


Cultural Strategy: Using Innovative Ideologies to Build Breakthrough Brands

Douglas Holt, Douglas Cameron
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Douglas Holt, Douglas Cameron : Cultural Strategy: Using Innovative Ideologies to Build Breakthrough Brands before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cultural Strategy: Using Innovative Ideologies to Build Breakthrough Brands:

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. An Important But Incomplete Beginning To Developing Full Cultural StrategyBy Jonathan CookCultural Strategy, by Douglas Cameron and Douglas Holt, was a simultaneously exciting and frustrating read for me. It is an important book in that it provides a specific model for integrating the

power of culture into marketing strategy. It's a milestone that the authors go beyond the generic advice to simply "pay attention to culture" that most business books provide. The authors clearly have working experience in this area, and are able to provide compelling narratives to justify the application of their cultural strategy model. The weakness of this book, however, is a consequence of it being one of the first of its kind. The model of cultural strategy that it offers is better than what most marketers currently use, but it's much thinner than it could be. For one thing, the authors' model of culture is rather sparse, in comparison to what most cultural anthropologists might describe. Holt and Cameron content themselves with understanding culture as mere ideology - as ideas that are shared and motivate. Culture is much more than that. It's especially important for people in business to work with culture as something embodied. Culture isn't just the communication of ideas. Culture is in physical objects we possess, and the behavior we engage in with those objects. These aspects of cultural strategy are largely missing from Holt and Cameron's model. The authors briefly mention ritual here and there, but they never explain what they mean by it, much less how to use ritual in business. This oversight leads to a rather narrow scope of recommended application. Holt and Cameron focus mostly on advertising as a tool of cultural strategy, but advertising holds a rapidly diminishing portion of the marketer's toolbox. The book is thick with examples, perhaps a bit over thick, to compensate for the relatively sparse principles for cultural strategy that the authors provide. People who have read other work by Douglas Holt will recognize much that has been recycled for use here. The heavy reliance on examples gives the impression that cultural strategy mostly involves having a team of savvy and perceptive people who will notice cultural trends before the competition. Indeed, at the end of the book, the authors make an unfortunate descent into design thinking, suggesting that "cultural studios" can simply start off sloppy, and then go through iterative cycles of testing and refinement until they hit on a strategy that takes advantage of a cultural disruption. Some broader principles of culture could improve this fumbling approach, but Holt and Cameron are resistant to such principles, viewing them as tools that stiff "brand bureaucracies" use to defend their faltered ideologies. There's some truth to that, but a smarter strategy could involve using principles of culture to establish more sustainable, less ideosyncratic processes of anti-bureaucratic innovation. A final shortcoming of this book is that the authors don't seriously treat other methodologies that could be incorporated into a bigger, more effective system of cultural strategy in business. Holt and Cameron acknowledge only the most superficial versions of emotional mindshare strategy, for example, when there are in fact a growing number of research firms using extremely deep qualitative methodologies to illuminate complex and beautiful systems of emotional significance. When the authors of this book reduce such research to catchphrases, they accurately describe what corporate bureaucracies can do TO the results of such research, but the solution to this problem is to improve translation of research results into corporate action, not to abandon the research entirely. I've focused on the gaps and flaws in Cultural Strategy in this review, but encourage people working to develop culturally-informed methods in business to read this book nonetheless. It is to be expected that any book seeking to introduce concepts of culture into business will be partial and problematic at this point. The serious treatment of culture as a source for management and marketing has barely begun, and Holt and Cameron are to be applauded for this effort to provide the qualitative side of commerce more of the attention that it deserves. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Lorenchen Wonderful book! Introductory information but great approach. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Jeni Fehr Excellent resource

Market innovation has long been dominated by the worldview of engineers and economists: build a better mousetrap and the world will take notice. But there's another important way to build new businesses: with innovative ideologies rather than innovative mousetraps. Consider Coca-Cola, Nike, Jack Daniel's, Marlboro, Starbucks, Corona, Oprah, The Body Shop: all built with innovative ideologies. Further many "better mousetraps" are much more compelling to consumers when bundled with innovative ideologies; consider BMW, Apple, and Whole Foods. Cultural Strategy provides a step-by-step guide for managers and entrepreneurs to build businesses in this simple but effective way. Holt and Cameron analyse a series of classic cases that relied on these bold, innovative strategies: Nike, Marlboro, Starbucks, Jack Daniels, vitaminwater, and Ben Jerry's. They then demonstrate how the theory works as an actionable strategy model, drawing upon their consulting work. They show how cultural strategy takes start-up brands into the mass market (Fat Tire beer), overcomes "better mousetraps" wars in a technology driven category (ClearBlue pregnancy test), effectively challenges a seemingly insurmountable incumbent (FUSE music channel vs MTV), and develops a social innovation (The Freelancers Union). Holt and Cameron also describe the best organizational model for pursuing this approach, which they term "the cultural studio". The book demonstrates that the top consumer marketing companies are consistently poor at this type of innovation because they rely on an antithetic organization structure, what the authors term "the brand bureaucracy". To succeed at cultural innovation requires not only a very different approach to strategy, but a new way of organizing as well.

"May well be one of the most important books on advertising and branding in the past ten years."--Richard Huntington, Adliterate.com About the Author Douglas Holt was Professor of Marketing at both the Harvard Business School and the University of Oxford. He is now President of the Cultural Strategy Group, a consulting firm that

provides brand strategy and innovation solutions using the cultural strategy framework. He is a leading expert on brand strategy, having established cultural branding as an important new strategy tool in his best-selling book *How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding*. He has developed cultural strategies for a wide range of brands, including Coca-Cola, Microsoft, Ben Jerry's, Sprite, Jack Daniel's, MINI, MasterCard, Fat Tire beer, Qdoba, Georgia Coffee, Planet Green, and Mike's Hard Lemonade, along with a number of non-profit organizations. He holds degrees from Stanford, the University of Chicago, and Northwestern, and is the editor of the *Journal of Consumer Culture*. He has been invited to give talks at universities and management seminars worldwide, including the Global Economic Forum in Davos. Douglas Cameron is Co-Founder and Chief Strategy Officer for Amalgamated, an influential non-traditional advertising agency known for developing content across multiple media platforms. He has developed brand strategies and campaign ideas for a wide range of clients, including Ben Jerry's, Clearblue, Coca-Cola, Fat Tire beer, FOX Sports, Freelancers Union, Fuse Music Television, Mike's Hard Lemonade, Sprite, and Svedka vodka. He began his career at Cliff Freeman Partners, the most lauded creative shop of its time. He entered the world of marketing inadvertently: travelling the world as a bagpiper, he was invited by David Ogilvy to perform at his French castle. Ogilvy insisted he take up advertising. He graduated from Dartmouth College, where he received the English department's top graduating honour.