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## Reviews of Books

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# Reviews of Books

**Victoria L. Crittenden, Editor**

*Boston College*

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This issue of reviews focuses on marketing strategy. The first two reviews by Bruce H. Clark and Charles Noble look at strategic marketing from an all-encompassing perspective, with a customer focus as the key driver in each book. Clark's review of *Market-Led Strategic Change: Transforming the Process of Going to Market*, by Nigel Piercy, and Noble's review of *Marketing Strategy: Customer & Competition*, by Steven P. Schnaars, suggest that both books provide creative, interesting approaches to combining customers and competition. Jennifer Moisan provides a review of what appears to be a rather straightforward book on preparing a market plan, *Marketing Campaigns*. The final two reviews address strategic marketing issues from the business-to-business and consumer contexts. Mark Kay reviews *Business to Business Marketing*, by Victor Hunter and David Tietyen. Jacquelyn Warwick's review examines *McDonaldization Revisited: Critical Essays on Consumer Culture*, by Mark Alfino, John S. Caputo, and Robin Wynyard.

**If you decide to order any of these books, tell the publisher, "I read about it in JAMS!"**

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## ***Market-Led Strategic Change: Transforming the Process of Going to Market, 2nd ed.***

**by Nigel Piercy**

**Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1997, 665 pages**

This is a marvelous, thought-provoking book on how to cultivate and implement a customer-focused strategy within a company. In a time when many marketing texts seem depressingly similar, this book is *different*, and that is very much to the good.

Piercy is well-known for his research and writing on marketing implementation—for an example of his thinking on this subject, see his recent *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* (JAMS) article (Piercy 1998)—and a

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great strength of this book is that he brings this perspective to bear on the problem. Indeed, what is most innovative about the book are not new theories or concepts but new ways of executing the concepts we already have.

That we need a book like this is a depressing indication of the gap between the academy and the boardroom that afflicts our field. In a recent *Wall Street Journal* interview (Lancaster 1998), the dean of the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University is quoted as saying that while practitioners in medicine and law frequently rely on professional school expertise as a source of new ideas and techniques, "I don't know many managers who sit around and wait for business-school research to change the way they manage" (p. B1). This is probably even more true in creative, people-oriented disciplines such as marketing. Piercy argues that much of the failure of marketing concepts to take hold in management practice arises from barriers to their use within the organization; he suggests that marketing as a field has produced a vast literature on *what* strategies and techniques managers should use, but relatively little advice to the practicing manager on *how* to get this done in his or her company.

Piercy appears pessimistic about the ability of traditional marketing to provide value to customers and profits to companies. He notes that he has largely removed the word *marketing* from the second edition of this book, instead substituting *markets* where possible. He argues that most firms require better understanding of markets rather than more marketing techniques. He also observes that managing the company's relationship with markets has become far more important in the 1990s, while at the same time traditional functional marketing organizations are dying.

*Market-Led Strategic Change*, therefore, is directed to all managers engaged in providing value to customers rather than to marketing managers alone. It aims to help managers with the three issues Piercy says they must grasp to succeed: understanding customers, choosing the right market strategy (market selection and value proposition), and implementation. In this effort, *Market-Led Strategic Change* largely succeeds.

The book is organized into four sections. The first section, entitled "The Customer Imperative," lays out a compelling argument for (a) how the new market challenges facing organizations today often go unaddressed by traditional marketing; (b) how many companies neither take

customer satisfaction seriously nor have an effective customer focus; and (c) how difficult, but rewarding, it can be for the few companies that do take customers seriously to manage this critical relationship.

The second section, which Piercy describes as the most substantially new for this edition, lays out what he calls "The Strategic Pathway" for firms that want to improve their process of going to market. Success arises, he claims, from making the right choices along a pathway that consists of the market selection, value proposition, and relationship management required to take a firm to market, culminating in a marketing plan.

Unlike most marketing books, implementation is dealt with in an in-depth way in the third section, with effective, insightful chapters on the planning process, budgeting, marketing organization, and market intelligence. This is some of the best material I have ever seen on implementing market strategies. The last section consists of a chapter addressing implementation through internal marketing and a summary chapter. Each section is supplemented by short case studies. While not decision oriented in the classic Harvard mode, they are generally excellent illustrations of companies struggling more or less successfully with the issues Piercy identifies, and they include good discussion questions.

As a researcher who is interested in how managers do things in the real world, I found this book incredibly bracing. Others may find it infuriating. One imagines that Piercy has little tolerance for fools: he clearly has little tolerance for theorists. He dismisses vast areas of academic marketing research as irrelevant to the practicing manager, and the book as a whole is aggressively atheoretical, drawing heavily on research and consulting with practicing managers, while skimming lightly over "standard" marketing fare. Trade books and the *Harvard Business Review* are cited more often than the *Journal of Marketing*, while other prestigious academic journals, including the *Journal of Marketing Research*, the *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Marketing Science*, and, ahem, the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* are not cited at all.

The disadvantage of the atheoretical thrust is that parts of the book read more like a grab bag of ideas than a coherent approach. Piercy seems aware of the issue, occasionally stopping to ask, "So, where have we got to?" in short summary sections. Still, it doesn't quite work, particularly with some of the material in "The Strategic Pathway." Certain sections of the text appear to be rewritten versions of specific—admittedly insightful—articles he and others have written.

Piercy suggests, and I agree, that this is probably not the first book managers should read about marketing. Better to start with a more standard text and then use this book to put that text in an implementation context. I currently have the book on a supplemental reading list for my MBA Marketing Strategy elective. If used as a main text, instructors

should consider three issues. First, the atheoretical thrust of the book requires the instructor to provide the theoretical context by other means. In particular, the book is somewhat light on the definition of the value proposition, and the section on relationships with competitors would benefit from some citation of recent work on the interaction between market strategy and competitive markets (e.g., Day and Reibstein 1997). Second, while highly readable, the book weighs in at 665 pages, about 520 pages of text and 140 pages of case material. Finally, the book is targeted at the U.K. executive market—it is part of Butterworth-Heinemann's "Professional Development" series for managers—meaning the large majority of examples and case studies are U.K. based. Instructors in other regions of the world will want to consider how much of the material generalizes outside of the United Kingdom—I would argue most of it does—and how to supplement the book with examples relevant to the context of their audience.

Executive readers will probably care about none of these issues. Indeed, I suspect that the more experienced the manager, the more he or she will like this book; it will feel far more real to practicing managers than most. Through the cases and frequent vignettes in the text, Piercy illustrates how soberingly difficult it is to develop a customer focus in practice. Fortunately, the book is also brimming with ideas on how to deal with these problems in the strategic marketing process. For example, in the course of planning, he suggests turning the market planning process on its head by uncovering the activities in which the firm engages and then inferring the strategy in practice that is the consequence of these activities. He also provides five extremely helpful diagnostic exercises, along with thorough instructions on how to administer and interpret them, to help companies develop and manage the process of going to market.

No reader will walk away from this book without substantial new ideas on making customer-focused marketing work. On that basis, I think it is a book that should be on the shelf of every person seriously concerned with market strategy.

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## ***Marketing Strategy: Customers & Competition***

by **Steven P. Schnaars**

**New York: Free Press, 1998, 216 pages**

Marketers face an ongoing challenge in developing the area dubbed “marketing strategy” (or, alternatively, “strategic marketing” or “strategic marketing management”). This challenge boils down to developing an understanding of what is “strategic” about marketing and how marketing strategy concepts differ from the principles of strategic management. In his book, *Marketing Strategy: Customers & Competition*, Steven Schnaars does a commendable job of integrating ideas from these two disciplines. His running theme, that strategy has become more focused on marketing issues (e. g., customer orientation) in recent years, elevates the strategic importance of marketing ideas and information. While these observations are not new from an academic perspective, they are fairly novel in a student-oriented guidebook such as this (Webster 1992).

In this revision of his 1991 work, Schnaars has created a useful “crash course” in marketing strategy and strategic management principles. This book could be used effectively as a source of content material for many marketing management and strategy courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels. One of the impressive traits of this work is the “density” of material presented. For example, in just the first 10 pages, the author does a credible job of reviewing and synthesizing marketing’s role in corporate strategic thinking, the marketing concept, and alternative strategic orientations such as a technology and production focus. Schnaars’s clear and concise writing style makes this possible. The trade-off of this condensed coverage, however, is some lack of depth, making this book better suited as supplemental reading or a reference to accompany another major focus in a course (such as a heavy case discussion component or a simulation exercise).

It took some study to understand the positioning of this book. In part, this results from the opening and closing, which are quite abrupt, almost jarringly so. There are no introductory comments from the author that would clarify his thoughts about the potential uses of the book or his beliefs about the current state of marketing strategy. Nor are there any concluding or summary comments at the end of the text. The final chapter (a somewhat arbitrarily placed discussion of customer satisfaction) is fine but offers no sense of closure to the material. While the author should be commended for avoiding any self-indulgent musings on the state of marketing thought and practice, I felt somewhat confused and cheated by the lack of more broad-based commentary. These omissions magnify what I consider the biggest weakness of the book—the generally poor organization and lack of logical flow to the material. For example, I found the use of headings and subheadings to be so baffling that I often could not get a clear sense of the major sections and structure within each chapter.

There is not a great deal of innovative thought to be found in this book. That does not mean the text is not

worthwhile, however. The author has managed to bring together a solid “tool box” for marketing strategy students. I found the presentation of some of the traditional strategy frameworks such as Porter’s Five Forces Model, the Boston Consulting Group’s (BCG) Growth-Share Matrix, and discussion of differentiation versus cost leadership strategies to be rather uninspired. Given the decades of weak empirical support for many of these ideas, I think a more imaginative (or at least critical) perspective is necessary. For example, George Day (1990) freshened up the Five Forces Model by adding some additional dimensions to Porter’s work. Schnaars should have done a similar rethinking of some of these somewhat dated frameworks.

There are some areas of the book that were particularly well-done. Chapter 2 (“A Brief History of Marketing Strategy”) presents a concise and interesting historical view of the evolution of marketing strategy thought from the 1950s’ budgeting era to more current themes such as the quest for superior customer satisfaction. Schnaars has a strong grasp of the basic economic principles that influence strategy dynamics. This is particularly evident in his discussion of the evolution of products, markets, and new technologies (chapter 11). Finally, I found his discussion of *speed* as a strategy in itself (chapter 12) to be perhaps the most novel contribution of the work. He provides a thoughtful discussion of the reduced planning, innovation, and response cycle times that have resulted from heightened competitive pressures in many industries.

In addition to the content material, this book offers numerous one- to two-page minicase studies. These are generally quite fresh and add interesting illustrations to the concepts discussed. These were used to excess in some cases, however. For example, the chapter on competitive dynamics has seven of these vignettes—several more than are needed to do the job.

In the content of the book, the biggest omission is the lack of attention to the process elements of marketing strategy. While a host of normative ideas and frameworks are presented, the processes of strategy formulation, implementation, and control are given no discussion. This may be a personal bias, but I feel these areas warrant attention—students must understand the issues organizations face in trying to reach the strategic ideals espoused in the text.

Schnaars is a fine writer. He presents material in an engaging and highly readable manner. While he avoids academic jargon and superfluous details in the text, he does offer enough relevant references at the end of chapters to allow for deeper study. Some of the exhibits he offers would make for interesting classroom discussion. For example, Schnaars’s case histories of imitators that later surpassed pioneers were interesting and effective. In all, this is a solid companion book for marketing management and strategy courses. Its usefulness could be improved significantly, however, with some fairly superficial improvements. Improving the organization of the material, adding more discussion to give students a broader perspective on the material, and perhaps adding a



few more unique and creative insights would make this an even better work.

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Day, George S. 1990. *Market Driven Strategy: Processes for Creating Value*. New York: Free Press.

Webster, Frederick E. Jr. 1992. "The Changing Role of Marketing in the Corporation." *Journal of Marketing* 56 (4): 1-17.

**Charles Noble**  
**Boston College**

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### *Marketing Campaigns*

by Diane Canwell  
London, UK: International Thomson Publishing,  
1998, 162 pages

A successful marketing campaign incorporates many different things. Diane Canwell's *Marketing Campaigns* covers everything from the initial stages of planning to reviewing an implemented campaign. This book not only will appeal to those educated in marketing but will also attract novice marketers with very little knowledge in the "do's" and "don'ts" of marketing. Canwell also provides a diskette with the book that will aid in the planning and production of a successful marketing campaign.

One of the many strengths of this book is the thorough, yet comprehensible, way in which Canwell explains the material. For example, in the chapter on pricing the product, Canwell not only mentions the different types of cost that make up the final price of the product; she goes into detail as to what each cost incorporates and how it affects the overall price. This "easy-to-read" way of writing allows Canwell to entice many different types of readers and prevents her from alienating the less experienced and knowledgeable.

Another key aspect of this book is the many example charts and sample plans that accompany each chapter. These examples and plans give the reader a chance to see the material in a more clearly defined way. This allows the reader to place his or her own information into the charts and plans and lets him or her test the ideas for a potential marketing campaign.

The longest chapter of *Marketing Campaigns* handles the aspect of promotion. The chosen forms of promotion can either make or break your campaign, which makes this chapter the most important, in my opinion. This section covers all forms from print ads to television and radio spots. Canwell presents the pros and cons of each in a very impartial and objective way. She informs the reader of the costs and benefits of the different types, and does not sugar-coat anything. Canwell presents all of her material in a very candid and well-informed way. All of the chapters of the book are outlined and summarized for the reader to

easily understand the author's direction and scope of the material.

This book, *Marketing Campaigns*, is a well-organized, informative piece of material, presented in a very professional manner. To the informed marketer, this book may seem redundant, but to the beginner, *Marketing Campaigns* is very enlightening and instructive. I would highly recommend this book to anyone beginning their own business venture or anyone just wanting to broaden their knowledge of the marketing field.

**Jennifer Moisan**  
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### *Business to Business Marketing*

by Victor Hunter and David Tietzen  
Lincolnwood, IL: NTC Business Books, 1997, 326  
pages

B. Charles Ames noted in 1970 that marketing in the industrial world is a total business philosophy, based on improving performance by identifying the needs of each key customer group. The same is just as true today, but performance requirements have substantially toughened. Sales training costs have increased as product life cycles shorten and industrial products become more complex. Executives demand increasingly more accountability from their sales and marketing staff. To survive in today's environment, sales tools and marketing models need to be carefully honed and refined.

Hunter and Tietzen provide much practical substance to doing precisely what Ames had envisioned. They detail a total business industrial marketing philosophy by focusing on the process of developing an integrated approach to customer retention, managing contacts, and promoting loyalty. Focusing on the total lifetime value of the customer, they note that firms increasingly need to base their marketing around the fact that customer loyalty drives revenue growth and profitability. Databases can help to do this.

Certainly, the main tenet of this approach, helping firms to develop a community of customers through long-term relationships, should be hardly surprising to marketers. The positive profit impact of focusing on customer retention by taking customer defections out of the system has certainly become well understood to managers by now. The tough issue is how to accomplish this, given organizational pressures to minimizing costs.

Several solutions to this problem are found among the pages of this compact and clearly written book. For example, if firms reduce costly face-to-face sales calls and replace them by more timely and responsive mail and phone contacts, perceived service levels can actually increase. The authors note that firms with a field sales force can realize an immediate 15 percent decrease in sales expense to revenues simply by better integrating customer

contacts. Face-to-face encounters must be carefully used and leveraged with other contact tools.

Important discussions in the book are devoted to the issue of managing communication with the customer in a cost context. Sales and marketing may be the primary revenue generators for a business-to-business company, but the costs of these functions are particularly important to watch in competitive markets as profit margins shrink or volumes decline. Costs must be carefully controlled while maintaining or increasing customer satisfaction levels through better sales support and customer services.

Managing customer relationships while controlling costs is now greatly assisted through the use of databases and computerized tools. Integrating sales with databases—and otherwise managing a firm's information infrastructure—is becoming increasingly relevant to a broader span of industrial organizations. The advanced technologies that enable the creation of databases and other information tools are treated as a secondary matter, however. Far more important is the customer orientation that drives decisions, the analysis and understanding of contact preferences to enable effective communication with customers. In this book, customer-oriented concepts are clearly overriding in importance in strategically managing information resources.

### Building Loyalty and Community

The book tries to document the steps necessary to build sustainable customer relationships that lead to loyalty and community. The centerpiece of this approach to industrial marketing management is a database that supports managers who run what the authors call a "Customer Community Center" or "C<sup>3</sup>." This is the organizational backbone to "making it easier for the customer to do business with you." Besides the computer, the telephone clearly plays a central role in the process. The C<sup>3</sup> can centralize activities, including telemarketing, order entry, and inventory tracking, as well as command such areas as customer information and customer service support.

A centrally directed and organized database to serve customer-oriented needs is clearly a central management challenge and few writers have comprehensively highlighted this concern. The C<sup>3</sup> concept is based on a highly informed view of the industrial sales potential of telemarketing, customer service, and contact management, as well as of the synergistic effects of combining and integrating these functions. Hunter and Tietyen provide a useful means of conceiving, planning, creating, and managing a multifunctional customer-oriented services center that can substantially aid sales and marketing initiatives. While their concern is capitalizing on the benefits of using information to support sales and drive marketing, it is surprising that there is no discussion of new electronic modalities that could support and expand functionality of the C<sup>3</sup> concept, such as teleconferencing, electronic networks, or the Internet.

Given that the once central role of the salesperson is fundamentally changing in industrial organizations,

marketing executives need to seriously consider the telemarketing and database support functions that aid their operations. Salespeople are becoming problem solvers and conduits of information who increasingly act in partnership with their clients. Customers, on their part, more frequently value immediate accessibility and responsiveness of salespeople rather than face-to-face encounters.

The book attempts to take a practical approach, expressed without theoretical discussion or technical background, and is clearly oriented to practitioners. A close reading can provide many useful ideas for marketing, sales, communication, and information managers as they move to integrate and share functions in evolving industrial organizations. Numerous examples are cited, but few are discussed so extensively that would make reading the book burdensome or tiring. For details on the specifics of setting up database marketing systems, readers will have to look elsewhere.

The community-based and relationship-based ideas driving discussions in later chapters are not fully developed or explored, but at least they are congruent with the recent trends in academic research. Parallels to these ideas can be found in the relationship marketing literature, the strategic literature on quality and supplier sourcing, and even community-directed discussions concerning the Internet. Positive and reactive network relationships among interdependent partners in a supply chain are understood in each of these research areas as an important opportunity, yet there are few practical and integrated approaches put forth to manage such complex relationships. Community-related ideas are clearly an important conceptual development relevant to industrial marketers and these will likely be further explored by firms in coming years.

In sum, Hunter and Tietyen take an approach that is realistically rooted in selecting, understanding, and serving loyal customers who have the greatest potential lifetime value for the firm. In quickly changing environments, executives need to keep in touch with critical sales and customer information to direct their strategies and should take note of these ideas. No doubt the book's approach has been shaped and informed by Victor Hunter's consulting work and his advisory role for *Target Marketing* magazine. The insights he contributes to constructing and using databases evidence considerable experience. To industrial marketing managers pondering the difficult organizational and planning problems of integrating functions, using databases, and coping with new technologies—while remaining close to the customer and meeting sales objectives—the book can be a useful aid.

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## ***McDonaldization Revisited: Critical Essays on Consumer Culture***

by Mark Alfino, John S. Caputo, and Robin Wynyard  
Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998, 201 pages, hard cover:  
\$59.95, paperback: \$19.95

A number of scholars examine the thesis of George Ritzer's *McDonaldization of Society*, which was written for both academicians and practitioners and set off a flurry of positive and negative discussion in the academic arena. It is because of this academic reflection that it seemed important to produce *McDonaldization Revisited* to discuss the theoretical underpinnings of *McDonaldization of Society* from multiple points of view. Thus, in this book, the idea of "McDonaldization" being a foregone conclusion is being challenged.

The main theories discussed and compared in the book originated with the sole theorist used by Ritzer, one of the founding fathers of sociology, Max Weber. Weber attempts to deal in the main with how individuals make choices; justify the choices made; and how, from these choices, they develop and form future action. Using Ritzer's discussions intertwined with Weber's theories as a premise, the book provides a fertile backdrop for agreement and/or disagreement of Ritzer's original text.

The book is a rich collection of essays focusing on multiple areas of consumer culture, as well as across disciplines, analyzing the premise of McDonaldization. It provides theoretical discussions of the relationship between Ritzer's analysis and semiotics, critical theory, feminism, postmodernism as well as a myriad of other areas of interest.

For continuity, the authors of the essays define McDonaldization as "increased efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control through substitution of human labor power with technology and instrumental rationalization" (p. viii), which can be found in the original text. In his original work, Ritzer used McDonald's fast-food restaurants to examine both production and consumption and apply it to a wide range of economic, political, social, and cultural artifacts and processes. *McDonaldization Revisited* uses the knowledge of multiple authors of varying disciplines and backgrounds from England, Scotland, and across the United States giving the writings a great deal of depth and diversity.

While the first book may have been for both academicians and practitioners, this book is written more for

demicians and less for practitioners. To fully appreciate the writings, your mind cannot stray but must stay on task to truly evaluate what the author(s) are presenting for analysis.

The book begins by examining and analyzing the basic theories from Ritzer's original work and then continues with a more in-depth analysis of human differences from multiple points of view. While some works speak directly to specific issues comparing old and new ideas of McDonaldization, others discuss the topic in general. Ideas are also discussed and examples given from both a national and international perspective, which adds another contextual dimension.

Those who contributed to this volume acknowledge the extent of Ritzer's contribution to the thinking of complex sociological concepts but discuss other opinions based on his arguments and analyze both Ritzer's and Weber's theoretical discussions from every possible dimension and often come to interesting, alternative conclusions. Thus, many of the authors conclude by suggesting caution and restraint when interpreting and applying Ritzer's ideas.

Although the book attempts to stand alone and often does a good job of introducing the topic of discussion by first giving a synopsis of Ritzer's original work, for the reader to receive maximum benefit of the book's discussions he or she needs to have read, or at least be familiar with, the ideas laid out in *McDonaldization of Society*.

As a collection of essays, the book would be more for the graduate student than the undergraduate. It would make an excellent supplemental text for a graduate class already familiar with, or just learning about, the theories presented. It would be an excellent source of material for assessing and arguing various theories as well as assessing possible flaws in the flow of discussion, both in terms of Ritzer's arguments and those being presented by the various authors.

The authors are passionate in their analysis and discussion. It is a challenging book that assesses and explores different avenues of consumption in capitalist societies, the focus they each take, and the influence they have on the human experience. Thus, no matter which side of the fence you found yourself on when reading Ritzer's original work, *McDonaldization Revisited* will make you stop and reevaluate the different perspectives of the *McDonaldization of Society*.

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