

Radical Marketing by Sam Hill and Glenn Rifkin  
Harper, New York: 1999

Marketers can be certain of one thing. Failure. We constantly see new products leaving the market as fast as they entered. I clearly remember a quote from class in which you said “90% of all new products fail.” This book shows that there are successful products with hard working individuals who stand behind their products. In doing this these individuals demonstrate a great commitment to their company or institution.

I found Radical Marketing to be very engaging and thought provoking. In its simplest form the book explained the ten rules of radical marketing in great detail. The authors then applied these rules to real world case studies.

The book stated that the term radical marketing referred to “marketers who have achieved extraordinary success without the modern machinery of professional marketing.” The authors then go on to note the common traits shared by most of the radical marketers. First, most had an exceptional amount of intelligence which allowed them to create new niches that had gone previously unexplored. Second, they noted most had no formal marketing background. This allowed them to ignore marketing theories and apply conventional wisdom to their institution.

To better understand the ten rules of radical marketing I feel it would be best to explain each the rules of radical marketing and then give examples from the case studies.

1) The CEO must own the marketing function.

The essence of this statement is CEO must be involved with the marketing side of their corporation. Marketing is a key ingredient to any company’s success. They must know their customers and more importantly know their product. For example Harley-Davidson’s CEO and Chairman go on bike rallies with Harley enthusiasts.

2) Make sure the marketing department start smalls and stays small and flat.

The example given in the book was one of the game of telephone when one message is given to another and it works its way around a circle finally ending where it had started. Usually that message is distorted and lost in the shuffle. Sam Koch brewer of Sam Adams beer started small stayed and stated small. In fact he refused to have a marketing department for ten years until demand for his product forced him to change his ways.

3) Get out of head office and face-to-face with customers.

To develop a lasting relationship with a person you must meet them. This idea is very import to radical markers because many gather data first hand and personally respond to customer letters. Putting yourself out among customers creates brand awareness and goodwill. The best example is that of the Grateful Dead who would tour for days on end and interact with fans at every tour stop.

4) Use market research cautiously.

Marketing research uses averages. Averages tend to limit things and can eliminate creative input. Another important thing to keep in mind is marketing research depends a great deal on how it is used and applied. Radical marketers don't concern themselves with the technical side of marketing research. This allows them to make unique inferences and decisions.

5) Only hire passionate missionaries.

People who know and use a product can sell it to another person because they know the benefits. From personal experience if I use a product and enjoy it I will recommend it to a friend. This also holds true when you are marketing. If you are marketing a product that you are not familiar with you are setting yourself up for failure. But, if you know the product you will be able to market more effectively.

6) Love and respect your customers.

Radical marketers see customers as individuals. This is an important fact because many radical marketers are concerned with individual people needs, wants, and concerns. For example Snap-on tools have been known to pay tribute to mechanics in trade magazines.

7) Create a community of consumers.

People like to know that they are important. This is why companies have been known to set up clubs, clinics, and seminars. They act as a unifier of the community. This is why Harley Davidson developed a new strategic business plan around the HOG community. (Harley Owners Group)

8) Rethink the marketing mix.

Radical marketers are a special breed in everything they do. This holds true for their advertising techniques. They tend to be short and can be seen as dialogue with customers. Perhaps the most interesting thing is radical marketers define their customers in terms of behaviors and needs rather than demographics.

9) Celebrate uncommon sense.

Break the rules and be your own. Radical marketers avoid listening to traditional wisdom and would rather do it their own way. To achieve this they “limit distribution to create loyalty and commitment among their distributors.”

10) Be true to the brand.

The ideas of quality not quantity, brand equity, and staying loyal to your customer keep radical marketers on the cutting edge. They are not concerned with answering to the masses but, would rather keep customers happy and coming back for more. They take pride in their product. Iams for example will never use inferior ingredients in their pet food.

#### Evaluation

I thought the authors’ organization of the material was very straight forward. They presented the foundation of what radical marketing. Then through detailed case studies each point was explained and interrelated.

When first looking at the book I thought that the subject matter was very simple. But, when I examined the cases I got a deeper understanding of them and saw how complicated they were. For instance, I knew the popularity of the NBA was in a steep decline and its future looked bleak. Then David Stern took over as commissioner and things started to change. Most people don’t realize all the different promotions and strategies Stern employed to change the face of the game.

The one thing that I would change after reading the book was I would give a case study of a radical marketer failing. Everything seemed as if it were a successful story. But, there are radical marketers who have failed and I would have compared them to the

successful case studies. This would create a contrasting view that would display the other side to radical marketers.

Perhaps the most important things I have taken from this book were the commitment and value that radical marketers place in each customer. In many ways this is a throw back to the days when things were small and people looked after one another. I feel that that some big businesses are cut throat in their practices and lose sight of the individual. In the end they place too much emphasis on their companies' bottom line and stock performance.

### The Big Picture

For me I have always associated advertising with expensive media and print ads that usually take months and millions of dollars to develop. For me this book showed that there are simple marketing strategies that appeal to the masses. In a way some of the material such as, responding to letters and interacting with customers is more related to public relations. But, when looking at it again you see that some companies are not concerned with customers and would rather shovel them off to the public relations department.

Customers are the one thing that can not be replaced. If you have no customers you have no business. Radical marketers understand this concept and that is why they only provide good quality products. Good products help both the producer and consumer. The producers have satisfied customers who will continue to buy from them and consumers have a reliable product that they can trust.

In summation radical marketers have been successful because they are willing to take risks. These risks are major and can make or break the company. But, radical marketers are passionate about their products and stand behind them wholeheartedly. This concept is uncommon in the business world but, very easy for the everyday Joe to relate. The underlying message here is be in touch with your customers and that is why these radical marketers have been successful.