences in order to find their perfect frame. As they wait, give them the "Queen/King For a

Day" treatment. (See "Pampering.")

EDGE 9: SUBSCRIPTIONS

People subscribe to magazines. They subscribe to get razors, ties, coffee, wine and more. Why not eyewear and sunwear? Create a subscription service for your clients' favorite designers — give subscribers a special price if they agree to receive new eyewear each quarter to build their wardrobe.

ESSENTIALISM

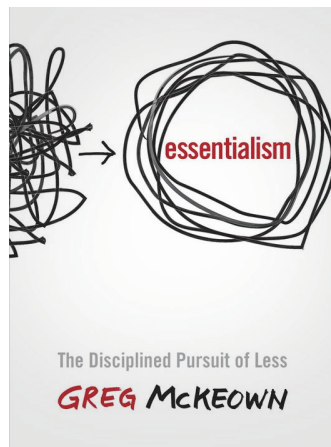
The Disciplined Pursuit of Less

by Greg McKeown

PUBLISHED: 2014

Summary by Julie Fanselow

Is busy-ness the greatest enemy of your business? In *Essentialism*, Greg McKeown helps harried entrepreneurs blaze a path toward devoting their energies to the things that matter most. The book is subtitled "the disciplined pursuit of less," which may sound a bit heretical in our go-go capitalist society. But the author makes a compelling case that less is better, at least when it comes to your to-do list — and once you



"An essentialist says 'yes' only to the things that really matter, but she also understands the power of a graceful 'no'." JULIE FANSELOW

give yourself permission to stop trying to do it all, you will "make your highest contribution toward the things that really matter."

PRIORITY MEANS ONE

When the word *priority* came into the English language in the 1400s — and for 500 years after that — it meant "the very first thing," and it was singular. Only in the 20th century did we see the plural: priorities. But only one thing can be the most important goal for you and your business, at least at any one time. You can have five goals, but you can't have five priorities. The essentialist doesn't try to juggle lots of good projects. He goes big on one great thing, whether it's opening a new location or adding a speciality that will improve your patient base and profits.

YOU MAKE THE CALL

"If you don't prioritize your life, someone else will," McKeown says. "And you will lose sight of what's most important to you." Zero in on something concrete. Not, "we want to be the top eyecare practice in our market," but "we want to increase our profits by 10 percent this year." This is your "essential intent." Making and living by your one essential decision can eliminate a thousand later decisions.

WHAT MATTERS MOST

Whatever the decision, ask whether it advances your priority? If an action doesn't help you meet your top goal, don't do it. Of course, this means saying "no" a lot. An essentialist says yes only to the things that really matter, but she also understands the power of "a graceful no." The nonessentialist says "yes" to almost every request or opportunity. The essentialist says yes to only about 10 percent of opportunities. If you can answer a

resounding "yes" to the question — "Is this *exactly* what I am looking for?" — then go for it.

CLEAN OUT YOUR CLOSET

Think of your business like an overstuffed closet: Organizers often say if you haven't worn or used something in a year, get rid of it. Apply that to your business. Get rid of everything you don't love. Will this line, service or activity help me reach my goal? If not, let it go.

TIME TO THINK

At Microsoft, Bill Gates regularly took an entire week away from his day-to-day duties to think and read. You may not be able to manage that, but you can put a little of what Gates called "Think Week" in every day. Instead of starting your day with 20 minutes on Facebook or cable news, read a business book (we're giving you a ton of ideas in this story), a philosophy book, or even poetry. Mix it up. You never know where your next source of inspiration might be. And remember all day long: Multitasking is a myth. Allow yourself time to focus, and the quality of your work will improve. The nonessentialist is too busy doing to think about life. The essentialist creates space to think deeply about what he really wants to do.

WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE

Nonessentialists say: "I have to."
Essentialists say: "I choose to."

CUT YOUR LOSSES

Nonessentialists hate to admit they've made mistakes and believe if they just keep trying, they can make anything work, even as losses pile up. The essentialist thinks, "What else could I do with this time or money if I pulled the plug on this now?"



THE POWER OF FULL ENGAGEMENT

Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to High Performance and Personal Renewal

by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz | PUBLISHED: 2003

Summary by David Squires

The Power of Full Engagement attempts to undo all the rotten work advice you've absorbed over the years, ranging from the Protestant work ethic to the rantings of Vince Lombardi. ("Winners never quit?" Really? If that were true, every successful person would still be in the first job they ever took and married to the first person they ever dated.) If you love what you do, have no productivity problems, regularly complete both your urgent work and your *important* work, and comfortably manage all the commitments in your life, you're excused from reading this book. The other 98 percent of you, start reading.

BUILD RITUALS

Our brains have limited reservoirs of will. Every decision you make draws from this reservoir. Since the mind is a lot better at saying "yes" than telling itself "no," creating new automatic habits (called "rituals") and mapping out a complete daily schedule is the best way to automate positive behaviors so you spend less time telling yourself "no."

TAKE 21 DAYS

Twenty-one days. That's how long you need to change an old habit. So

choose a habit you want to change — going to bed late, wasting time on the Internet first thing in the morning — and for the next three weeks replace it with another ritual: hitting the sheets at 9:30, starting the day attacking an important project for 90 minutes.

SCHEDULE HABITS

It's important to set a firm time schedule for your habits. Schwartz tells of a study in which a group of women agreed to give themselves daily breast-exams for 30 days. Half stated when and where they would do the exams, the other

half left it open. At the end of the study, 100 percent of those who said when and where they would do the self-examination followed through, while only 53 percent of the others did.

TAKE A BREAK

Just because you can work intensely for four hours at a stretch, doesn't mean you should. To be truly productive and to eliminate mistakes, you need to pace yourself. Think of completing tasks in 90-minute chunks (set a timer if you need reminding). True energy renewal can be attained with as little as a minute or two of deep breathing.

FILL THE SLOW TIMES

Look for slack periods of your day that you can make more useful. Your daily commute might be used for focused thought on key work projects, as well as a personal transition period into "work mode." Similarly, your commute home might be used to think about family plans and projects and a transition to "home mode."

STOP WHEN YOU'RE DONE

Define clear stopping points at the end of the day, so when you're with your family and friends, you're really *with* them. Don't answer work-related emails and phone calls. You've earned the break.

PICK YOUR FIRST PROJECT

Before you go to bed every night, make sure you know what key project you will work on the next day before *anything* else. Too many people wake up, fire up email, encounter their first crisis before breakfast and bounce from emergency to emergency for the rest of the day. By picking one project to which you can devote your best, freshest period of work, you ensure that the urgent never overwhelms the important.

FINISH THE JOB

Get serious about completing projects. Old joke: There are two types of people in this world — those who finish things, and ...

BRAINSTORM REGULARLY

When you ask people where they

get their best ideas, almost nobody will answer "work." There's a lesson there. Have at the very least an hour of work time every week where you do unstructured brainstorming and big-picture thinking *away* from your practice or store. Bring a notebook (the paper kind).

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

Stop asking what is the meaning of life. Instead, imagine life asking what is the meaning of *you*.

DIFFERENTIATE OR DIE

Survival in Our Era of Killer Competition

by Jack Trout

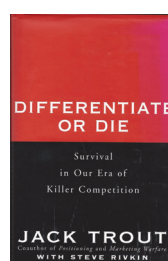
PUBLISHED: 2000

UPDATED: 2008

Summary by Steve Whitaker

Jack Trout's *Differentiate or Die* is a favorite for Steve Whitaker of Whitaker Eye Works in Wayne, PA. "I pick it up and choose a chapter to refresh me every week," he says, "and I always come away re-energized." Put yourself in the right frame of mind when you read this book, he

adds, and you'll be surprised by the new ideas you gain — including lots of "stuff that will seem obvious and you should have implemented long ago." Some lessons:



GET PAST COMMODITIES

There is no such thing as a commodity; only people who act and think like commodities. For example, think about a person who comes in with a certain popular frame in mind. But in daring to be different, you've decided not to carry such a widely available line. Through a few questions, you learn

the person is looking less for a certain brand than a “geek chic” look. “Ah,” you say, “try this ...,” and you present a modified cat’s-eye. “Now it doesn’t matter *what* brand I sold. What matters is I truly believe it has quality and at least some class, even if my cost was \$30,” Whitaker says. “And if it’s unique, now your customer has something a bit different from her friend. Momentum carries. Get them to think they like theirs better, and they will. That’s what it’s all about.”

MAKE CUSTOMERS CURIOUS

How can you tell if you are differentiating? When your customers know more about you and your products than you know about your customer. (It’s really good to know as much as you can about your customers, too, of course.)

RAISE YOUR PRICES

High-quality products should be more expensive and offer prestige. Price is rarely a differentiating idea. “Quality will trump price differentiation nearly every time,” Whitaker says. “I see this all the time specifically with Lindberg — a rimless line that is pricey by anyone’s standards. ‘Wow, that’s expensive!’ ‘Anne, the investment speaks for itself. They are nearly invisible, they weigh less than 2 grams. There are no screws, the culprit of all other eyewear. It has won countless design awards! Feel them. Try them on! No more ears and nose pain!’ I always thought the first thing we should think before we address an ‘expensive’ objection is ‘compared to what?’”

KNOW, THEN OWN

Know, then own, the attributes of your company and products. Always extoll the virtues of your products. Never let up.

DIFFERENT WINS

Whitaker says: “If you are different and your presentation of your product is different, you will beat and outlast those who neither know the product or lack the pas-

sion — and you may be selling the *same* product! I sell what other optical shops don’t have in a way that they aren’t trained.”

MARRIED TO THE BRAND

Why Consumers Bond with Some Brands for Life

by William J. McEwen

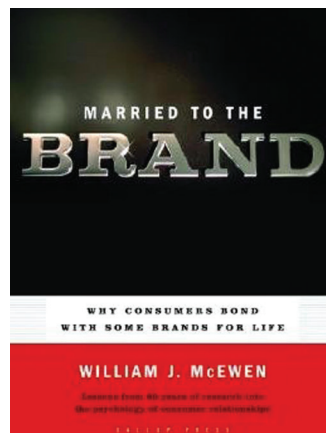
PUBLISHED: 2005

Summary by Josh Bladh

Married to the Brand explores why consumers bond with brands for life — but “brand” is more people than product. “This book taught us that patients are committed to our doctor and/or staff, not the brands that we carry,” says Josh Bladh, office manager for Dr. Taylor Bladh in Diamond Bar, CA. It’s a quick read, he says, “that dives into the psychology of consumer relationships and what brands have done to further the commitment of the consumer — from the first encounter (date), to the brand experience (engagement), to the brand relationship (marriage). Our favorite quote from the book just might be, ‘Lasting, meaningful relationships are always reciprocal.’” Here are other take-aways Josh Bladh got from the book:

IMPRESS EARLY

The first encounter your patient has with you is rarely face to face. They Google your name on their insurance carrier and read reviews about you or your office before initiating contact. This is the consumer/patient looking for a prom-



ise you will take good care of them. Enthusiastic customer reviews and a beautiful (and functional) website make a huge difference in creating a positive first impression.

SEEK COMMITMENT

The goal isn’t brand awareness. The goal is a brand *marriage*! Marriage comes from engagement with the consumer. When your patients enter the office, do they see familiar names and faces? Or is your front desk a revolving door from a temp agency? Do you comment publicly on social media sites with patients? Do you respond to reviews? All are opportunities to engage your patient base.

HAVE A DIFFERENTIATOR

Whatever your differentiator is, make sure your patients know it! One of our differentiators is sports vision training. We have trained many professional athletes and have a hallway full of signed photographs with personal messages to Dr. Bladh thanking him in helping with their success. Our doctor also finds opportunities in the chair to ask questions to patients and see if sports ever comes up. It’s never a hard sell — that’s not how we do things — but he’ll share stories about success that we’ve had with our athletes and let the patient express the interest moving forward.

AFTER THE COUPON

There has to be an emotional con-

nection. Coupons and deals can initiate a first date, but will the connection continue after those promotions are gone? Promotions walk the line of bribery unless you can engage the patient into something more meaningful. We offer something as simple as a 2-ounce bottle of lens cleaner for each frame purchased.

LET YOUR PRIDE SHOW

After the marriage, will your patient mention their visit with pride? If a patient gets a compliment about their glasses, will they simply say “thank you” — or will they go out of their way to mention your office? The experience and delivery of your promise will dictate their response. Give your patients reasons to mention you by name.

GET BETTER REFERENCES

This is where your efforts really bear fruit — when you receive that review of, “I wouldn’t go anywhere else” or “I don’t know what I would do if my eye doctor ever retired.” We offer in-store credit to people who refer their friends and family to us by giving both the new patients and those who referred credit toward any pair of sunglasses.

STAY CONSISTENT

Everything you do has to reaffirm the promise that you are giving the patient. If your brand promise is health and your ability to care for your patients’ health, consistency is the key. Your soap dispensers should contain antibacterial soap with no lotion or fragrance mixed in. Your staff should know the difference between an HMO and a PPO. You should have a personal relationship with primary care providers in your demographic. Advertising should scream “health,” because that is your promise.

ADAPT OR DIE

In all marriages, relationships must be fostered. The same is true of the patient/doctor relationship. Foster your relationship with your patients by listening to what they have to say. Engage them throughout the year and structure your marketing accordingly. The truly successful practices are always adapting. Our doctor’s favorite line is “Adapt or die.”



“When patients enter your office, do they see familiar names and faces? Or is your front desk a revolving door from a temp agency?” JOSH BLADH