

 **THIS IS** 
MARKETING

.....

Seth Godin

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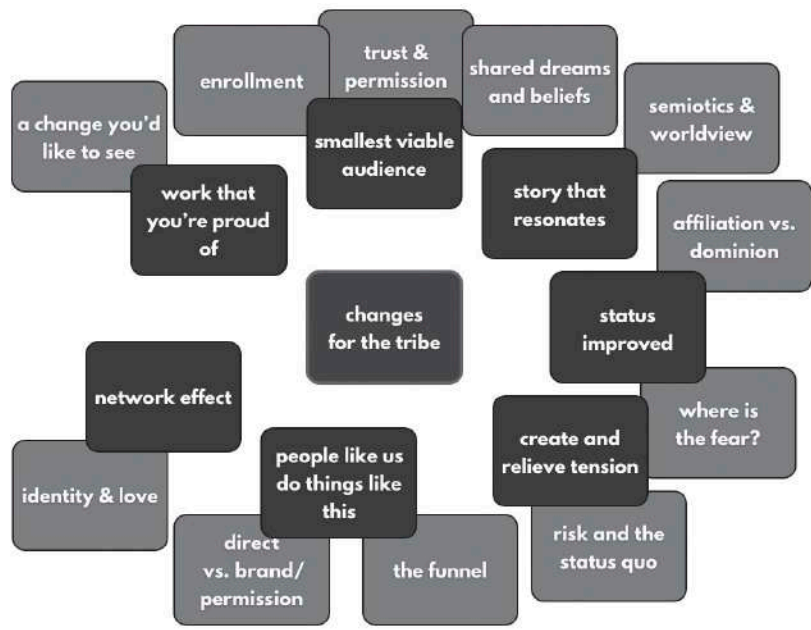
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[a sketch to show you what's to come]

Marketing is all around us. From your very first memories to the moment before you opened this book, you've been inundated by marketing. You learned to read from the logos on the side of the road, and you spend your time and your money in response to what marketers have paid to put in front of you. Marketing, more than a lake or a forest, is the landscape of our modern lives.

Because marketing has been done to us for so long, we take it for granted. Like the fish who doesn't understand water, we fail to see what's actually happening, and don't notice how it's changing us.

It's time to do something else with marketing. To make things better. To cause a change you'd like to see in the world. To grow your project, sure, but mostly to serve the people you care about.

The answer to just about every question about work is really the question, "Who can you help?"

This is marketing

- Marketing seeks *more*. More market share, more customers, more work.
- Marketing is driven by better. Better service, better community, better outcomes.
- Marketing creates culture. Status, affiliation, and people like us.
- Most of all, marketing is change.
- Change the culture, change your world.
- Marketers make change happen.
- Each of us is a marketer, and each of us has the ability to make more change than we imagined. Our opportunity and our obligation is to do marketing that we're proud of.

How tall is your sunflower?

That's what most people seem to care about. How big a brand, how much market share, how many online followers. Too many marketers spend most of their time running a hype show, trying to get just a little bigger.

The thing is, tall sunflowers have deep and complex root systems. Without them, they'd never get very high.

This is a book about roots. About anchoring your work deeply in the dreams, desires, and communities of those you seek to serve. It's about changing people for the better, creating work you can be proud of. And it's about being a driver of the market, not simply being market-driven.

We can do work that matters for people who care. If you're like most of my readers, I don't think you'd have it any other way.

It's not going to market itself

The best ideas aren't instantly embraced. Even the ice cream sundae and the stoplight took years to catch on.

That's because the best ideas require significant change. They fly in the face of the status quo, and inertia is a powerful force.

Because there's a lot of noise and a lot of distrust. Change is risky.

And because we often want others to go first.

Your most generous and insightful work needs help finding the people it's meant to serve. And your most successful work will spread because you designed it to.

Marketing isn't just selling soap

When you give a TED Talk, you're marketing.

When you ask your boss for a raise, you're marketing.

When you raise money for the local playground, you're marketing.

And yes, when you're trying to grow your division at work, that's marketing too.

For a long time, during the days when marketing and advertising were the same thing, marketing was reserved for vice presidents with a budget.

And now it's for you.

The market decides

You've built something amazing. You have a living to make. Your boss wants more sales. That nonprofit you care about, an important one, needs to raise money. Your candidate is polling poorly. You want the boss to approve your project . . .

Why isn't it working? If creating is the point, if writing and painting and building are so fun, why do we even care if we're found, recognized, published, broadcast, or otherwise commercialized?

Marketing is the act of making change happen. Making is insufficient. You haven't made an impact until you've changed someone.

Changed the boss's mind.

Changed the school system.

Changed demand for your product.

You can do this by creating and then relieving tension. By establishing cultural norms. By seeing status roles and helping to change them (or maintain them).

But first, you need to see it. Then you need to choose to work with human beings to help them find what they're looking for.

How to know if you have a marketing problem

You aren't busy enough.

Your ideas aren't spreading.

The community around you isn't what it could be.

The people you care about aren't achieving everything they hoped.

Your politician needs more votes, your work isn't fulfilling, your customers are frustrated . . .

If you see a way to make things better, you now have a marketing problem.

The answer to a movie

Filmmaker and showrunner Brian Koppelman uses the expression "the answer to a movie," as if a movie is a problem.

But, of course, it is. It's the problem of unlocking the viewer (or the producer, or the actor, or the director). To gain enrollment. To have them let you in. To get a chance to tell your story, and then, even better, to have that story make an impact.

Just as a movie is a problem, so is the story of your marketing. It has to resonate with the listener, to tell them something they've been waiting to hear, something they're open to believing. It has to invite them on a journey where a change might happen. And then, if you've opened all those doors, it has to solve the problem, to deliver on the promise.

You have a marketing question, and it's possible that there's an answer.

But only if you look for it.

Marketing your work is a complaint on the way to better

They say that the best way to complain is to make things better.

It's difficult to do that if you can't spread the word, can't share those ideas, or can't get paid for the work you do.

The first step on the path to make things better is to make better things.

But better isn't only up to you. Better can't happen in a vacuum.

Better is the change we see when the market embraces what we're offering. Better is what happens when the culture absorbs our work and improves. Better is when we make the dreams of those we serve come true.

Marketers make things better by making change happen.

Sharing your path to better is called marketing, and you can do it. We all can.

For more on the ideas in this book, please visit
www.TheMarketingSeminar.com

Marketing to the Most Important Person

Is marketing evil?

If you spend time and money (with skill) you can tell a story that spreads, that influences people, that changes actions. Marketing can cause people to buy something that they wouldn't have bought without marketing, vote for someone they might not have considered, and support an organization that would have been invisible otherwise.

If marketing doesn't work, then a lot of us are wasting a great deal of effort (and cash). But it does.

So, does that make marketing evil? In a story about my blog published in *Time* magazine, the author wrote, tongue in cheek, "Entry you'll never see: Is marketing evil? Based on a long career in the business, I'd have to answer 'yes.'"

Actually, I need to amend what this pundit said. I'll add this entry: Are marketers evil? Based on a long career in the business, I'd have to answer, "Some of them."

I think it's evil to persuade kids to start smoking, to cynically manipulate the electoral or political process, to lie to people in ways that cause disastrous side effects. I think it's evil to sell an ineffective potion when an effective medicine is available. I think it's evil to come up with new ways to make smoking acceptable so you can make a few more bucks.

Marketing is beautiful when it persuades people to get a polio vaccine or to wash their hands before performing

surgery. Marketing is powerful when it sells a product to someone who discovers more joy or more productivity because he bought it. Marketing is magic when it elects someone who changes the community for the better. Ever since Josiah Wedgwood invented marketing a few centuries ago, it has been used to increase productivity and wealth.

I've got a lot of nerve telling you that what you do might be immoral. It's immoral to rob someone's house and burn it to the ground, but is it immoral to market them into foreclosure? Well, if marketing works, if it's worth the time and money we spend on it, then I don't think it matters a bit if you're "just doing your job." It's still wrong.

Just like every powerful tool, the impact comes from the craftsman, not the tool. Marketing has more reach, with more speed, than it has ever had before. With less money, you can have more impact than anyone could have imagined just ten years ago. The question, one I hope you'll ask yourself, is *What are you going to do with that impact?*

For me, marketing works for society when the marketer and consumer are both aware of what's happening and are both satisfied with the ultimate outcome. I don't think it's evil to make someone happy by selling them cosmetics, because beauty isn't the goal—it's the process that brings joy. On the other hand, swindling someone out of their house in order to make a sales commission . . .

Just because you can market something doesn't mean you should. You've got the power, so you're responsible, regardless of what your boss tells you to do.

The good news is that I'm not in charge of what's evil and what's not. You, your customers, and their neighbors are. The even better news is that ethical, public

marketing will eventually defeat the kind that depends on the shadows.

What will you build now?

What do we do about the noise in our heads?

Where do we find the strength to bring our *better* to the world?

Why is it so hard to develop a point of view? Why do we hesitate when we say to the world, “Here, I made this”? And what’s the alternative to hesitating?

These don’t sound like marketing questions, but in fact, if you let them sit unanswered, they’re getting in the way of your marketing. People who aren’t as gifted or generous as you are running circles around you, because they are showing up as professionals. And yet, too many people with something to offer are holding themselves back.

There’s a difference between being good at what you do, being good at making a thing, and being good at marketing. We need your craft, without a doubt. But we need your change even more.

It’s a leap to choose to make change. It feels risky, fraught with responsibility. And it might not work.

If you bring your best self to the world, your best work, and the world doesn’t receive it, it’s entirely possible that your marketing sucked.

It’s entirely possible that you have empathy for what people were feeling.

It’s entirely possible that you chose the wrong axes, and that you failed to go to the edges.

It’s entirely possible you were telling the wrong story to the wrong person in the wrong way on the right day, or even on the wrong day.

Fine, but that's not about you.

That's about your work as a marketer.

And you can get better at that craft.

This thing that we do—whether it's surgery or gardening or marketing—it's not *us*, it's the work that we do.

We're humans. Our work isn't us. As humans, we can choose to do the work, and we can choose to improve our work.

If we're going to take it personally every time someone doesn't click on a link, every time someone doesn't renew, we can't possibly do our work as professionals. And thus we get stuck in search of perfect. Stuck without empathy. Stuck in a corner, bleeding and in pain, because we've been personally maligned.

One way to avoid that is to realize that marketing is a process and a craft.

Just because the pot you made on the wheel broke in the kiln doesn't mean you're not a good person. It simply means your pot broke and that maybe some lessons in pottery will help you go forward. You're capable of doing better.

Realize that as a marketer, the *better* you are trying to teach or sell to the right person is worth far more than what you are charging.

If you are seeking to raise money for a charity, someone who donates a hundred or a thousand or a million dollars is only going to do it if they get more value than it costs them to donate. If you're selling a widget for a thousand dollars, the only people who buy it will buy it because they believe it's worth more than a thousand dollars.

We bring value to the world when we market. That's why people engage with us.

If you don't market the change you'd like to contribute, then you're stealing.

Here you are offering more value than you're charging. It's a bargain. A gift.

If you hesitate to market your offering properly, it's not that you're being shy. It's not that you're being circumspect. It's that you're stealing, because there's someone who needs to learn from you, engage with you, or buy from you.

Someone will benefit from your better if you get out of your way and market it.

There's a student who's ready to sign up. There's somebody who wants a guide, who wants to go somewhere. If you hesitate to extend yourself with empathy, to hear them, you're letting us down.

The marketer's contribution is willingness to see and be seen.

To do that, we need to be able to market to ourselves, to sell ourselves every day. To sell ourselves on the difference we're able to make, if we persist with generosity and care.

You're already telling yourself a story. Every day.

We may market to ourselves that we are struggling. We may tell ourselves that we are unknown and deserve to be unknown. We may tell ourselves that we're a fake, a fraud, a manipulator. We may tell ourselves that we are unjustly ignored.

They're as true as we want them to be. And if you tell yourself a story enough times, you will make it true.

Make things better. It's entirely possible that the thing you are marketing satisfies no real demand, there is no good strategy behind it, and that you are being selfish in thinking that just because you built it you should stick with it.

Blow it up. Start over. Make something you're proud of. Market something you're proud of. But once you've done that, once you've looked someone in the eye and they have asked, "Will you do that again for me?" once you have brought value to a student because you taught them and helped them get to the next step, do it again, and then do it again. Because we need your contribution. And if you're having trouble making your contribution, realize your challenge is a story you are marketing to yourself.

It is the marketing we do for ourselves, to ourselves, by ourselves, the story we tell ourselves, that can change everything. It's what's going to enable you to create value, to be missed if you were gone.

I can't wait to see what you build next.

A Simple Marketing Worksheet

- Who's it for?
- What's it for?
- What is the worldview of the audience you're seeking to reach?
- What are they afraid of?
- What story will you tell? Is it true?
- What change are you seeking to make?
- How will it change their status?
- How will you reach the early adopters and neophiliacs?
- Why will they tell their friends?
- What will they tell their friends?
- Where's the network effect that will propel this forward?
- What asset are you building?
- Are you proud of it?