

From the author of the #1 Amazon Bestseller '*How to Launch a Brand*'

FABIAN GEYRHALTER

Foreword by David Glaze, Creative Director, AMAZON

BIG GER THAN | *this* |

*How to turn any venture
into an admired brand.*

"Don't just read this book...put it to work inside your company."

William C. Taylor, Co-Founder, FAST COMPANY

BIGGER THAN | *this* |

by Fabian Geyrhalter

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This book is dedicated to those entrepreneurs who are driven to launch brands rooted in empathy for humanity.

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FOREWORD

by David Glaze, *Creative Director, AMAZON*

Authenticity. Like *storytelling*, *disruption* and the dreaded *innovator*, *authenticity* has become one of those buzzwords that gets tossed around with abandon, often vaguely twisted into copy in the hopes of riding a current marketing wave and ultimately blurring its actual meaning. However, like all such overwrought terms, the concept is actually based in an underlying truth...authenticity is indeed a valuable brand attribute, so long as it is, well, authentic. In *Bigger Than*

This, Fabian Geyrhalter quickly moves beyond the clichés, identifying key building blocks of an authentic brand and specific ways to leverage them. In a delightfully concise, rapid-fire read, he makes the case for rediscovering the spark in seemingly mundane commodity products and services. Brands need not be radically new to inspire passion, he argues, but thoughtful and honest in finding, telling and embracing their story.

We all want to believe our favorite brands have a soul. Not so long ago, advertisers had the luxury of telling whatever story they chose with little chance of negative consequences. We were willing to suspend our admittedly less-developed cynicism to embrace brand stories we could relate (or aspire) to. No matter that our corn flakes were mass-produced in enormous factories; there was a nurturing breakfast in every bowl...the box clearly said so. Some

cigarettes would make us sexy, others hip or macho. Brands told us what they “believed” in, and we believed what they told us. Activists or regulators would occasionally burst the brand bubble of a particularly bad actor, but generally we were left to our contented illusions.

Then came the Internet and social media. Suddenly consumers have the ability to share their individual brand experiences and echo those of others. No institution, individual or product is safe from scrutiny. Many once-revered brands have been revealed to be not so much interested in our well-being as their bottom lines, their stories simply fabricated to appeal to a particular target market. Banks, cable companies, food producers, telecoms, insurance companies...the list goes on and on.

At the same time, technological innovation has exploded, challenging us not only with

an ongoing deluge of new devices and services but also whole new ways of interacting with each other and the world at large. This flood of information and paradigm shifting can all feel rather sterile and overwhelming, even for digital natives. The soul is missing.

It's no surprise, then, that consumers are embracing brands, both new and old, that convey simplicity, caring and craftsmanship. It's also no surprise that this trend creates an enormous opportunity for commodity products. We inherently understand commodity products: a watch that just tells time, a shoe that just protects feet, a whisky that's just for drinking as is, no explanation needed. And who wouldn't be more interested in reading an engaging founder's story than a magazine-thick instruction manual?

The author's genuine enthusiasm for this topic is infectious. I've known Fabian for almost two

decades, since we worked together to bring the car brand Acura to life in the digital world. His passion and optimism for the process of reimagining existing brands and birthing new ones seems to have only grown over the years, along with his considerable expertise. Perhaps most refreshingly, Fabian's impatience for marketing fluff and business-speak keeps him focused on sharing insights for action. *Bigger Than This* is no collection of philosophical musings but rather a guidebook for finding the potential in even the most mundane product or service. Expect your copy to become dog-eared...you're likely to find yourself referencing it again and again.

– David Glaze, Creative Director, Amazon

FOREWORD

BRANDS IN COSTUMES

About *Bigger Than This*

It is the Saturday night before Halloween as I start writing this book. Outside of our house, mayhem ensues. It is coordinated and focused mayhem: people are dressed up in costumes that are sexier, creepier and funnier than who they truly are.

Dressing up for Halloween is a great analogy for how many educated consumers see branding: a fake persona is crafted to evoke emotions from a specific audience in order to achieve a predetermined goal. Brands don't often try to

scare customers to get their attention as people might on Halloween, but in the end the game of dress-up is at the core of much of the marketing, advertising and branding that exists today. It sounds as calculated as it in fact can be, but fortunately this approach is on its way out. Brands are being forced to leave the costumes to humans during Halloween. Instead they opt for complete transparency and engaging, open conversations because of the rise of social media and the birth of a generation ready to participate, as long as the brand's approach is inclusive and amicable. It is a great moment for consumers but a scary one for big brands that are not adapting. The moment presents a huge opportunity for agile startups ready to connect with a large audience in deep ways almost instantaneously.

As I rode my bike down the beach for a weekend ride recently, the song "Moving Moun-

| “ |

Instead of
moving
mountains
let the
mountains
move you.

| **SKYLAR GREY, "MOVING MOUNTAINS"**

THE RESURGENCE OF COMMODITY BRANDS IN TIMES OF INNOVATION AND DISRUPTION

We live in times of amazingly fast technological advancements. Every day we learn of a new jaw-dropping innovation, try a new app that creates fresh conveniences, test a service that is even easier to use than the one we relied on yesterday. These services allow us to receive our purchases at a speed we could have only dreamed of just two

years ago (e.g., Amazon Prime Now, which delivers online orders within an hour). Many services come with a human attached – someone who actually walks us through every step of whatever product we have just received upon delivery. Enjoy, the company that delivers tech to your home, for instance, comes with a “consultant” in tow, who sets up everything for you.

You won't read about those companies here. I am writing about a subject that has barely been explored: companies that launch seemingly boring commodity products into this world without edgy technology but manage to transform themselves into staple household brands for urbanites and beyond. They are brands such as TOMS shoes and Shinola watches. Their marketing to consumers is not built around new product benefits, significantly different features or a big innovative design vision, just commodity shoes and commodity watch-

es. Still, consumers have gone nuts for them.

These brands strive for what I call the **AND?DNA**. The AND?DNA is the search for something that was not inherent in the DNA of their offering but in the DNA of their carefully crafted and authentic brand story.

When they introduce their very basic products to consumers, the natural question anyone would ask is, “And?” – as in, “And why should I buy these very basic shoes?” These brands can answer the “And?” question with an intriguing, convincing and honest answer that adds a new layer to the brand's DNA: the story.

“And?”

is a question that brands selling a commodity must answer on several levels, and so should you:

“And why would a consumer suddenly deeply care about your perhaps plain offering?”

“And how do you tell a bigger, relatable and sustainable story around your offering that can turn it into a beloved brand?”

“And why do you and, if applicable, your employees devote your time to this particular offering, turning it from simply a day job into a daily passion with all of your heart and soul?”

**“It’s not what
we do but how
we do it.”**

The IOAN Team – Wall graphic at the Industry of All Nations flagship store in Venice, CA

Embracing commodities is a counter-move-

BIGGER THAN | *this* |



THE 8 COMMODITY BRAND TRAITS AND THEIR COMMANDMENTS

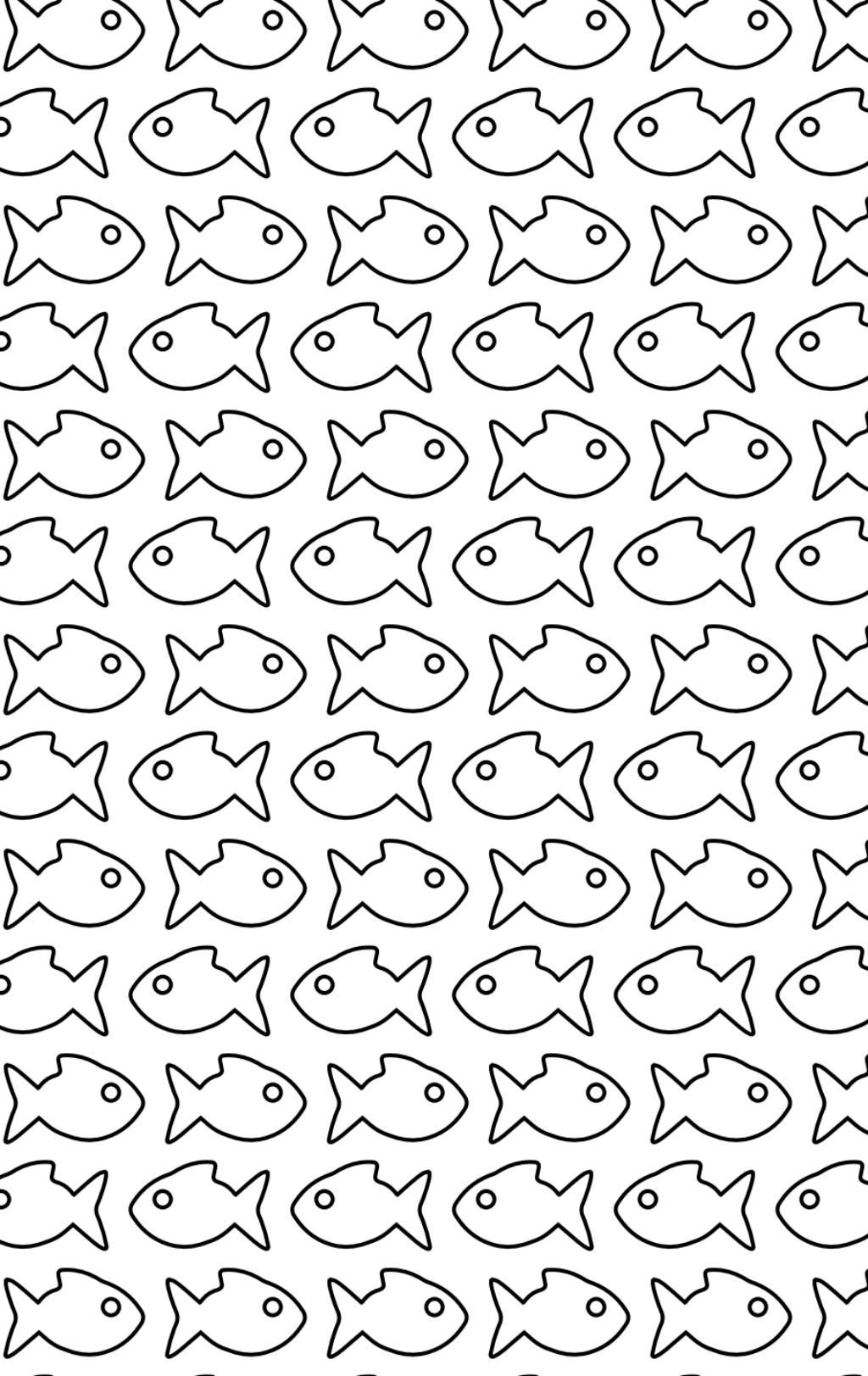
When someone recommends a business book to me, I always ask, “What was the biggest takeaway for you?” When they tell me, I usually nod and feel grateful for having learned something. Then they add that I should really check it out. I don’t, and here is why: if a book has one big takeaway, I usually feel that my time is better spent learning about another 20 books’ key takeaways and start implementing them in my business or my personal life. That pos-

sibly superficial, possibly negligent and very short-of-attention attitude of mine now comes full circle by turning into a definite benefit to you, the reader, as I am distilling my recommendations into as few pages and clearly labeled points as possible to make this book enjoyable and actionable for you.

Here are the eight traits and their commandments that your brand can obey to win (more) hearts. Adopt one; adopt many. As you will learn, today's commodity ventures that understand branding at the root level (of unique positioning) rarely stick to only one of these; they connect in many of the following ways with their tribe.

If you intrinsically believe in some of these commandments, if you are ready to fully embody them, then they are not marketing techniques anymore. **They will turn into your unique brand positioning**

within your industry, allowing you to connect on a deeper level with your audience and subsequently stand out in a sea of sameness.



|| 1 ||

STORY

When the background story is
bigger than the product



Most of us buy brand stories all the time. These stories are often attached to a commodity product. You can find many examples in today's biggest brands, from Dove owning genuine beauty to Starbucks coining a coffee lingo its customers actually use. As Revlon founder Charles Revson famously said about his cosmetics brand,

“In the factory we make cosmetics; in the store we sell hope.”

Today's startups continue this tradition in both their internal and external branding efforts. Airbnb hired an artist from famed animation studio Pixar to help align its team around its customer service goals and plans to expand its mobile presence, creating stories of the experiences of the host, guest and a hiring manager. The stories exemplified the brand in action and influenced the way the organization worked, as *Fast Company* detailed at the time.ⁱ

Stories about a brand are also a powerful way to align consumers around its message. A recent study by the research firm Origin found that consumers are 5% more likely to pick a wine if it features written notes by the wine-maker, and they are willing to pay 6% more for it. That is powerful storytelling with immediate return on investment. Another study by PR firm MWWPRⁱⁱ found that more than a third of the U.S. population ages 18–80 belongs to a group



RESOURCES

Easily share quotations from this book with your colleagues and entrepreneurially minded peers. –

BiggerThanThis.com

Gain continuous branding insights and actionable advice by signing up for my regular blog updates (we throw in our latest brand name and design case studies as well). –

NewBrandPost.com

Download free comprehensive white papers on topics surrounding a successful brand launch from brand strategy to naming and brand architecture. –

Finien.com/WhitePapers

Need swift, personalized brand advice? Schedule a brief call with me using Clarity. I would love to connect. –

Clarity.fm/FabianGeyrhalter

To work with me and/or my consultancy FINIEN on your brand strategy, name or brand identity design, or to book me for a workshop, panel or speaking engagement, e-mail me directly. –

fgeyrhalter@finien.com



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fabian Geyrhalter is a renowned **brand strategist** and the **founder** and principal of **FINIEN**, a Los Angeles-based consultancy specializing in turning ventures into brands.

Geyrhalter is a columnist for **Inc.** and **Forbes**, and his thoughts on branding have been published by the *Washington Post*, *Mashable*, *Entrepreneur* and the *Huffington Post*. A frequent speaker and mentor to entrepreneurs worldwide, he is a Global 100 mentor at the **Founder Institute** and author of the #1 Amazon Bestseller **How to Launch a Brand**. Geyrhalter regularly judges international design competitions and is an active jury member of the **Academy of Interactive & Visual Arts**. His branding work has won numerous accolades, including 32 *American Graphic Design Awards*. Geyrhalter is an advisory board member of *Santa Monica College* and served as an adjunct professor at **USC** and **Art Center College of Design**. He is further serving as consulting Executive Creative Strategist at **Urban Insight**, a leading technology consulting firm, managing the intersection of brand vision and creative digital strategy.

His consultancy's client list ranges from **high-growth startups** such as *Jukin Media*, *Survios* and *Vimmia* to **established brands** such as *Honeywell*, *Warner Brothers*, the *Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*, *Goodwill*, *W Hotels* and *Evolution Juice*.

Geyrhalter was born in **Vienna, Austria**, lives and works in **Long Beach, California**, and is a graduate of *Art Center College of Design*.

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Bigger Than This is a quick read about the deceptively difficult task of turning your venture into an admired brand.

Inspired by a new wave of commodity brands that is winning hearts, using the eight traits and their commandments in this book will guide you to your specific path to turning your venture, may that be a commodity product or a hot startup, into a better, more beloved brand.

"In Bigger Than This, Fabian Geyrhalter offers a set of ideas and a collection of case studies to help you create long-lasting value in head-spinning times."

William C. Taylor, Co-Founder, **FAST COMPANY** and Author of **Simply Brilliant**

"Bigger Than This is a small book with a very big font and an even bigger idea."

Shaun Smith, Author of **ON PURPOSE: Delivering a Branded Customer Experience People Love**

"The author's genuine enthusiasm for this topic is infectious. Expect your copy to become dog-eared...you're likely to find yourself referencing it again and again."

David Glaze, Creative Director, **AMAZON**

"Essential reading for any entrepreneur who wants their brand to be more empathetic."

Heather McGough, Co-Founder, **LEAN STARTUP CO.**

"Bigger Than This is full of case studies, insights and analysis that explore the best ways in which to turn a business into a brand."

Brittany Golob, Editor, **TRANSFORM MAGAZINE**

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