



Purple Cow: Transform Your Business by Being Remarkable

Seth Godin

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You're either a Purple Cow or you're not. You're either remarkable or invisible. Make your choice.

What do Starbucks and JetBlue and KrispyKreme and Apple and DutchBoy and Kensington and Zespri and Hard Candy have that you don't? How do they continue to confound critics and achieve spectacular growth, leaving behind former tried-and-true brands to gasp their last?

Face it, the checklist of tired 'P's marketers have used for decades to get their product noticed -Pricing, Promotion, Publicity, to name a few-aren't working anymore. There's an exceptionally important 'P' that has to be added to the list. It's Purple Cow.

Cows, after you've seen one, or two, or ten, are boring. A Purple Cow, though...now that would be something. Purple Cow describes something phenomenal, something counterintuitive and exciting and flat out unbelievable. Every day, consumers come face to face with a lot of boring stuff-a lot of brown cows-but you can bet they won't forget a Purple Cow. And it's not a marketing function that you can slap on to your product or service. Purple Cow is inherent. It's built right in, or it's not there. Period.

In *Purple Cow*, Seth Godin urges you to put a Purple Cow into everything you build, and everything you do, to create something truly noticeable. It's a manifesto for marketers who want to help create products that are worth marketing in the first place.

Purple Cow: Transform Your Business by Being Remarkable Details

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From Reader Review Purple Cow: Transform Your Business by Being Remarkable for online ebook

Eugene says

main idea is to make your product remarkable (purple cow). do not compete by features.

Lynn says

I have literally had this book on my book shelf for years, and I'm glad to finally be able to say that I read it! If you are looking for the "how" behind making a Purple Cow, you may be disappointed. This book only introduces the idea and explains the "why" behind it. Looking briefly through the reviews here, I feel the people that found the book unsatisfying were looking for a how to guide. I plan to read Free Prize Inside soon, which boasts on the cover that it will tell you "How to make a Purple Cow", but I suspect that there really is no simple step-by-step formula. The entire point of being remarkable is that you need to spend some time really figuring out your market and how to be different in it.

Purple Cow is rare in that while being concise, you don't feel ripped off by the brevity of the book. Instead I came away appreciating that Godin could get to the point quickly and back up his ideas with quick case studies. The bullet points sprinkled throughout the book in bold were actually worth being bolded. Often when you encounter business books made up of many brief sections, I find a lot of to be fluff or immediately forgettable. The opposite is true here. This book gave me a lot of ideas and spurred conversation with my partner about ideas we should implement in our small business.

You don't have to be a marketer to appreciate or learn something from this book, but I do think business owners who sell a tangible product may come away with more useful info than people that sell service-based or one-off projects. My business falls in the latter category, and while I agree with what Godin says, a lot of the wisdom is hard to apply to my business, but it did get the gears turning.

Ari Goldfarb says

In a field of black and white, be the purple cow. Either your business is remarkable or it dies. You need to be bold and take risks in order to stand out. Information is consumed so frequently that most people subconsciously block it out. The strategy of the purple cow preaches the need to be a leader; the need to make your innovations the marketing strategy itself; and the need to pursue the right customers (going after people who are ahead of the curb and will bring your product to the majority, not targeting the majority who are resistant to change).

It talks about failed strategies, like following the leader, because change is always happening and when the landscape shifts you won't be in a position to succeed because you have no background with original thought, just imitation.

One fact that stood out to me is a tip I've seen frequently throughout a number of industries, so I have no doubt of its truth. Don't try to please everyone; don't build a product with the intention of everyone loving it

and wanting to use it. Know your ideal target, even if you can just narrow it down to one person, and build a product for them, because even though we want to believe our tastes are unique, they aren't. Someone, or a lot of someones, out there have the same tastes we do, have the same feelings we do, have the same nostalgia we do, and will resonate with the same products as we do. By pleasing one person we please everyone who feels a certain way; by attempting to please everyone, we end up pleasing no one.

David Yeo says

Purple Cow tells how the traditional 4-Ps of marketing is lacking to move consumers in current day's media noisy market place. Marketing Guru and author, Seth Godin defines a new 'P' that stands for 'PURPLE COW'. He coined the term PURPLE COW to mean a product or service having achieve huge differentiation, innovative and scores high on wow factor. On this point, Seth describes that the PURPLE COW will first attract the early adopters who will then take it through into the masses. He reasons the madness in spending in mass advertising is instead better spent in creating a much better product which will turns promotes / sells itself.

Gisela Hausmann says

Seth Godin's book "Purple Cow" is still as much fun as it was when I read it first. And with that Godin proves the his "Purple Cow" is a purple cow in itself. Marketing books are supposed to talk about campaigns, analyze data, show proven ways. Godin does the opposite. He invites the reader to go for the unknown, the things that have not been done before. The most important factors being, "don't try to target everyone. - - The mass market is dead. - -The mass product is unremarkable. - - Nobody wants to talk about anything that's unremarkable."

I love this book. – 5 stars.

PS: I still believe as I have believed since this book got published that Godin came up with the the name of this book when he (probably) discovered Milka chocolate in his famous trip to Europe. Clearly it was a purple cow to name his book after that. I used to eat this chocolate when I lived in Europe. Still, the idea to use the purple cow as a metaphor would not have occurred to me.
Highly recommended.

Gisela Hausmann, author & blogger

ReD says

An unremarkable and dated book. A quick read, but I don't feel like I came away from this book with anything.

Let me summerize the book in a few sentences:

MARKETING IS WRONG, ADVERTISEMENTS ARE DYING.
FOR STUFF TO SELL IT HAS TO BE AWESOME.
IF YOUR STUFF IS AWESOME AND IT SELLS DONT SAVE ALL THAT MONEY, SPEND IT ON
MAKING SOMETHING MORE AWESOME.
YOU WILL FAIL.
KEEP TRYING.

Which is all fine and dandy, but I'm not entirely sure who the hell this book is supposed to help.

Aaron Maurer says

This post started out as a book review for Seth Godin's book Purple Cow, but morphed into something much more. If you have read Purple Cow, then this post will resonate. If you have not read Purple Cow, then read this post and then go read the book.

This book is over 10 years old and yet it still speaks to me on many levels. Like all the other marketing business books I have read this summer I read the material through the lens of education. Instead of worrying about how to make money, I read these books to figure out how to appeal to students and improve education.

This book is spot on. The book discusses the markets of companies. I feel that the market for students is no different. Society today has over-saturated the minds of our youth. They have so many outlets, apps, people, communities, etc. pulling for their attention that it is almost beyond absurd. Reading this book about being a purple cow made me think even more about how teachers brand themselves. I hate to say it, but we are in the market of our students. We are fighting for their attention. What will we do as teachers to stand out for their time?

The frustrating thing is how many teachers don't feel this is their obligation. They don't think they should have to appeal to students. It is not their job to entertain or grab their interest. They believe the students should conform to them. I know it is not professional to say, but I want to ask them what planet do they live on? When we were kids we did not conform either. We might not have gotten into trouble, but it was not that long ago that we were young and begging to get out of school. It is our duty to be a game changer. It is what we do. It is our job. Why else would you be in the occupation if not for the kids. You want your own children to have teachers who go above and beyond so make sure you do the same.

Teachers today have to connect with students. We have to be better than very good. As Seth states in the book, "The opposite of remarkable is very good. Very good is an everyday occurrence and hardly worth mentioning." Teachers today have to go above and beyond. Stand out. Make your teaching brand known. Not only do we have to stand out among the buzz of society, but even among the teachers in the building we teach in.

I cannot help but think of several years ago when I was one of four teachers in the district who received a SMARTboard. It was mind blowing to students. Everyone wanted to be part of the action. Teachers wanted one and students were so excited to be part of the journey. Now every classroom has a SMARTboard and nobody cares. Following the leader only leads to very good. You have to create your own niche. The SMARTboard is now a chalkboard of today. Not one kid cares about the technology. What are you doing to separate yourself?

I have typed up my notes to Evernote which you can view [here](#). I have taken the context of the material and tried to rewrite it to fit education. I would love to hear your thoughts and feedback.

Despite the book being a decade old, the material is still fresh. Yes, his examples of the the digital camera no longer work as they have been replaced by smart phones, but the ideas are as strong as ever. We are in an age where we have to stand out. Safety is in the risk taking.

Working on my own teaching and craft this summer I am really trying to brand myself. I want to be "me" aka Coffeechug. I don't want Coffeechug to look like anyone else. Would I love the following of Dave Burgess and #TLAP? Yes, he is everywhere right now. I am learning from him and his community like no other, but I cannot be just another person. I have to apply, adapt, modify, and make things my own. Coffeechug has to be a Purple Cow in education.

Last, in order for this to happen I have to shake things up. Schools need to quit being factory mode learning institutions. I know we have preached that for years, but very little has changed. Desks are still in rows and we still expect students to fill in worksheets perfectly to our standard. Let your uniqueness as a teacher spill over to students. Let them be unique. Let them chart their own path with your guidelines. We are not linear by nature and our classrooms should not either. It is time schools become a Purple Cow and move beyond very good to remarkable.

Thank you Seth Godin for giving me more fuel to my fire to pursue my passion of being a remarkable educator. This is a must read if you have not already read this book.

Foad Ansari says

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Now I know that making my business a purple cow is important. It's critical. My future and the future of the world depends on it. Nothing matters more. I get it.

Unfortunately, I have no idea how.

And that in a nutshell, is this book's problem. It keeps telling you "be excellent and be memorable" in so many different ways. I could have figured that out myself. Without a step-by-step plan customized to my particular situation that tells me *how* I can be excellent and unique, merely telling me to be a purple cow is pointless

Micah Elliott says

At the heart of this book is the notion of "Moore's idea diffusion curve". It's just a bell-curve that shows

innovators (sneezers), early adopters, early/late majority, and laggards. The central theme of the book is that you need to target the front of that curve by appealing your "remarkable" product to them as a niche, and treat them very specially.

Contrary to the most popular review here (quite negative) calling this book an unnecessarily expanded essay, I would argue that Godin covers a lot of ground in a concise 137 pages. And you don't need an MBA to understand the principles. This book is required reading for anyone looking to start a business.

The most resonating take-away is that marketing has worked its way to the front phases of product development. If the product can't *be* the marketing, then it will fail. This means that developers/engineers need to understand a bit about marketing, and need to be able to include and work with marketers from conception.

In the few hours it took to read through "Purple Cow", I've been able to take away quite a few valuable insights:

- The days of the "Hurricane Effect" (traditional massive blitz marketing, e.g., TV commercials, banner ads) are over
- Understand the importance of the idea curve (a simple concept) and its ripple effect.
- Employ market-centric design (marketers need to be a part of early design phase).
- At the front of the curve are sneezers -- a very loud group of users who will do your marketing for you.
- Treat the sneezers individually and personally, as your most valuable asset. Overwhelm that small target, and please them in every way possible.
- You can only attract sneezers by being remarkable (a purple cow, stand out, break the rules, do the unsafe thing, etc).
- The marketing *is* the product (the Leaning Tower of Pisa markets itself just in its name), and a good slogan is essential.
- If your product is not innovative, start over.
- Find an edge of the market, go to it and beyond.
- Resist the temptation to "milk the cow" (be ever seeking the next purple cow).

If you must pay \$[...] for this book, it is well worth it. But given its popularity, you'll likely find many copies at your local library. In reading this you'll probably become a Godin fan. His blog continues to discuss material similar to that found in this book.

Zoubir says

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Catherine says

I'm being kind with a 4 star rating. While it's a well written book, and I believe most of what Seth says to be true, I was hoping for a guidebook. Instead, he affirmed what I already knew-marketing isn't as effective as it was 10 years ago, marketing doesn't guarantee you'll get noticed, and all of the normal avenues of marketing are no longer the powerhouses. It's not even print vs. digital. It's the remarkable vs. the unremarkable.

After reading The Dip (also by Seth Godin), I thought this one would be the perfect follow-up. And it is, but not in the way I expected. The Dip had instructions, steps to take to move forward. Purple Cow has the same direct writing approach, but the instructions were lacking. I understand why. He's saying there is no "right" way or easy answer. If there was an easy answer to success, we'd all be successful. But we know it's not just a lottery, either. You can work towards being successful. His main point, is that humans are overwhelmed with products, choices, and ads. If your company doesn't have something that stands out, you'll get lost in the middle. This is what's happened to me. I provide a great product. But I wasn't the first, I'm not the biggest, the smallest, the cheapest, the most expensive, the easiest, the most difficult, the craziest, the prettiest packaging, the most illusive, the best placement, the fastest, the slowest.....This makes me unremarkable. I'm good, but that doesn't matter. I'm not remarkable. I fall into the wasteland of Google, I'm just another photographer on a page. I can't blame people. They don't want to spend all their time researching the middle. They want someone to tell them what's best, cheapest, etc. I find myself falling into that sometimes as well, though I try to find the people in the middle, because I know what it's like. The quickest answer isn't always going to serve me best, but I admit it saves on time and frustration. And that's what people want.

What I found most helpful about this book is the examples he gives of successful companies, why they became successful, how they've stayed successful and why some of them are no longer successful. He breaks apart the product from the marketing, saying that the marketing is important, but the product is more important. This is good! Who wants to be sold crappy products with great advertising?

Bottom line, if you're in business for yourself, or if you are an influential person in your company, this is a good book to read. Though it's frustrating and isn't full of easy to-do lists, it's probably the best piece of advice I've heard. And I hate Seth for it. Hopefully one day I'll thank him instead.

Favorite Quotes:

"Are you obsessed or just making a living?"

"Let them see that every single industry is feeling the same pain you are."

"Well, if you don't have time to do it right, what makes you think you'll have time to do it over?"

"Cheap is an easy way out of the battle for the Purple Cow."

p.93 "The sad truth, though, is that it may be quite a while before the {cell phone} market generates the attention it did five years ago." This made me laugh out loud, because it was written in 2002, but the smart phone was unforeseen. Wow, if we only knew then....

"So the question you need to ask yourself is this: If only 6 percent of the most valuable brands used the now-obsolete strategy of constantly reminding us about their sort-of-ordinary product, why do you believe this strategy will work for you?"

"Will any business that targets a dying business succeed? Of course not. But...targeting a thriving niche in a slow-moving industry can work-if you're prepared to invest what it takes to be remarkable."

"No one will argue with you if you claim that Wal-Mart is the biggest, most profitable, scariest retailer on earth. So, when Wal-Mart was frantically trying to catch up with Amazon.com, what did they have plastered on a banner in their offices? "You can't out-Amazon Amazon."

"You have to go where the competition is not. The farther the better."

Azita Rassi says

A very interesting book, but what was more interesting to me was the fact that I was enjoying listening to a marketing book of all things. If you had told me a few years go that I'd actively seek audiobooks on marketing, I'd have thought poorly of your divination skills :-)

Ahmad says

This book is really a Purple Cow :) !

In a "remarkable" way, Seth sending a message that: if you don't convert your business into a Purple Cow (being Remarkable), most probably you'll not succeed.

He clarifies how the world of business have changed & how marketing of old days doesn't work anymore.

A LOT of good advices with evidence and study cases in this book.

I totally recommend it for people interested in business, sales and marketing.

Shreerang says

Now I know that making my business a purple cow is important. It's critical. My future and the future of the world depends on it. Nothing matters more. I get it.

Unfortunately, I have no idea how.

And that in a nutshell, is this book's problem. It keeps telling you "be excellent and be memorable" in so many different ways. I could have figured that out myself. Without a step-by-step plan customized to my particular situation that tells me *how* I can be excellent and unique, merely telling me to be a purple cow is pointless.

Zacharia Lorenz says

This is the first book I've read by Seth Godin and, I must say, I'm definitely eager to read more.

As an advocate of inbound marketing, I was thoroughly impressed by Godin's observations of the direction that marketing was heading in 2003. He knew that more and more people were demanding transparency, that they no longer listened the outbound advertising strategies that dominated marketing budgets in the second half of the twentieth century. Ten years ago, Godin's understanding was leap and bounds beyond the majority of marketers today.

Today, people want information. Why? Because we're used to it. For younger generations, Google has become the norm. Why would anyone make a purchase based solely on a TV commercial when they can Google the product and find countless blog posts and forum discussions that tell them why they should or should not buy? With the evolution of smartphones, our access to this information had become even more instantaneous.

Godin knew this even before the iPhone (which was released just a few months after he published Purple Cow). By now, it should be obvious: the TV-industrial era is dead and we have entered an age of information marketing. It's about transparency. It's about having a remarkable product and informing people about you, your industry, and your competitors. If you have a truly remarkable product, people will find and choose you naturally. If you don't, then you'd better get back to the drawing board because no amount of marketing dollars will help.

Can't wait to see what Godin has accomplished in ten years... Can't wait to see him speak at HubSpot's Inbound Marketing Conference in August :-)
