

Marketing Lessons from Wisden and Whitakers

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I was reading an article the other day talking about the most influential books in the professional development of the author. As I read the article, I looked across the bookcase and saw many of the books mentioned in the article and some I thought should have been included in the author's list but weren't. It made me think about the most influential books in my professional development and what I would recommend to an aspiring young marketing graduate.

I looked at my bookcase and saw the marketing text book by Philip Kotler¹ from my undergraduate marketing days, "Competitive Strategy" by Michael E. Porter² and "The Brand You 50" by Tom Peters.³ They were all influential but none more influential in my life than "Corporate Religion" by Jesper Kunde.⁴

I scanned across my bookcase and saw my business books segregated in a large section with personal interest books on one side of them and reference books on the other. In a bizarre stream of consciousness, I noticed the large yellow splash of colour in the "Cricket Books" section and thought instantly "Wisden".

Lesson #1 – Never underestimate the power of maintaining visual identity standards

"Now there is a lesson for the aspiring marketing graduate" I thought. That big block of yellow with the unchanged dust cover is a testament to how well the publishers of Wisden Cricketers' Almanack⁵ understand the value of Visual Identity as a memory hook⁶ for the brand.

As my eye scanned across the various volumes, I saw the Wisden edition dating back to the year 2000. It was a year of celebrating moving into a new millennium. Everything felt new. The Wisden from that year was marked on the spine boldly "137th Edition".

Lesson #2 – Remember the three Es of marketing

I had recently published a paper on how to engage consumers with brands in an era of intangible benefits and technology driven dialogue entitled "The Three Es of Marketing⁷". The third "E" was for

¹ Kotler, P., et. al.; (1983); Marketing in Australia; Prentice-Hall of Australia; Melbourne.

² Porter, M.E.; (1980); Competitive Strategy: Techniques for analyzing industries and competitors; The Free Press; New York.

³ Peters, T.; (1999); The Brand You 50; Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

⁴ Kunde, J.; (1999); Corporate Religion; Financial Times/ Prentice Hall; UK.

⁵ Wisden Cricketers' Almanack; (2000); 137th Edition; John Wisden & Co. Ltd.; Alton, Hampshire, UK.

⁶ See: <http://www.linkedin.com/pulse/your-logo-brand-michael-neale?trk=mp-author-card>

“Enduring”: finding ways to make the brand story enduring for customers – giving them confidence that the brand has been around for a long time and will be for some time to come. Wisden makes an absolute feature of maintaining dustcovers on the volumes to reflect the ongoing/enduring nature of the brand. Year after year, it delivers the same thing with consistency and constancy.

Lesson #3 – Live out your brand story

Wisden is very clear about its brand story and lives that brand story out. The Wisden Cricketers’ Almanack catalogues every significant fact in cricket every year. If it isn’t catalogued by Wisden, it simply isn’t significant. Now that is a bit of a circular argument ... but every cricketer wants their name written into history – they want their name written in Wisden.

It was at this point that I realised that my small Wisden collection was at the wrong end of the bookcase. The Wisden Cricketers’ Almanack is an annual encyclopaedia and should actually be in the reference section of my book case. It didn’t belong next to a collection of biographies and books of long tales of eccentric characters. It belonged with the atlases, dictionaries and almanacs. It belonged up the other end, sorted alphabetically, next to the Whitaker’s Almanack.⁸

In a curious twist of the stream of consciousness, I started to think about Whitaker’s Almanack. I found this a very useful tool when I was living in the UK. Whitaker’s is an Almanack of the UK covering orders of precedence and forms of address, notes about changes in the law with explanations of different levels of government, non-government organisations and social institutions, religion, social welfare, transport, infrastructure and so on. It gave me insight into the complexity of society and culture in the UK that I would have never known without the aid of this important tool.

Lesson #4 – The market is complex: understand it

The UK was not the most challenging cultural adjustment for and Adelaidean Australian. But despite this, there was a lot about the UK market that I didn’t understand until I undertook some research. It is a good lesson. No matter how much you think you know the market, there is always something else you can learn. The market is more complex than you think.

Then I started to see the similarities between Wisden and Whitaker’s. Both are absolute experts in their fields.

⁷ <http://literallybrilliant.com.au/wp-content/uploads/20150107-LBWP-The-Three-Es-of-Marketing-MNv072.pdf>

⁸ Whitaker’s Almanack 2001; (2000); 133rd Edition; The Stationary Office Limited; London.

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Lesson #5 – Know your stuff

When I had brand managers reporting to me, I would tell them that they had to be expert in their categories. Nobody should know more about the category than them. They needed to be passionate, willing to learn; almost obsessive about their category. If I knew something about their category that they didn't, they knew they had to learn more. When you read Whitaker's, you feel like you have a definitive insight into the UK. When you read Wisden, you feel as though there is nothing else significant to know about cricket. They know their fields. They define the fields. Perhaps there is no more important a lesson than this for an aspiring marketing graduate.

Here is the interesting observation for the aspiring marketing graduate: you have learnt a lot from books and there is probably a multitude of books that you could learn even more from. But perhaps the most useful thing for you to do now is to get a marketing mentor.⁹ Get one with years of experience. Find someone who can look at the situation you find yourself in and can find meaningful lessons for you there.

So my lessons from my bookshelf come from an unexpected source: they are marketing lessons from Wisden and Whitakers.

⁹ For more on Marketing Mentoring see: <http://literallybrilliant.com.au/wp-content/uploads/20140908-LBPS-Marketing-Mentoring-MNv05.pdf>