

# Radically Different

**Radical strategies to help you  
differentiate your business in  
a hyper competitive world**

**STEVE BALLANTYNE**

If you're a small  
business or  
brand, or want to  
behave like one,  
this book will  
radically change  
how you think  
about marketing.

# A few words before we get started

One of the frustrations I have with most marketing books is that they're often written around one idea. One idea that the author keeps regurgitating, in a whole bunch of boring in-depth case studies starring all the predictable suspects - Apple, Google, Virgin, Tesla, Uber etc.

This book is a little different.

It's based on a 7-stage framework (called The Road to Differentiation) that I've developed to help small brands and businesses radically stand out from their competitors. I'll talk more about this on page 34.

It also includes lots of practical, real-world examples that will inspire you to be *radically different* in your business category.

There's over 80 examples in the book!

The advice in this book is not academic theory – it is practical wisdom distilled from over 30 years working at the marketing coalface throughout Australasia and the world.

My ideas are based on real world insights and experiences.

Throughout my career I have worked for hundreds of small and medium-sized businesses and have founded / invested in a number of consultancies in recruitment marketing, digital marketing, B2B marketing and branding. I currently run a brand consultancy called Brand IQ.

I'm passionate about helping people find their radical difference. Over my lifetime I've found that every time I've made a big step forward that's dramatically changed my life, it's been because there's been a radical change to my mindset and approach. I encourage you to do the same.

My sincere hope is that after reading this book, you'll be able to use the practical ideas within it straight away to help you radically differentiate your business or brand.

Whether you run a small brewery, a software company, a consulting business, a retail store, a gym, educational institute or a health coaching business... this book will give you the tools to stand out from your competition and thrive. Ultimately, and ideally, to win more customers, make more money and have fun along the way.

And in the spirit of differentiation, I'm going to do something you wouldn't ordinarily do – and that's offer you something right at the outset.

*After reading the book you can apply the principles to your business yourself in your own good time. But if you'd like to start straight after I'll help you apply the principles most relevant to your specific business in a personal, intensive, 60-minute coaching session via Zoom. I normally charge \$450 for my coaching sessions but as a valued reader of my book, it's just \$200. You don't even need to pay upfront, in fact if you don't find the coaching valuable, I won't charge you at all. Here's where you can [book your session](#).*

**I hope you enjoy the book and if you have any ideas or general feedback about how I can improve the next edition, please email me at: [steve@brandiq.co.nz](mailto:steve@brandiq.co.nz)**



*Don't forget to check out The Radically Different Ad Gallery on page 136 where I have collated some of my favourite ad campaigns.*

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# You must be radically different to survive

You're at a party. Everyone there is cool, with their groovy threads, perfect hair, dance moves, and easy knack of banter. Your jeans are, well, jeans; your hair is styled, and you dance like everyone else. But although you spent some time and effort preparing, no one is checking you out. You feel invisible, and certainly not in the mood for a party.

Sucks, doesn't it? But, you know, you'll get over it. But it's a lot more serious when it happens in business.

The bad news is there are a lot of small businesses and brands feeling invisible and ignored. Small businesses today face a more competitive atmosphere than we've ever witnessed. The internet, along with the coronavirus pandemic, has created an environment of extreme global competition.

## **The good news is, you can change that**

How? Turn on the news and the message couldn't be clearer. The more radical you are, the more attention you get. Radical entrepreneurs, activist groups, artists, politicians, leaders, ideologies, and marketers - these are the ones getting airtime and attention.

So, it's simple. To get noticed, you must be *radically different*.

When everyone's wearing blue jeans, chuck on the fluoro pink pedal-pushers. When everyone's presenting in PowerPoint, make a video, complete with your favourite obscure song. Because if you're not standing out, you're invisible, and to survive in today's cut-throat marketplace, you can't afford to be.

In this book, I'll show you how to be *radically different* - without breaking the bank - and I'll share plenty of inspiring examples to help you get there.

## **Competition is global**

Competition is intense. The digital revolution has resulted in facing off against your competitors on a global field.

The overload of media, ads, messages and information gives customers unlimited options at their fingertips – options that create competition across product categories. Your prospective customers might have been ready to buy your product, but they often get disrupted by a barrage of ads for a multitude of other products and services clamouring for a share of their wallet.

In this context, consumers are less likely to be loyal to a particular brand when they are inundated with offers from cheaper, better, or more convenient alternatives. And because consumers want instant gratification, you can lose them in a click.

The coronavirus pandemic has amplified the competition. Our homes have become the center of our lives as public places carry the risk of virus transmission. Businesses have adjusted by catering to less physical interaction and more digital interaction. As a result, people are buying differently - even people who had never purchased anything online prior to the pandemic have been persuaded by the ease and safety of online shopping.

With digital transactions, chatbots and virtual consultations now the norm, the playing field for businesses is indeed massive. If you have a small business in Australia, you can sell to anyone in the world. We are in uncharted waters. And the disconcerting fact is, you're only going to survive and thrive if you can clarify and amplify what makes you meaningfully different.

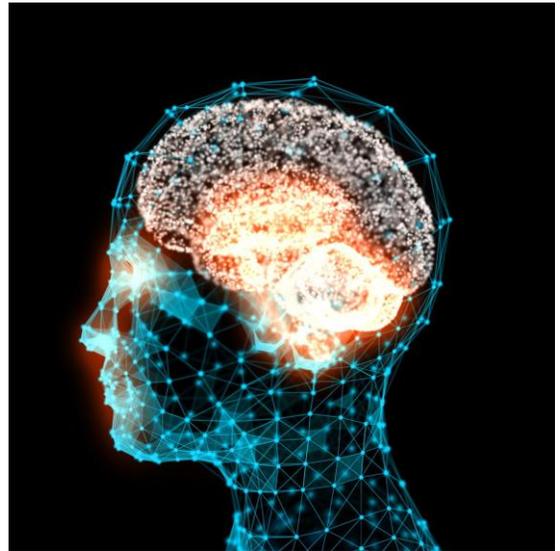
## **We see what is distinct**

Speaking of survival, as our human ancestors evolved on the savannah our Stone Age brains preserved the traits that contributed to survival. After all, if you didn't have strong survival traits, you weren't likely to produce offspring that would survive either.

As our ancestors' eyes surveyed the plains, their brains prioritised what to observe and what to ignore. It was a matter of energy conservation. They couldn't squander precious carbohydrates processing every little thing.

But noticing something unexpected in the corner of your vision could either save your life or provide food, so that thing that stood out from the landscape was worthy of attention.

Believe it or not, our brain hasn't changed much in the last 10,000 years. It's not enough time for significant genetic modification to have occurred. We still don't process everything we see. We are hardwired to notice what is different. The more extreme the contrast is, the more visible the contrasting element becomes.



Recent studies show how our brain uses neural patterns to compare our expectations – what we've experienced in the past – with what is happening in the present. Researchers identified a feedback loop where high frequency waves of neural activity relayed an error message when we see something we don't expect.

In other words, noticing something different makes our brain light up and pay attention immediately.

Ok, so what does this mean for your small business or brand in a world where there are many others targeting the same audience as you?

### **You must be *radically different***

You may have heard of the term differentiation. David Parker defines it as a benefit or set of benefits that meaningfully and favourably distinguishes you from your competition and for which customers are willing to pay.

But that's not enough anymore. To survive - and thrive - you must be *radically different* in a meaningful way that your customers value.

People expect outstanding customer service.

They expect a high-quality product or service.

They expect to have multiple options laid out on a slick website.

And most of your competitors are delivering all the above.

So, excelling in any or all these areas will not make you *radically different*.

They simply make you the same as everyone else.

As a small brand or business owner, you need the skills, knowledge and desire to be *radically different* or you will end up looking and sounding like everyone you're competing against. Being reliable is no longer enough anymore - you must be remarkable in a way that's meaningful to your customers.

*"In a crowded marketplace, fitting in is failing. In a busy marketplace, not standing out is the same as being invisible."*

Seth Godin

## **It's David vs Goliath on a global scale**

The problem is that small businesses don't have the resources that big businesses have to make this happen. They don't have the spending power to dominate the media.

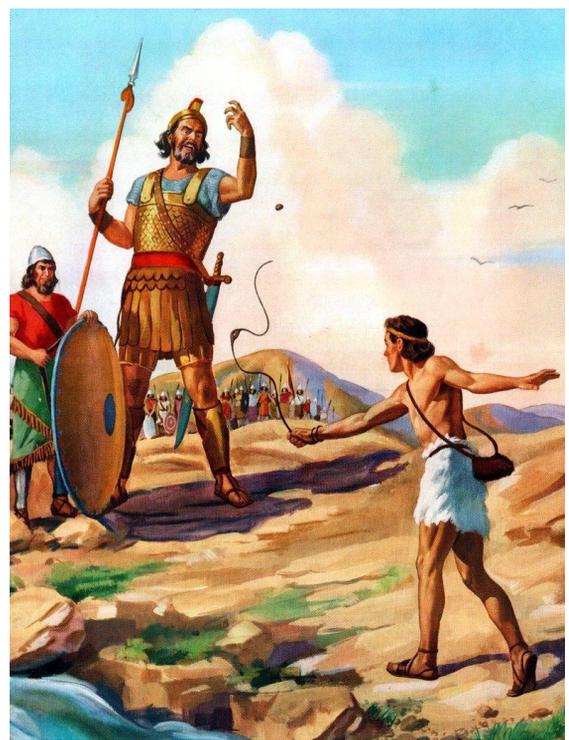
It's like the Biblical story of David attacking the giant Goliath armed with a slingshot - it's not a fair fight.

In America, many small towns feared the day Walmart moved in.

The smaller retailers - in every area from groceries to hardware - couldn't compete with the big box store. Their massive media combined with low prices, late hours and convenient one-stop shopping destroyed a lot of small businesses in heartland America.

That fear is now felt on a global scale. Whether you're a retailer in Auckland or a consultant in Toronto, you're not just competing with your neighbours. You're competing with thousands of companies around the world.

And the larger companies have no problem using their loud voices and powerful dollars to buy up all the media they can to drown you out.



The big players have worked hard to convince people that being the same is the pinnacle of perfection – their chains of identical stores replicated across the nation turn every town into a diorama of the same shops.

There's only one way to compete, and that's to be different.

*Radically different.*

### **But how do I become *radically different*?**

Grow some balls. No, I'm not sorry if that's offensive, because your success as a small business or brand depends on you having the courage to go against the fads, to resist the obvious strategy of doing what everyone else is doing and steer your own course.

The comfort zone might be comfortable, but nothing grows there. Instead of competing, the *radically different* business focuses on separating.

This book is your shake-up. Within these pages is a proven methodology to make your business *radically different*, stand out in the market and reach your target audience effectively without spending a fortune.

**But first, we'll talk about the big dumb mistake nearly every small business and brand makes – because they've been taught to think that way.**



In a sea of  
sameness,  
you have to  
be radically  
different to  
get attention.

## Avoid the competition trap

Most of us were taught from an early age that if you want to succeed, you have to be better than the competition. Whether it's academically, in sports, or getting a job, you just have to prove yourself to be better than the next person.

So having had that drummed into us in our formative years, it's natural that it carries over into the business world as well.

But that's a very dangerous trap to fall into.

When you're busy looking at what the competition does so you can do it better, you have no time to develop original and unique ideas of your own. You simply end up doing the same as them (albeit a tad better).

In the words of Jerry Garcia from the band The Grateful Dead:

*"You don't want to be the best of the best. You want to be the only one who does what you do."*

### **It's a small imitation world**

Thank you, internet. You've made it so simple to see what competitors are doing anywhere else in the world. Now everyone is copying everyone else on a global scale. The result is less originality and more sameness, with more businesses looking just like the next one.

Take hotels for instance. Almost every hotel offers a clean room with toiletries including shampoo, soap, lotion, and a shower cap. Why these but not other items we're likely to use daily, like toothpaste? I'm pretty sure most of us brush our teeth more often than we worry about getting our hair wet!

Most hotel rooms offer the same thing because they have copied one another. Whether it's a cheap family motel or a five-star establishment, we now expect our hotel rooms to come equipped with these toiletries. Everyone does it because everyone else is doing it.

## **The madness of benchmarking**

If you're imitating the best, you can't be the best. It's nonsense, but so many businesses put it into practice that it even has a name: benchmarking.

Benchmarking is the tool of sameness.

The strategy of looking at what other businesses have implemented successfully and copying them means you're always a step behind. You're following the pack, and while you might be surviving you are certainly not standing out. Instead of paving your own path to success, you're riding the coat tails of someone else, continually comparing your progress with theirs.

If you're copying others' products, strategies, price points, technology, or value propositions, you'll end up looking and sounding just like them. Another small business in the shadows of others' success.

Benchmarking is the killer of creativity and innovation. It sucks the very life out of small businesses and ensures you remain invisible. Boring. Stagnant.

## **Don't let your competitors distract you**

But, you may be wondering, if I'm not comparing my business to the competition, how do I gauge performance?

By changing your focus from being 'best in class' to 'only in class.'

Al Ries, author of *Differentiate or Die* says that instead of "competing to be the best," businesses should "compete to be unique." Instead of focusing on being better than someone else, direct your energy to what you do that is unique.

The best way to make sure you are truly unique from your competition? Ignore them. Don't let them distract you.

Apple did this well. They didn't look at what IBM was doing and try to do it better. In fact it seemed that Steve Jobs had blinders on when it came to what his competition was up to. He ignored traditional marketing and business advice and created what he thought people wanted in the best way possible, down to every detail.



Think different.

Imagination is more  
important than  
knowledge.

*Albert Einstein*

Apple's famous 'Think Different' campaign is the epitome of being *radically different*. Launched in 1997, the campaign still resonates today.

While IBM's ads at the time focused on "business solutions" featuring people in formal business attire working in offices, Apple launched their famous campaign with this narration.

*Here's to the crazy ones.*

*The misfits.*

*The rebels.*

*The troublemakers.*

*The round pegs in the square holes.*

*The ones who see things differently.*

*They're not fond of rules.*

*And they have no respect for the status quo.*

*You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them.*

*About the only thing you can't do is ignore them.*

*Because they change things.*

*They push the human race forward.*

*While some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius.*

*Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.*

Apple successfully appealed to a unique audience – the quirky creative people going against the grain, and the everyday people aspiring to be like them. They didn't try to have a better business solution than IBM. They forged their own distinctive identity and established themselves as different. Their continued success over 20 years later is obvious.

Imagine if ten start-ups in the same type of business launched tomorrow without looking at what each other was doing. I bet we would get some wildly original companies.

That's essentially what Apple did - they ignored what everyone had done before and created a *radically different* business and message that stands alone in the marketplace.

With some work and clever thinking your business can do the same.

## Punks of the beer world

Being *radically different* is a matter of survival, and UK based Brew Dog Brewery knows all about that. Starting a brewery in the midst of a recession would seem to be a recipe for failure. Brew Dog not only rose to the challenge – they grew their business by 200% in 2009. How? You guessed it – by making themselves *radically different*.

They started selling their craft beer at markets in 2007 and quickly grew into Scotland's largest independent brewery. But then the recession hit. Adam Morgan says in his book about Brew Dog's success, "If you can't spend your way into being noticed, one of your strongest strategic options is to behave your way into being noticed."

Brew Dog capitalised on their anti-establishment punk attitudes. They brewed unique beers (including the world's strongest at 32% abv). They projected themselves naked onto the houses of Parliament and made a special beer for the Olympics – "Never Mind the Anabolics."

On top of all that, they launched a crowdfunding program called Equity for Punks – an anti-business business model – and now give away 20% of their profits annually. Their *radically different* stance led to huge success.



A sample of Brew Dog's irreverent advertising



## Being radically different is about innovation

But back to you. Are you ready to stop focusing on what everyone else is doing? What would happen if you just did business differently?

Instead of incrementally adopting your competitors' ideas, why not reinvent them? Instead of chasing improvements, chase radical innovation.

You might piss a few people off, but so what? Look for innovations that will disrupt the status quo. With each new improvement, thinking in a radically different way can achieve a step change in performance that sets your business apart from the crowd.

**To truly be different, you have to focus on being *radically different* through innovation, invention and creativity.**

**It's no easy task. Innovation takes work. I'll show you the way.**

### KEY TAKEOUTS FROM THIS CHAPTER:

Ignore your competitors. Don't copy them, don't try to be better than them. Doing what they do just makes you the same as them.  
Do something *radically different*.

# Being original is hard

I'm sure you've noticed that most websites look the same. Layouts, menus, styles, even colours. With unlimited options when it comes to website design, how is it possible that most appear to be copies of one another?

It's not your imagination. A PhD student at Indiana University did a study to see if websites really are starting to look the same and what the reasons might be.<sup>1</sup> They found that the average differences between websites peaked from 2008 to 2010, then decreased until 2016.

The difference in layout of websites had the most significant decline, as differences decreased by 30% during that time.

One reason for the increasing similarity of websites is the common use of software libraries, which influence page layout. Plus, a lot of users likely use the default settings. While this makes it easy for visitors to navigate a new site, it comes at the sacrifice of creativity and originality.

Poor web designers! They must be incredibly bored with delivering the same layouts over and over, to satisfy what their clients want.

More than that, it contributes to filling the pockets of the big tech players who are now in effect controlling the visual aesthetics of the internet! Just because it works for the big companies doesn't mean it's the right answer for everyone else.

It's another instance of copying the big businesses and hoping that what worked for them will work for other businesses.

This is the same reason why most brand messaging is nearly identical. Copying is easy. Being original is hard.

## **Small businesses struggle more than ever**

At one time, in the not-so-distant past, it was a lot easier to be different and stand out. There were generally fewer players in the market.

The markets were smaller, and less global.

Competitors from other markets were less likely to be competing with you on your home turf.

Communities were more loyal, and patrons were less fickle.

But wow! How things have changed! Today, with the simplification of technology, the globalisation of business, and the easy access to information, it has become virtually impossible to stand out in any crowd – particularly now that the crowd has moved beyond your home turf into global territory.

This reality has hit the small business community especially hard. How do you begin to thrive, let alone succeed in this environment?

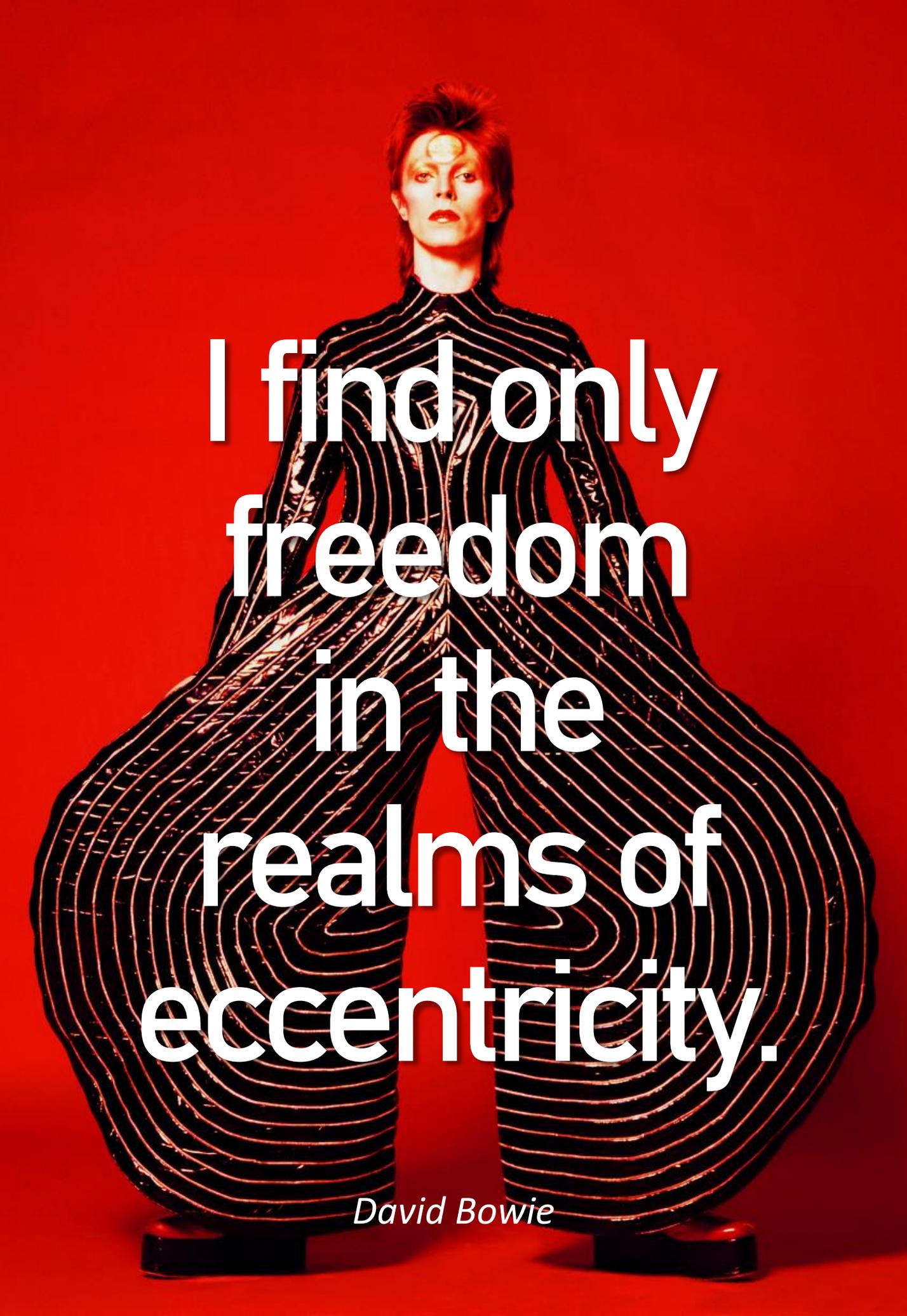
As I mentioned in the previous chapter, most businesses take the easy route and focus on copying and adapting their competitors' best attributes. What they miss in the process is thinking about second-order effects - that they'll end up with something just like the other stuff out there.

Instead of doing the hard work of gathering insights from customers and discovering open positions in the market, companies look at their competitors for direction. So, many end up using brand messaging they have seen before, or a regurgitated version of it. Imitation doesn't cut it when you're a small business competing on a global stage – you've got to put in the work to make sure you are different.

### **How different is different enough?**

If you have an idea and you're worried it might be too 'out there' or taking things too far – you're probably on the right track.

Consider the innovators in the music world. Jimi Hendrix. The Beatles. Billie Holiday. Elvis. Louis Armstrong. Johann Sebastian Bach. Bob Dylan. Bowie. These people have legendary status because they dared to be *radically different*. They were true innovators, changing the course of music.

A full-body photograph of David Bowie. He is wearing a black, form-fitting, long-sleeved outfit with white vertical stripes. The outfit has a high collar and a zipper down the front. The lower half of the outfit is very wide and flared, creating a large, circular silhouette. He has a gold eye on his forehead and is looking directly at the camera. The background is a solid, vibrant red. The text is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font.

I find only  
freedom  
in the  
realms of  
eccentricity.

*David Bowie*

Many of them shocked people at first. Imagine if any of them had simply performed cover songs or copied the popular style of the day. I'm sure they would have done a fine job, but they wouldn't stand out (and the world would have missed out on a treasure of great music).

Most businesses simply don't take the time or have the courage to invest the appropriate effort in their differentiation strategy. The misconception is that it's safer to stick to what is known than risk going out on a limb. But that is not the way to make an impact.

*When did your team last have a meeting to discuss how you intend to be radically different from your competitors?*

*How many market trials have you conducted over the last year to test a radically different product or service innovation with your customers?*

*Do you have a "Contrarian Strategy" that forces your business to move away from a tired Best in Class approach?*

*How are marketing people compensated? Do they get rewarded for copying or for being radically different and disruptive?*

To stand out in a cluttered, competitive marketplace, you need to say and do something different from other brands. Take a unique tone. Follow a controversial belief. Look at the world through a different lens. If your industry is stuffy, be the casual guy. If your industry is casual, be the unwavering professional. If your competitors have colourful branding go for monotone.

While researching this book, a colleague told me a story of a dental clinic that had opened in her hometown. Now, we all know what to expect when going to the dentist, and most of us don't like it. This clinic did the opposite of the expected. Modern décor with smooth, clean lines and pops of colour pleased the eye upon entry. During treatment, you could opt to wear special goggles and choose something to watch – maybe a TV show, or a documentary – and when your treatment was finished, the assistant exfoliated your lips and provided you with moisturizing lip balm. Now that's different!

Word quickly got out about their different approach to dentistry. After being open for two months they had a six-month waitlist!

This is a great example of differentiating your business. But it's not enough just to be different. Traditional differentiation is an uphill battle in which companies lavish too much effort on too few competitive advantages: the latest feature, a new colour, a lower price, a higher speed. In the case of the dentist we've talked about, more luxury.

**Radical differentiation** is about having unique capabilities that your customers see as being valuable to solving their problems. It's about finding a whole new market space you can own and defend, delivering handsome profits over years instead of months.

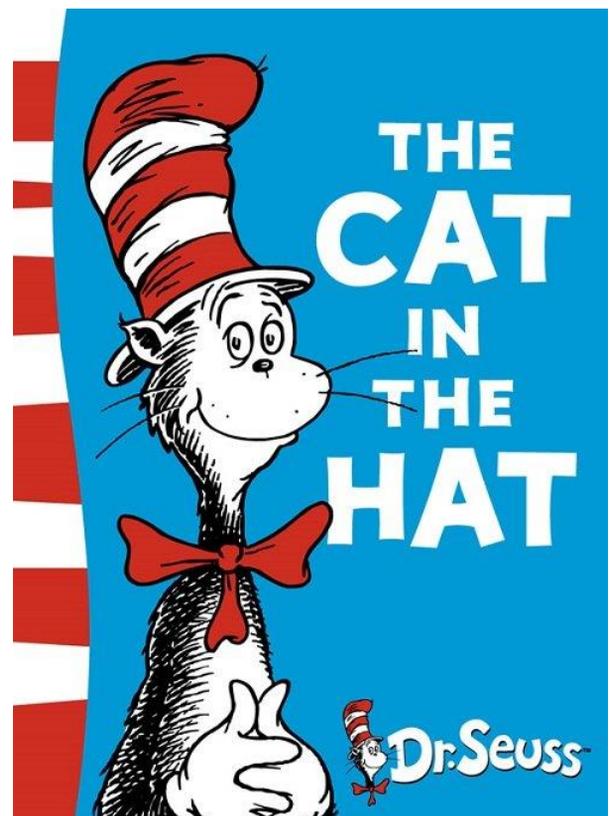
### A lesson from Dr Seuss

Most authors, when they publish a book, hope that it sees reasonable success. Imagine writing a book that continues to sell hundreds of thousands of copies every year, 60 years after its first publication. Pretty impressive! What's more, it's a children's book, written with just 250 words.

That book is *The Cat in the Hat*. The reason it came to be was due to some *radically different* thinking.

In 1954, it was reported that illiteracy was rising among children because their books were too boring.

A publisher challenged Theodore Geisel to write a book using a list of provided words for 6-year-olds, and create a story that children wouldn't be able to put down.



After much hard work, Geisel created a work of rhyming verse, with humour and his own illustrations, authored under his pseudonym “Dr Seuss.”<sup>2</sup> Geisel had mostly worked as an illustrator for advertising campaigns and as a political cartoonist. His first children’s book was rejected by dozens of publishers.

He joined the army in World War II where he drew posters and wrote propaganda films. It was after he returned from the war, now in his late 40s, that he put his attention – and his *radically different* thinking - to writing children’s books.

Fanciful creatures, poetic meters and what Geisel liked to call “logical insanity” stood out from the conventional children’s books of that era. (Remember those riveting lines like “See the red ball? The ball is red.”)<sup>3</sup> Kids and adults alike loved his creative stories.

His books were strikingly different at the time he wrote them and still have no equivalent today. Dr. Seuss published over 60 books in his life and his estate earned US\$33 million<sup>4</sup> in 2020, almost 30 years after he passed away. Talk about owning a market space!

## **The Road to Differentiation**

Still here? Great. Hopefully my preamble has warmed you up, challenged your thinking and opened your mind to new possibilities.

I’m now going to take you through a proven process I have developed to help businesses and brands differentiate themselves. I’m going to show you a process for delivering disruptive, radically differentiated products and services that your customers will love.

This process is based on my coal face experience and examining the best case studies from around the world. Over the last 30+ years I have worked with over 200 companies throughout Australasia.

**My 7-step framework is called *The Road to Differentiation*. Before I take you through that I want to tell you about the one foundational principle that binds everything together and gives you a greater chance of success.**

## KEY TAKEOUTS FROM THIS CHAPTER:

Copying is easy. It makes you lazy. It prevents you from being imaginative and innovative. Don't copy. Don't be lazy. Be different.

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World  
changing  
startups need  
to be premised  
on accurate  
contrarian  
theories.

*Reid Hoffman – Founder of LinkedIn*

# Cultivate a contrarian mindset

Becoming *radically different* starts with committing to a new way of thinking: the contrarian mindset.

Most of us have been programmed from childhood to conform, to do as we're told, to fit in. Being too different results in ridicule or discipline. As we grow and learn to think for ourselves, some of the effects of this lessen – but the problem is that our brain is fundamentally formatted. We must make an effort to carve out alternative ways of thinking.

Paul Sloane, author of *How to be a Brilliant Thinker*, puts it like this:

*“We can easily fall into a rut with our thinking because, although the brain is a very powerful organ, it is very lazy. We can become a couch potato doing the same type of thinking over and over again, and never exercise the mind in different ways. Our brain is a bit like a tennis player who has a fairly good forehand, so he tries to hit every shot with his forehand. He'll never go to the net, take an overhead, or play a backhand. He can play the game but if he developed other shots, he'd be a much better player.”*

## Contrarians go against conventional thinking

When it comes to our businesses, too often we implement the same thinking over and over again. We look to see what others have done to succeed and we do the same thing. Paying for flashy advertising, implementing buyers' rewards programs, adding new features or guarantees of performance – these all just serve to make us look more and more alike, serving up exactly what the customer expects to see.

A contrarian, however, thinks and acts differently. They look for other means of gaining an edge. They oppose popular opinion and conventional advice. They pave their own path resulting in a radical difference from the norm.

Some of the greatest thinkers in history - Plato, DaVinci, Napoleon, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Steve Jobs, Warren Buffet, Elon Musk and countless others – are all contrarians. They didn't buy into popular thinking one bit, nor accept things at face value.

Creating difference is about seeing things in a whole new light. It's about re-imagining what the problem or the need might be, and then deciding that you will do whatever it takes to be the one to solve this problem for people.

## 8 ways to cultivate a contrarian mindset

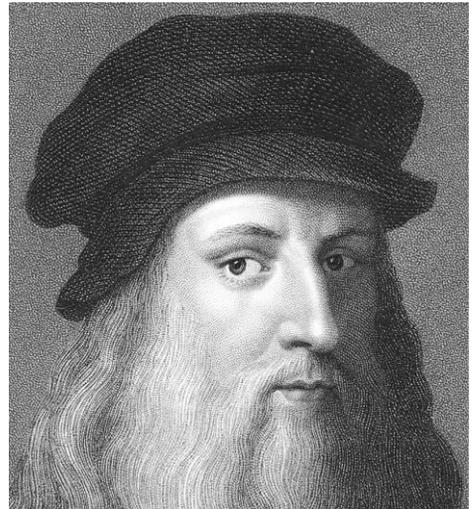
### 1. Don't read what your competitors read

*"If you only read what everyone else is reading, you will likely think just what everyone else is thinking."*

*Haruki Murakami*

One of the greatest examples of seeking inspiration outside the usual routes in their category is Leonardo da Vinci.

Da Vinci was a painter, anatomist, architect, artist, palaeontologist, botanist, scientist, writer, sculptor, philosopher, engineer, investor and musician. He drew on all of these to create his art.



The first step to *radically different* thinking is to question what you think you know.

Look for knowledge and inspiration in unexpected places, beyond your industry. Perhaps there is something from your private life that can transfer into your business category. For example, if you're an accountant who loves rock climbing, the risks and planning associated with your weekend hobby could provide a novel way to approach your accounting business.

### 2. Learn to see differently

*"You see, but do not observe. The distinction is clear."*

*Sherlock Holmes to Watson*

We learn to see differently when we observe the world from a completely different viewpoint. Obstacles become opportunities. Mundane details take on new meaning.

Do you know the story behind the invention of Velcro?<sup>1</sup> In the 1940s, Swiss engineer George de Mestral took a close look at the burrs stuck to his clothing after a walk in the forest. Nature's hooks attached to the loops in the fibre of his clothing, inspiring the hook-and-loop design of Velcro. He took his idea to friends in the weaving business, and an alternative closure to the zipper was born. The company continues to innovate today.

Question the things you take for granted. Try looking at the world through a child's eyes, without preconceived notions of how things should be. You might be surprised at what you see.

### **3. Surround yourself with contrarian individuals**

*"You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with."*

*Jim Rohn, motivational speaker*

Interesting idea. The people we surround ourselves with influence our behaviour, attitudes, the conversations we engage in and the ideas to which we are exposed. Who we spend our time with and what they think and say has a strong influence on our world view.

Seeking out the company of those "round pegs in square holes" who make their own way regardless of popular opinion will help you to change your way of thinking. Try to see things from their perspective to train your brain to be more observant.

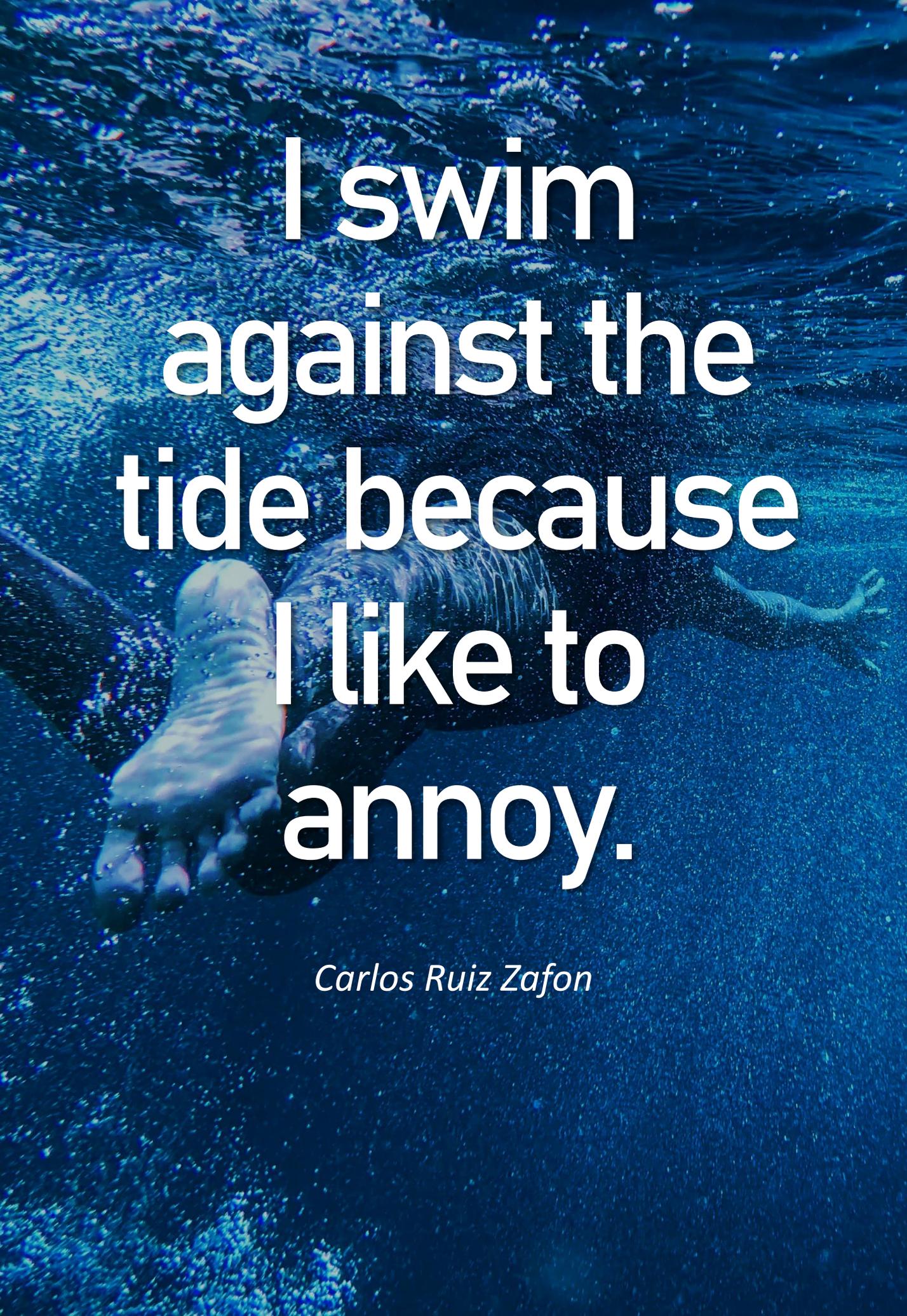
To create a *radically different* business, you have to learn to colour outside the lines – or change the lines altogether.

### **4. Think long-term, not short-term**

*"I skate to where the puck is going to be, not where it has been."*

*Wayne Gretzky, most famous ice hockey player of all time*

Contrarian thinkers seem to always be a couple of steps ahead of the crowd. It's because rather than seeking a simple, quick fix they think, dream and strategise for the future.

An underwater photograph of a person swimming against a strong current. The water is a deep, vibrant blue, and the swimmer's legs and arms are visible, struggling against the flow. The lighting is dramatic, with highlights on the water's surface and the swimmer's limbs.

I swim  
against the  
tide because  
I like to  
annoy.

*Carlos Ruiz Zafon*

As humans, our default thinking naturally focuses on the short-term. After all, our ancestors had to focus on their immediate needs in order to survive: food, shelter and sex. But we live in a different age where our survival is predicated on setting ourselves up for the future. Delayed gratification rather than instant gratification is key (thankfully, the 80s are long over).

“Rent the Runway” started with a couple of students perplexed about how to afford designer clothing for events. Wouldn’t it be smarter to be able to rent a dress for an evening? They set up a pop-up shop where people could rent dresses on the spot and turned it into a nationwide online business with rental subscriptions - and later, brick-and-mortar stores - where you can rent everything you need to complete your look.

Their ability to look into the long-term, to visualise how to source designer clothes in a sustainable way rather than solving the immediate need of what to wear, launched a business that has revolutionised access to fashion.

## **5. Get comfortable with not knowing**

*“The problem with the world is that the intelligent people are full of doubts, while the stupid ones are full of confidence.”*

*Charles Bukowski, poet and author*

Most of us (intelligently) accept that we don’t know everything. Yet we tend to act like we do. Our fears of appearing incompetent or ignorant often outweigh the courage it takes to admit we don’t know. Asking questions shows our vulnerability.

But in reality, asking questions shows that you have thought things through. Being open to whatever may come shows that you have accepted the risks. Contrarian thinkers ask the right questions, and that means that they talk more than twice as much as they listen, because talking takes guts.

Uncertainty is the partner of innovation. What’s the worst that could happen? Can you deal with it? What’s the best that could happen? You won’t know unless you get out there and do it. Contrarians thrive in the space of not knowing.

## 6. Harness your pain

*“Your super power is right next to your biggest wound.”*

*Tim Ferris, author and lifestyle guru*

This is one of my favourite quotes. Often the painful events in life fuel our passion and creativity. They also give us more backbone.

One of the best-selling albums of all time, Fleetwood Mac’s *Rumours*, was birthed from the pain, relationship dramas and addiction issues the band members were experiencing at the time. They leaned into the pain, allowed it to shape the lyrics and give fuel to a powerful musical performance that is still breaking sales records 40 years on.<sup>2</sup>



Most of us tend to avoid pain rather than chase pleasure. We often settle into a lazy belief system, with what is comfortable and known, and exist in a placid state. Don’t give in to this impulse. Actively seek out challenges and discomfort, learn from them and use them to your advantage.

You are not alone! There are many others who have experienced failed businesses, failed relationships and other difficulties. Leaning into it will give you a unique story, full of emotion, that others will relate to and engage with.

## 7. Stay relentlessly curious

*“Replace fear with curiosity.”*

*Steven Spielberg*

We begin life as wide-eyed, curious children, but as we age our cynicism stops us from exploring new ideas and worlds. We seek safety and security, following a known path that others set before us, such as the familiar steps of rising up a hierarchy.

We drown out our inner voice that seeks knowledge and insight by distracting ourselves with things like binge-watching Netflix and social media.

If we desire different results, we have to choose to act differently. We have to be explorers of our world, questioning what we know. Remember millions of people saw an apple fall, but only Isaac Newton asked “Why?”

## 8. Take Peter Thiel’s advice

*“What important truth do very few people agree with you on?  
What valuable business is nobody building?  
Competition should be avoided.”*

Peter Thiel was the founder of PayPal, co-founder of Palantir, an early investor in Facebook, and runs Founders Fund, an early-stage venture capital firm.



He is a famous contrarian and one of the most successful start-up investors in the world. In his book *Zero to One* he shares the 3 key concepts (above) that guide his investing and career.

Where do you stand out in your thoughts or beliefs? What do you see lacking in the current business models? Following his line of thought to rethink the way things have always been done allows you to build a future where you have a singular edge without worrying about your competition.

### Putting *radically different* thinking into action

Are you ready to be *radically different* from your competitors and from your previous self?

Developing a contrarian mindset is not a tactic – it is a commitment. It is a way of thinking that comes from listening, observing, absorbing and trusting your intuitive instincts.

Put these 8 steps into practice and see what new observations you make. As your thinking changes to a more contrarian mindset, you'll find inspiration in the most unexpected places.

If you can overcome the temptation to pursue incremental improvements in favour of radical differentiation, great rewards await.

You will see your sales shoot up and your competitors scrambling to do things that had long been taken for granted.

*Radically Different* is a practical guide to inspiring innovation as well as making it happen. It shows you how to identify opportunities for radical difference, create it from scratch and test it with a minimum of risk.

**It's time to start your journey on *The Road to Differentiation*.**

## KEY TAKEOUTS FROM THIS CHAPTER:

Question the way things have been traditionally done.  
Ask yourself what would happen if you did the opposite of that?  
Thinking differently leads to behaving differently.

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Two roads  
diverged in the  
wood, and I-  
I took the one  
less travelled by,  
and that has  
made all the  
difference.

*Robert Frost*

# The Road to Differentiation



*Using lessons learnt from my 30 years marketing experience and research about the ‘Science of Difference’, I have developed this unique strategic framework to guide your journey to being radically different.*

Why have I used the framework of a road?

Because being *radically different* is a journey, not a destination.

In literature, the road often represents our need to keep moving and surviving no matter what, to keep travelling toward what we seek. To journey toward success.

The journey to being *radically different* takes commitment. There are no shortcuts. It is a long and winding road which requires navigation to avoid lazily drifting back onto an easier route.

You’re creating your own road, which takes a lot more work than following the well-trodden path – but promises to be much more worthwhile.

## **There are 7 checkpoints on The Road to Differentiation**

Think of this framework as your route map. It will guide you to each checkpoint with the knowledge to complete each step along the way.

It will help you identify and avoid pitfalls, recognise when you need to make changes on-the-fly, and keep you on track to radical differentiation.

Success will depend on ticking off all seven checkpoints.

- 1. Get to know the terrain*
- 2. Find your differentiating idea*
- 3. Dramatise your difference*
- 4. Serve the forgotten people*
- 5. Build a strong personal brand*
- 6. Attack the status quo*
- 7. Communicate your difference*

These are the most important elements to get right if you want to be *radically different*, stand out from your competitors and grow sales.

They have been inspired by insights from my consulting work with over 200 brands and businesses - in many different B2B and B2C categories.

**Let's get started on the first checkpoint and do a little reconnaissance to scout out the market terrain.**

Don't listen  
to what  
they say.

Go see.





## Checkpoint 1: Get to know the terrain

To position yourself as *radically different*, you first need to have a deep understanding of the changes occurring in your market.

Forget about designing a customer survey to do this. In surveys, people often a) tell you what they think you want to hear, b) lie, or c) give answers that reflect their aspirations rather than the life they are actually living.

Forget about commissioning a pricey research firm. Maybe they'll give you some useful information, maybe they won't. But they sure won't help you with a breakthrough idea. And sometimes they are just plain wrong.

Take the photocopier. Inventor Chester Carlson was turned down by over 20 companies.<sup>1</sup> Neither IBM nor General Electric believed there was a market for the machines.

When Eureka Forbes launched their first vacuum cleaner in 1982, a consultant told them to give up because their research showed no one would pay for a vacuum when brooms were so much cheaper.<sup>2</sup>

Remember the Walkman? (That's the grandfather to the iPod for all of you under 30s.) Market research said consumers would be put off by irritating headphones and the fact that the device did not record.<sup>3</sup>

So market research is not always reliable.

A more effective way to get a feel for what your potential customers are experiencing is to spend time doing practical research at the coalface – online and out in the real world, where service delivery takes place.

That's you putting in the hard yards and seeing with your own eyes what's happening. This will help to give you an intuitive sense about what to do.

Time to scout out the terrain, assess the territory, and gain a deep understanding of the market context you are currently operating in.

## Here are 8 ways you can scout out the terrain

**1. Look at the questions and answers people are asking about your product or service category on Quora.**

**And join a Facebook Group related to your category and quietly observe what problems and pain points consumers have in your category.**

Facebook Groups can be an easy way to mine information. Your customers are essentially conversing about your market in public, sharing their tips, praise and criticism.

For instance, if your product is indoor plants, I can tell you that the majority of the content in Facebook Groups is either answering the question ‘What is this plant?’ or ‘How do I take care of this plant?’ or ‘Help, what am I doing wrong with this plant?’

One common complaint that stands out is the state of plants that have been shipped via courier. Four common pain points are instantly identifiable, and you can begin to plan how you will solve them for your clients.

**2. Research the most commonly searched terms and questions in your category at [www.answerthepublic.com](http://www.answerthepublic.com).**

With 3 billion Google searches every day, it pays to think about what exactly your clients are searching for. At Answer the Public you put in your keyword and it reveals the phrases and questions people are typing into search engines. Then you can tweak your product or service to what people actually want.

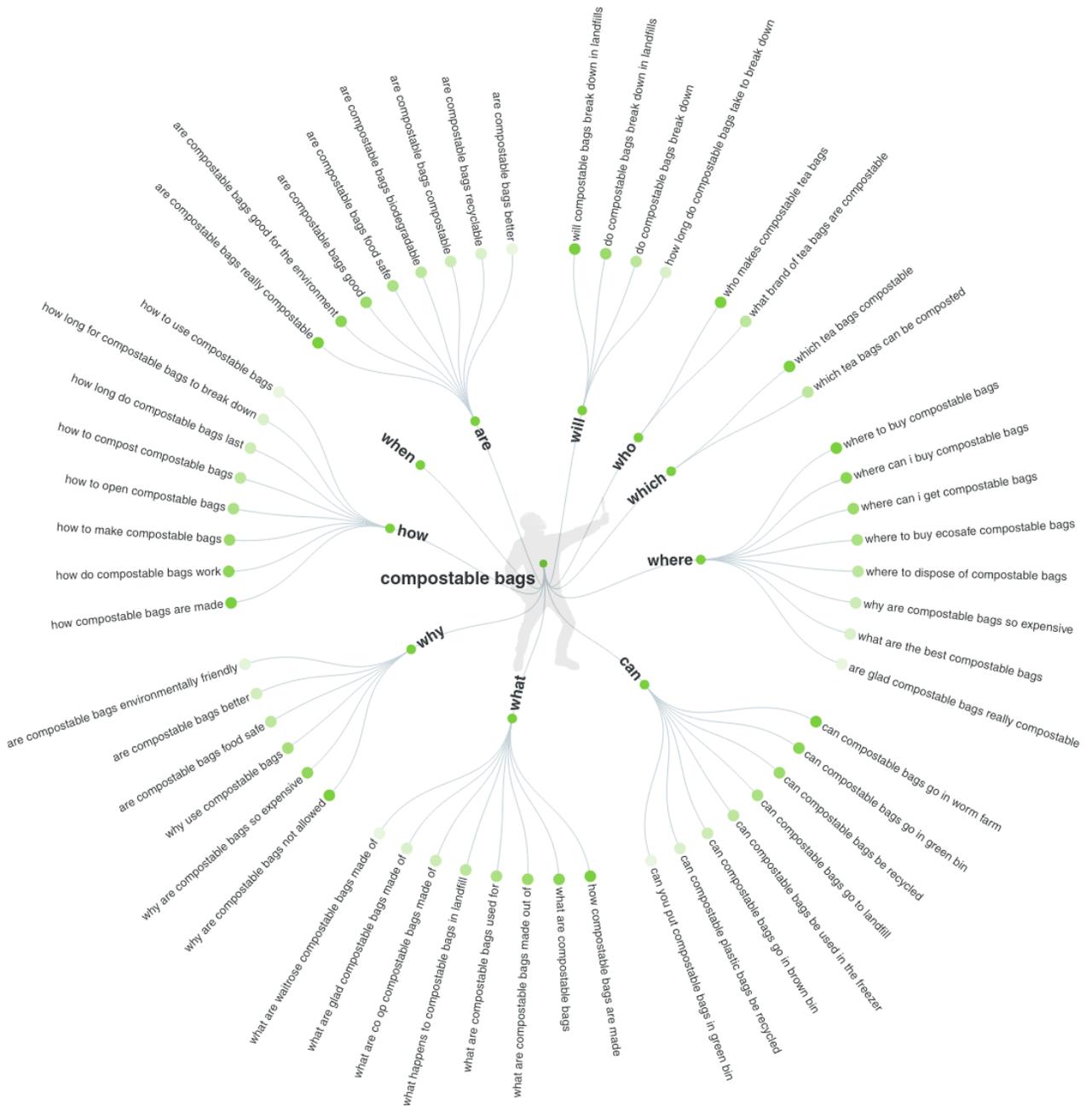
For the example (on the following page), I searched “compostable bags” in Australia. The results are displayed in 3 ways. The first is a compilation around basic queries associated with words like why, what, who, where and can.

The second is organised around prepositions – with, to, for, near, without, etc. The third image is a comparison, so people are typing your keyword with ‘vs’ or ‘like’.

Here are the results from our compostable bag search. Looking at the first image, some common threads appear – are compostable bags biodegradable, recyclable, or safe for the worm farm?

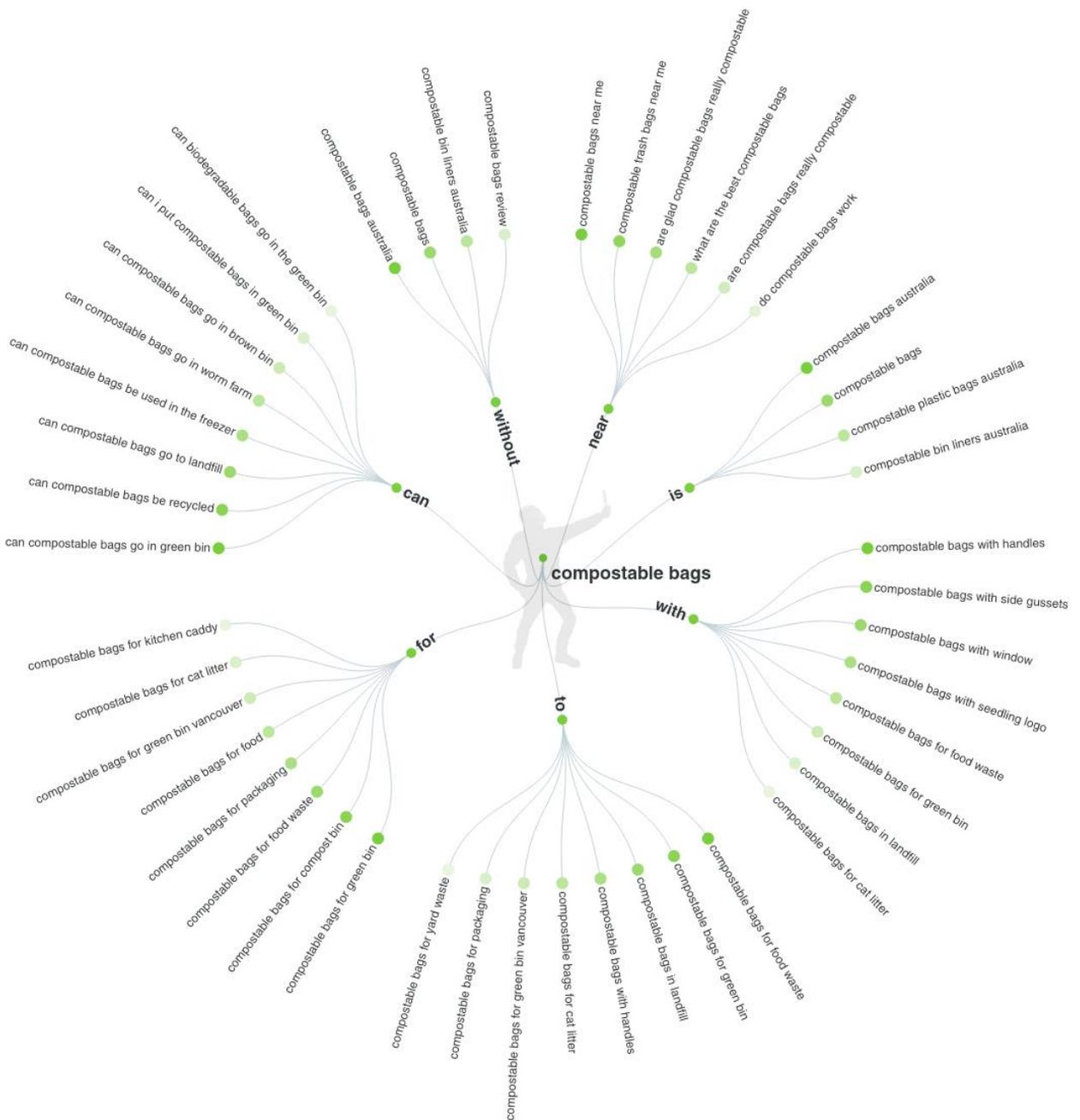
How long do they take to break down? Are they food safe?

Some legitimate questions that could easily be addressed in your marketing, making your compostable bags stand out to the consumer.



In the preposition image, another query is revealed: compostable bags with handles, with side gussets, and with windows. It also seems quite a few people want compostable bags for cat litter, which could be its own category.

This information sparks instant ideas for unique marketing opportunities or product development research. Could a campaign identifying your compostable bags as kitty litter friendly with placement in the pet section of supermarkets be a new opportunity? Or can you clearly identify desired features like handles and side gussets to make your product stand out?



The comparison window tells us people are searching for compostable bags vs paper, vs plastic, and again we see compostable vs biodegradable – it seems there is a lot of confusion around these terms!

This identifies a need for consumer education – and the opportunity for someone to position themselves as the go-to expert in the category.

Play with keywords in your category and see what you find. You only get 3 free searches per day, so search wisely. Or use one of their paid plans and go nuts.



### 3. Turn yourself into a customer.

Go out and buy competing products or use competing services in your category. Make note of the service, quality and style. Putting yourself in the customer's shoes will cause you to notice what impresses you and what is lacking - then apply those to improve your own offerings.

### 4. Check out the 'edgy' weird brands on the fringes of your category.

The most interesting ideas come from the fringes in society, those on the edge, the weird ones. They are usually ahead of the game.

Clothing brand Johnny Cupcakes launched in 2001.<sup>4</sup> Why Johnny Cupcakes? It was a nickname a friend gave him. His tagline is "world's first t-shirt bakery" though there is no actual baking going on.



His boutique store used baking racks and refrigerators for displays, vanilla-scented air fresheners and pastry boxes for packaging. Weird, right? Well it worked. Today, Johnny's net worth is \$3.8 million.

Try searching for weird or unusual businesses in your category and see what's out there.

### 5. Ask your customers what they hate most about your category.

This can reveal surprises and generate new, exciting ideas that could help you radically differentiate your offering. Customer feedback often has a positive slant, so try flipping that on its head by directly asking your customers what they hate (not about you in particular, but the category in general).

If you have a beauty salon, what do they hate about the experience of going to salons? What do they hate about booking appointments?

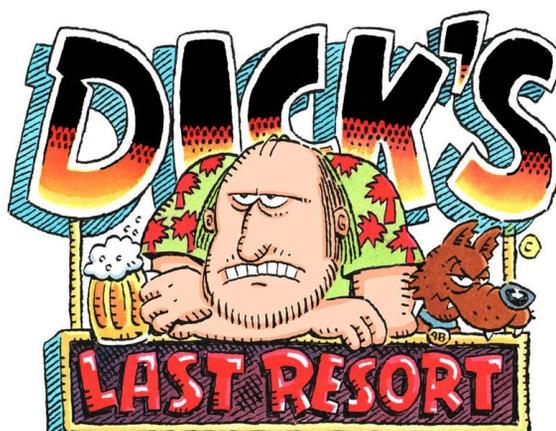
You can also try this on Google – a quick search for ‘what people hate about restaurants’ revealed that a lot of the things we take for granted as part of the restaurant experience, we don’t actually like. Makes you wonder why so many restaurants keep doing the same things!

## 6. Do a competitive audit.

Now I said earlier to ignore your competition, and I stand by that. What I mean here is to take an objective look at what your competitors are doing – how they look, talk, behave and especially where they fail to solve customers’ pain points. Then make it your mission to differentiate yourself by solving those pain points in a radically different way.

Going back to what people hate about restaurants, it’s often the perceived snootiness. From inquiring if your “party” is all present to the whole wine presentation thing, a lot of people just don’t like it.

Well there’s a restaurant in the States that has done something *radically different* and eliminated all of the uppity behaviours. They’re called Dick’s Last Resort. One of their taglines is that they put the F.U. in FUN. Instead of Happy Hour they have Crappy Hour. The staff will make fun of you and there are no please and thank-yous here. They started with one restaurant in Texas and now have nine locations across the country.



## 7. Do a Google search for future trends in your category.

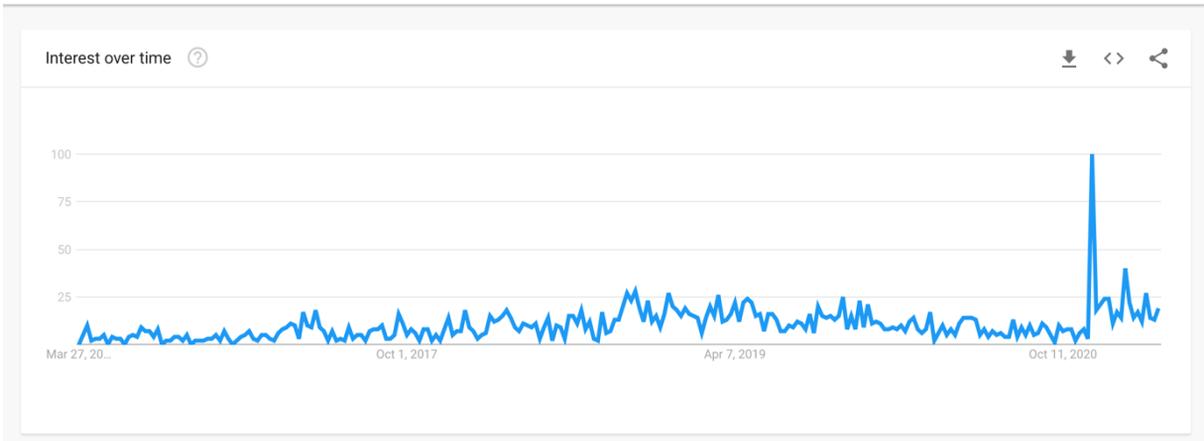
Use Google Trends to search for keywords and see if they are trending up or fading out. I like to adjust the timeline to the past 5 years to see how a topic has trended, then look to the breakout topics for further searches.

Let’s say you are running a start-up producing lab-grown meat. Searching for this on Google Trends reveals a spike in keyword searches at the end of November 2020, as shown on the next page:

● **lab grown meat**  
 Search term

+ Compare

Worldwide ▾ Past 5 years ▾ All categories ▾ Web Search ▾



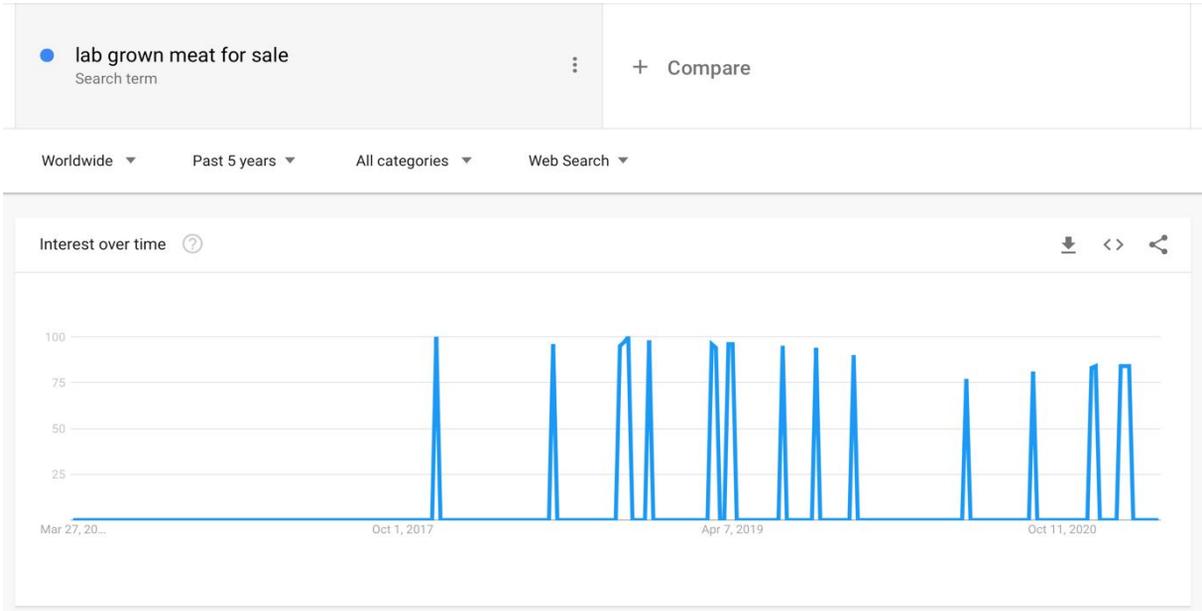
Now there was probably something in the news that caused that spike. But we can see that following the spike, the keyword is still more popular than it's ever been.

This tells us that public interest has been piqued by lab grown meat. What we don't know yet is what aspect people are most interested in.

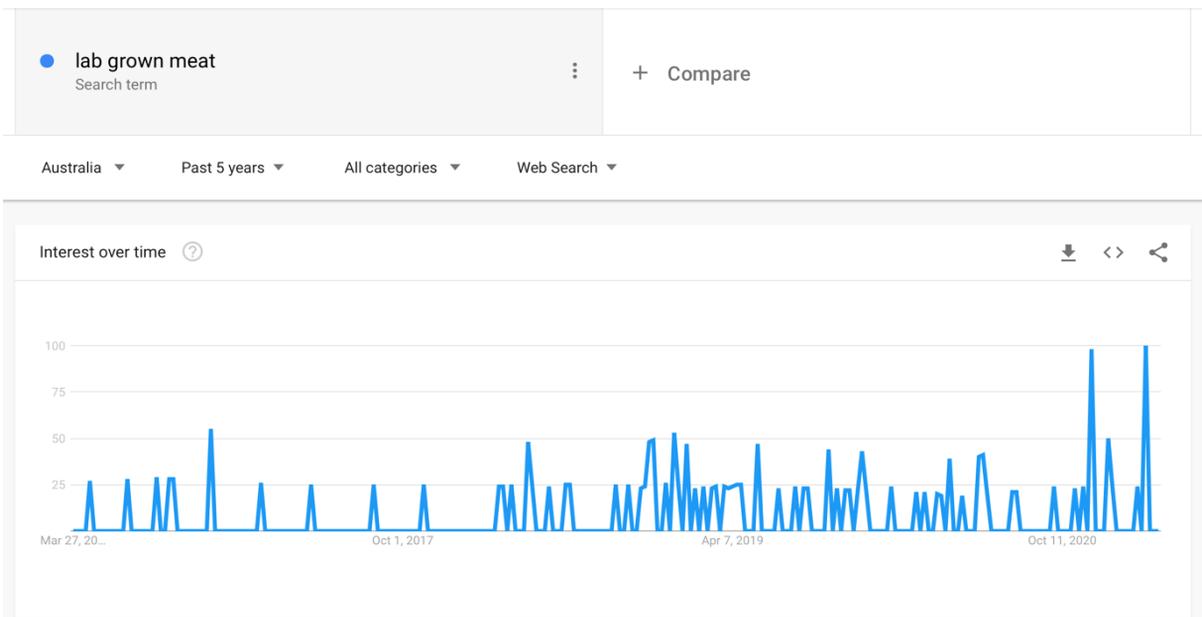
Scrolling down, we see a list of Breakout topics. A couple of these are for specific companies ('just lab grown meat' refers to a California start-up called Eat Just, and the Impossible Burger is a plant-based burger) so we'll ignore those for our purposes.

Related topics <span style="float: right;">Rising ▾ ⌵ &lt;&gt; 🔗</span>	Related queries <span style="float: right;">Rising ▾ ⌵ &lt;&gt; 🔗</span>
1 Company - Organization type <span style="float: right;">Breakout</span>	1 just lab grown meat <span style="float: right;">Breakout</span>
2 Stock - Topic <span style="float: right;">Breakout</span>	2 lab grown meat stock <span style="float: right;">Breakout</span>
3 Cell culture - Topic <span style="float: right;">Breakout</span>	3 impossible burger <span style="float: right;">Breakout</span>
4 Memphis Meats - Food technology company <span style="float: right;">Breakout</span>	4 lab grown meat for sale <span style="float: right;">Breakout</span>
5 Chicken - Birds <span style="float: right;">Breakout</span>	5 bill gates lab grown meat <span style="float: right;">Breakout</span>
< Showing 1-5 of 21 topics >	< Showing 1-5 of 11 queries >

If we click on 'lab grown meat for sale' we see this graph:



And clicking on 'lab grown meat stock' (stock as in stock market), we get this:



Both graphs show us a pattern of increasing popularity for these search terms in recent years.

Now it may not be ground-breaking news that people are searching to purchase and invest in lab grown meat - after all it's a relatively recent topic in the news. But you can easily play with search terms related to your own category and see what sort of patterns you observe.

From there, read articles by thought leaders in your category to see where they think things are going. For instance, TechCrunch is a leading website sharing the latest tech industry news.

A recent article on their site gives the lowdown on a company focusing on producing heritage meats – like Wagyu beef – in the lab, and talks to butchers who are already signing on to stock their products. Food for thought at your fingertips (pun intended).



## 8. Use social media to conduct your own market research.

It's easy to run polls, ask questions and use interactive content like quizzes to get your target audience to open up about issues that are important to them. Let your customers share their story with you and learn from them.

You can do this directly on your business' Facebook page, or by creating a group that you invite preferred clients to join (perhaps provide them with a bonus service or a thank-you gift for participating).

Instagram has some easy-to-use features like question stickers and emoji sliders where users can give a rating.

Putting these 8 steps into practice will give you a good idea of what your customers are experiencing and what sort of businesses are already out there.

**Next up, let's identify where your business fits in the market.**

## KEY TAKEOUTS FROM THIS CHAPTER:

Do your own market research. Research common search terms on Google, join Facebook groups in your category to find out what people are saying. Be a customer. Check out edgy or weird brands closely related to your category.

### References

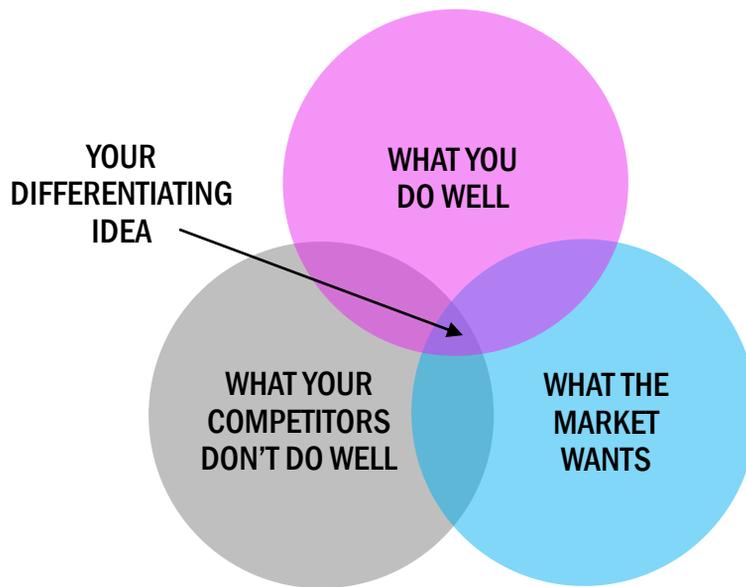
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You must  
do what  
others don't  
to achieve  
what others  
won't.



## Checkpoint 2: Find your differentiating idea

The second checkpoint on the Road to Differentiation is to find your differentiating idea. To do this, we'll use a tried-and-true brand positioning framework that I have successfully used with my clients over the years.



Your differentiating idea is the white space in the market – the niche where your strengths overlap what the market wants and where your competitors are lacking. The spot where there is no (or very little) competition, because no one is doing what you do.

*This is your point of differentiation.*

Say you have a small retail women's clothing business. You pride yourself on your ability to choose quality, well-made clothes and put together fashionable outfits with an eye for what your clients want. What the market wants is to find clothing that looks and feels good in an effortless and enjoyable shopping experience. But by having a look at your competitors, you see the same experience replicated over and over – racks stuffed with clothing, impersonal dressing rooms, and women feeling discouraged when things don't fit.

In this case, your sweet spot might be a retail experience that capitalises on your ability to see what would fit and flatter different body types, built on a more personal guided experience. Perhaps with the added benefit of free minor alterations so people get something that truly fits them.

By finding your differentiating idea, you find your niche in the market and can then focus your marketing efforts on capturing it.

## **What are you willing to do that your competition isn't?**

When Michael Phelps met the coach that would ultimately guide him to swimming stardom, the first question the coach asked was “What are you prepared to do that no other swimmer is doing? Are you prepared to train on a Sunday?” At the time most swimmers trained 6 days and had Sundays off. Michael’s coach then said that by training 2-3 hours on Sunday, he would gain another 150 hours per year in the water over his competitors.

Be willing to do what your competitors aren’t. Be open longer hours, offer free delivery, give an extraordinary guarantee, add an extra dimension to your service. Empathise with your customers. Do what it takes to make them feel good about doing business with you.

## **Can you invent a new category?**

Close your eyes and imagine for a moment that your brand is sitting on a ladder somewhere in the universe. The ladder is your product category, and the rung of the ladder that you’re on is your position in the market.

To be successful, you want to be on one of the top three rungs, i.e. one of the top three brands in your category.

If you’re not there, you have 3 options:

1. Work out a strategy to climb up the ladder you’re on.
2. Jump to a different ladder where it’s less competitive, therefore easier to be on the top three rungs.
3. Create a completely new ladder where you can be number one.



Option 1 is easier said than done. It's the path many follow, remaining in a constant state of competition to be the cheaper/cooler/faster version of whatever your business is involved in. This is exhausting, boring and not the path for those seeking to be radically different.

Option 2 involves changing categories – but once you've done that, you're still competing along the same lines you always have been.

So, that leaves option 3: Create a new category. What problem can you uniquely solve for your customers? Creating a new category brings awareness to this problem and shows how you are the only one with the solution to it. This problem you didn't really realise you had – I can solve it for you before it becomes a bigger problem.

Thinking back to our compostable bag search, we identified that a lot of people search for compostable kitty litter bags. We also saw that there is confusion around the terms compostable and biodegradable and general questions about whether they are the best choice for the environment. There is an opportunity here to create a new category and uniquely solve a problem - provide compostable cat litter bags, along with a campaign that educates consumers about them. While no category is completely void of competition, there are plenty that no one has successfully staked their claim to.

## **Re-discover your origin story**

We all started somewhere. Your unique origin story gives your customers a sense of the foundation upon which your business is built. Whether it was a well-researched process that took years, or an "aha!" moment that hit the ground running, it forms the basis of the personality behind your brand.

In Joey Reiman's book *The Story of Purpose*, he says that even big companies lose their way, forget their roots, and disconnect from their purpose. They forget what made them great in the first place. By reconnecting with your roots, your true identity, you find your why – the soul of your business. He says, "a good question is "what makes us soulful in a world of sameness?"

By developing the right narrative for your origin story, you can capture the hearts of your audience from the get-go.

## The Burt's Bees story

The origin story for Burt's Bees is just wonderful:

*In the 80s, Burt Shavitz was working as a photojournalist in competitive, cut-throat Manhattan. Seeking a less chaotic lifestyle, he moved to the pristine wilderness of Maine, and finding a lone beehive one day he decided to take up beekeeping and see if he could make a living out of honey. At the same time, Roxanne Quimby was on her own path to a better life, leaving behind a stressful life as an artist in San Francisco for an easier life in Maine.*

*Was it their destiny that the two should meet? One spring day, travelling along a long country road, Burt stopped for a hitchhiker. Climbing into Burt's bright yellow pick-up, Roxanne and Burt hit it off straight away, Burt's stories about his bees and his surplus beeswax sparking Roxanne's creative imagination. He and Roxanne started working together, making candles and lip balm and other products with the wax.<sup>1</sup>*

Now this could read something like 'Burt and Roxanne met in 1984. They started making candles from beeswax and within a year had sold \$20,000.'

See the difference?

The narrative of their story evokes an image of a dusty, sunlit road, a country girl and shaggy bearded beekeeper with a spark of romance.



## From tractors to supercars

Not all origin stories are as sweet as that one.

Most of us have heard of Ferraris and Lamborghinis – fast, expensive, high-performance cars. What a lot of people don't know is that Ferruccio Lamborghini made tractors before he made cars. He only got into high-performance cars because he was dissatisfied with the quality and after sales service he received from Ferrari.

Ferruccio thought Ferraris were good cars and he owned several over the years. But he categorised them as “repurposed track cars with poorly built interiors.”<sup>2</sup> He was annoyed when he continually had to bring the car in to service the clutch and the technicians would take it away for several hours. He expressed his displeasure to Enzo Ferrari, which resulted in an argument that birthed the Lamborghini car factory.<sup>3</sup> Both men were known to be proud Italians with short tempers!

Though records of what exactly was said vary, the gist was that Enzo told Ferruccio to stick to driving tractors. So, Ferruccio made the perfect car he felt no one could make for him. Plus, he realised he could triple his profits when his own mechanic found that Enzo's clutches were the same clutches he used in his tractors!



The great thing about Lamborghini's origin story is that it also demonstrates the value in creating a new category – Ferruccio created something that did not yet exist with his luxury supercar. It turns out a lot of people wanted to drive one.

### **Next up: Dramatising your difference**

You've identified your sweet spot.

You've decided what you will do that your competitors are not doing.

You've firmly staked your category.

And you've reminded yourself of why you started doing all of this in the first place.

**Once you've found your differentiating idea, the hard work starts. How do you communicate it to your customers in a radical way?**

### **KEY TAKEOUTS FROM THIS CHAPTER:**

Identify your positioning sweet spot. Think of something you're willing to do that your competition isn't (give this some real thought. It could be quite fun!). Work your way up to the top three brands in your category, or move to a different market/category if that's too difficult. Or create a new category where you can be number one.

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Take risks  
now and do  
something  
bold.  
You won't  
regret it.

*Elon Musk*



## Checkpoint 3: Dramatise your difference

Maybe you're already doing something a little different.

Do you think your customers notice it? Probably not, or you wouldn't be reading this book. Often what we see as significant differences in our own businesses, our customers scarcely notice at all.

When I was in my teens, I spent a couple of years taking acting lessons at a local theatre. I remember my acting coach saying that you really need to over-act or exaggerate your phrases and expressions on stage. While it feels unnatural for you, it will appear natural to the audience.

I think the same way when it comes to dramatising your difference. We think our product stands alone, while the customer sees it as much the same as the next one. We think our service sets us apart – but the customer is pretty well used to excellent service (in fact they expect it).

Clearly, we need to dial up and dramatise the difference. The big question is, how do we do it? Here are some practical suggestions I've developed over my career with examples to learn from.

### **Radical honesty**

Sometimes the most straight forward, effective way to dramatise your difference is just to be radically honest.

There's so much woke fluffiness and PC bullshit in the world today. So many people and companies are afraid to say what they really think - so they don't offend anyone. In this environment, brutal honesty stands out, gets heard and commented upon.

An advertising campaign that I worked on for Canon Australia illustrates the radical honesty approach. In the B2B space, the company was known for selling copiers, but what they wanted to do was branch out into selling software and managed services. They struggled to escape the fixed impression people already had in their minds that they sold copiers.



The solution we developed was to take out full-page ads, white block capitals on a red background, that said “The last thing we want to do is sell you a copier.” By plainly stating their honest truth, they caught people’s attention and changed their preconceived notions about Canon. The campaign was incredibly successful in shifting people’s perceptions and growing sales.

Here’s another one. Some years back, Domino’s in the USA was suffering from a reputation for mediocre pizza. Most companies would launch a “new and improved” campaign to try to win back their customers. Domino’s took a direct and honest route instead. During the NFL playoffs they aired a commercial featuring the CEO. He said, “We’re sorry our old pizza wasn’t very good.” Their radically honest approach resulted in smashing sales records.

To be radically honest, just show that you’re human! Tell the truth. Own your mistakes and share what you’ve learned. Studies show that people who show their imperfections are more trusted (it’s called the Pratfall effect<sup>1</sup>). Customers are wary of anything that seems tinged with falseness – for instance, a company that appears too perfect. We have built-in bullshit detectors. Radical honesty is one way to cement an impression.

You could follow the lead of car-rental agency Avis, who launched this legendary campaign during the 1960's: "We're number 2, so we try harder." I think this is one of the cleverest ad campaigns that's ever run.

# **Avis is only No.2 in rent a cars. So why go with us?**



**We try damned hard.  
(When you're not the biggest,  
you have to.)**

**We just can't afford dirty ash-  
trays. Or half-empty gas tanks. Or  
worn wipers. Or unwashed cars.  
Or low tires. Or anything less than  
seat-adjusters that adjust. Heaters that heat. Defrost-  
ers that defrost.**

**Obviously, the thing we try hardest for is just to be  
nice. To start you out right with a new car, like a lively,  
super-torque Ford, and a pleasant smile. To know, say,  
where you get a good pastrami sandwich in Duluth.**

**Why?**

**Because we can't afford to take you for granted.**

**Go with us next time.**

**The line at our counter is shorter.**

© 1965 AVIS, INC.

## Use visual contrast to look different

You know those big brands that stand alone outside of any category, instantly recognisable, they own their own space. Apple. Nike. Absolut Vodka. Facebook. Netflix. We're all familiar with their logos, colours, we could probably even pick out their fonts.

How can you look different in your category? Design a logo and choose a signature colour and graphics style that is completely unique to your category.

Then, anchor all of your marketing to it.

New Zealand rubbish company SuperTrash has completely disrupted category conventions around how a rubbish truck should look. Whilst most other rubbish trucks are white and green SuperTrash chose a pop art disco style hot pink pattern as their main brand element.

There is no other trash company in New Zealand making this kind of visual impact. It's a brilliant piece of branding!



Another completely unique design: blue wine. Much to the chagrin of dedicated wine lovers, blue wine is now a thing.

Who would have thought?

Gik Live! is the brainchild of a group of Spanish students who discovered they could extract a vibrant blue colour from grape skins. With a little extra sweetener added, they created an 11.5% wine now sold in over 25 countries.<sup>2</sup>

Their main audience is Millennials who like the Insta-worthy hue, while as expected, the more traditional wine drinkers shy away from it. Either way, it gets attention.

A truly unexpected colour for a traditional product can make a big impression.



## Dial up the drama through sensory experiences

So far we've covered how to speak differently – with radical honesty – and how to look different with radical design. How about doing something that feels different?

Scent is a powerful sense. Think about your hometown, your parent's house, your pet – I bet each of those is associated with a scent in your memory. If you grew up in New Zealand but moved somewhere land-locked, for instance, you might recognise the scent of salty sea air as coming home.

Hotels are capitalising on this with “olfactory branding” using carefully selected fragrances to influence your stay and encourage you to return.<sup>3</sup> Whether the desired atmosphere is homey, luxurious, clean or relaxing – there's a scent for it.

Holiday Inn hotels around the world smell of white tea with citrus notes, so if you travel a lot you will always feel a sense of comfort and familiarity in their hotels. Sofitel, Ritz-Carlton, Sheraton and Marriott are a few hotel brands using a signature scent to further distinguish them from their competition.

How about removing a sense? Opaque Restaurant in Santa Monica, CA, makes a daring point of difference – dining in the dark. In our daily lives we are overloaded with visual stimulation, so imagine what a different experience this would be! It is pitch black in their dining room, creating an intimate and adventurous dining experience. By taking away the ability to see, other senses of touch, taste, scent and sound are heightened.

This puts the focus solely on the food and conversation, creating an experience like no other.



The wait staff are all visually impaired and gladly offer guidance and reassurance to nervous guests. A quick scan of the reviews on TripAdvisor reveals that most people don't really rate the food that highly but say the experience is worth it.

Whether you link a specific sensory experience to your brand or change the intensity of one of our five senses, it will make an impression in customer's brains as something distinct and different.

Sensory marketing connects with emotions, which can create long-lasting brand loyalty. Use the power of touch, smell, sound and taste to connect.

In 2012, the Seoul branch of Dunkin' Donuts used scent technology to release the aroma of coffee on local buses while the Dunkin' Donuts jingle played on the radio – resulting in a 29% increase in sales.<sup>4</sup>



Little touches like a dish of unique candies on your desk, a signature scent for your office or store, or the right type of music can be simple ways to use the power of senses to connect to your brand.

## Create surprising experiences that people talk about

People love surprises. Even those that say they don't. (What they really don't like is having to react appropriately to a surprise.) To make a real impression and generate buzz, incorporate an unexpected experience into your product or service.

Take the story of Magic Castle Hotel.

How did an average hotel in L.A. get ranked #2 on TripAdvisor, beating the Four Seasons? A former apartment complex built in the 1950s, complete with a lobby that looks like a doctor's office, featuring rooms with dated décor and a small pool surely can't be that great of a place to stay.

But they incorporated a few winning surprises.

A cherry red phone next to the pool has a sign above it that says "Popsicle Hotline." If you pick it up, a butler (white gloves and all) comes out carrying popsicles on a silver tray.

You can also get free Cracker Jacks and Sour Patch Kids just by asking at the front desk of the hotel.

And sometimes there's a magician or two hanging out in the very average lobby.

Surprise and delight with quirky, memorable experiences and give your clients a story to take home and share amongst friends and family.



## Build your difference into your product

This doesn't mean make your product better, faster, stronger or whatever. Remember we're talking *radically different*.

A poignant radical difference is seen in Tony's Choclonely bars. Tony's is committed to making slave-free chocolate the norm.

Between the farmers that produce cocoa and the billions of people consuming the chocolate are a lot of people trapped in poverty, child labour, and modern slavery.

Beyond leading the way to slave-free cocoa, Tony's has done a radical thing to their chocolate bars: the pieces are cut unevenly, with some large chunks and some small chunks, to illustrate how things are not fairly shared along the supply chain in the world of chocolate.

You can't help but notice and then want to know why, so it raises curiosity and educates people simply through the sale of a chocolate bar. Very cool.

Tony's changed the experience of eating a bar of chocolate, giving it deeper meaning that instantly makes an impact.



Environmentally-dedicated outdoor retailer Patagonia sells tees declaring their environmental commitment. Their garments are made of recycled or organic material, further testimony to their eco-friendly vibe. But they took building your difference into your product a step further to radical difference, by including a message on the garment care tag inside a limited-edition pair of shorts: *Vote the assholes out.*



The message was for all of the politicians who refuse to act on climate change, and the shorts quickly sold out after going viral on Twitter.

Perhaps you can pair your product with another to create an unexpected surprise. Something that is very unique.

When Diamond Candles co-founder David was going to propose to his girlfriend, he bought her a candle as well as a ring, because he knew how much she loved them.

This was enough to inspire a new product: candles that contain a ring worth between \$10 and \$5,000. Doesn't that make you a little excited to buy a candle and see what you get? This is like Kinder Surprise for adults.



## Be deliberately raw in a slick category

When every competitor in your category has slick, professional, polished marketing materials, opting for a home-made, quirky, raw, unpolished, slightly rough-around-the-edges approach can make you stand out more.

A classic example is the ad for New Zealand power company Electric Kiwi.

Just thinking about it gets the jingle stuck in my head. Their ad featured regular people of all ages singing along to their “cheesy” song about the independent power company who would love for you to join them.

Because the original ad was so distinctive, further ads after that initial brain worm are instantly recognisable as belonging to Electric Kiwi.

They made themselves stand out with a low production campaign in a category that is known for being slick, polished and pricy. They seem like the humble, everyday guys next door you can trust to do the right thing.

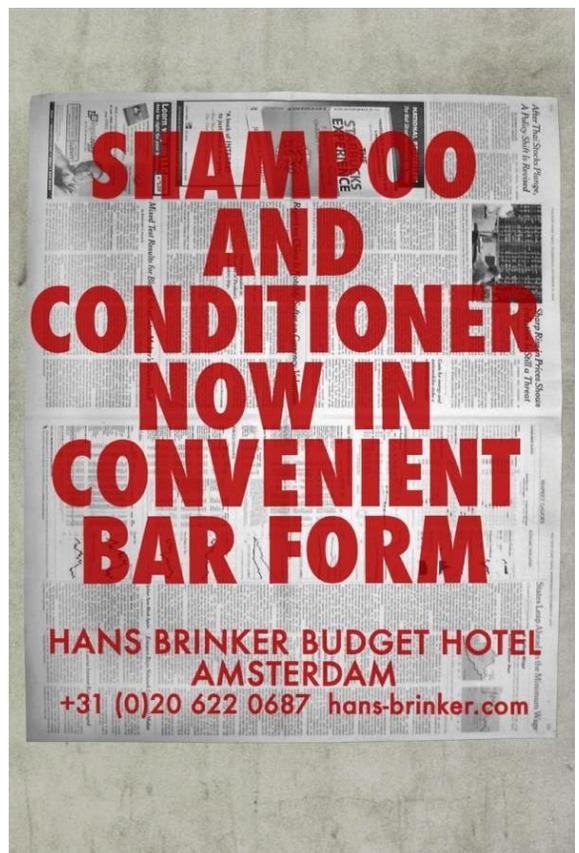
They’re also radically honest in their approach – they know many people don’t like their jingle, they admit it – but do it anyway.



And what about the Hans Brinker Budget Hotel ads.

Hotels usually try to compete on comfort, location and amenities – this hotel in Amsterdam throws all of that out the window with a sarcastic, “tongue in cheek” approach that really grabs your attention. Their ads are completely unique in their category. They have a distinct budget look (being printed over newspaper with block type) and advertise amenities such as free wi-fi with the neighbour’s password.

If you’re not going to stay in luxury, wouldn’t you like to stay somewhere with a bit of humour? In these instances, cheap bare bones marketing design is a point of radical difference. If you’re in a category typically considered ‘high-end’ or ‘luxury,’ can you go the opposite direction and use marketing that is more basic?



## Take on a taboo subject

Are you prepared to talk about things that no one else will?

The makers of Poo-pourri sure are. Their product is an alternative to the typical air fresheners used in bathrooms – the ones that never smell like the advertised product and leave droplets of scent clinging to your clothing.

Poo-pourri spray goes into the toilet where it traps odours, so you don't exit the bathroom smelling like a bouquet of roses or "mountain air." While the product itself is a different take on odour-eliminating sprays, they went an extra step in radical differentiation by taking on the taboo subject "Girls Don't Poop" for their marketing campaign.

The first time you see their ad you're left a bit dumbstruck – did I really just see that? Featuring a stylish woman sitting on a toilet talking about dropping the "motherload" at work, the ad went beyond the boundaries avoided by their competitors.

It's been viewed more than 40 million times on YouTube, proving the humorous tactic resonated with people. Later ads went on about wanting to cover the smell of her "devil's donuts"!



Life insurance agency DeadHappy tackles the topic of death straight on.

Their “really easy life insurance” offers “death wishes” so you can detail what you want to happen when you die. They have a list of suggestions (send someone on holiday, pay for someone’s first car, release your ashes in space) or you can create your own death wish.

To make your death wish a reality, you purchase a life insurance plan to cover it. It’s a whole new way of looking at a category that usually gets bland ad campaigns to approach a delicate subject.

How can you do this in your business? Mirror the language your audience uses – like dropping the motherload at work.

Be funny to put people at ease. DeadHappy’s logo is a smiling skull and crossbones. Embrace the style you develop wholeheartedly.

If a life insurance company can do it, surely you can too.



## Make full use of your back story

Everyone has a story. We've all had setbacks, lessons learned, or an interesting path in life.

Your backstory is the foundation for your brand story and marketing. It gives personality to your business. A well-told story about the real people behind the scenes makes you instantly relatable.

In Chapter 7 we talked about Burt's Bees and Lamborghini. Here's a few more brief insights into origin stories that instantly allow you to relate to the person behind the brand:

*A guy named Joe Coulombe worked at convenience stores in southern California. He thought that college grads might want a better experience than 7-Eleven's. So he opened a tropical-themed market, stocked good wine, and paid his staff well. He opened more locations near universities and added health foods to his product line. The company: Trader Joe's.*

*Japan, 1917. A 23-year-old electrician's apprentice comes up with an improved light socket. The boss isn't interested, so the young man makes samples in his basement and develops a few products. Panasonic is now worth \$66 billion.*

*In 1995, a programmer named Pierre Omidyar started auctioning some stuff on his personal website. It grew to where he needed a business account and he started charging people fees and got an assistant to help with payments. That site is now eBay.*

Even in these few lines, we get a feel for the person, the drama and the tale behind how they got started. Explore your origin story, learn how to tell a story and put it to work for you.

**In the next chapter, I'll show you how to find an underserved, forgotten audience that are desperately looking for help. An audience that no one else is looking after. These will be your most fruitful customers.**

## KEY TAKEOUTS FROM THIS CHAPTER:

Talk about your point of difference DIFFERENTLY.  
Really make a song and dance about it. Be honest. Be transparent.  
Admit faults (show you're human) and show you've learned from them.  
Be less PC. Take what everyone else is doing – and do the opposite.

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My story is  
the story of  
forgotten  
people and  
the voice of  
the voiceless.

*Andrea Hirata*



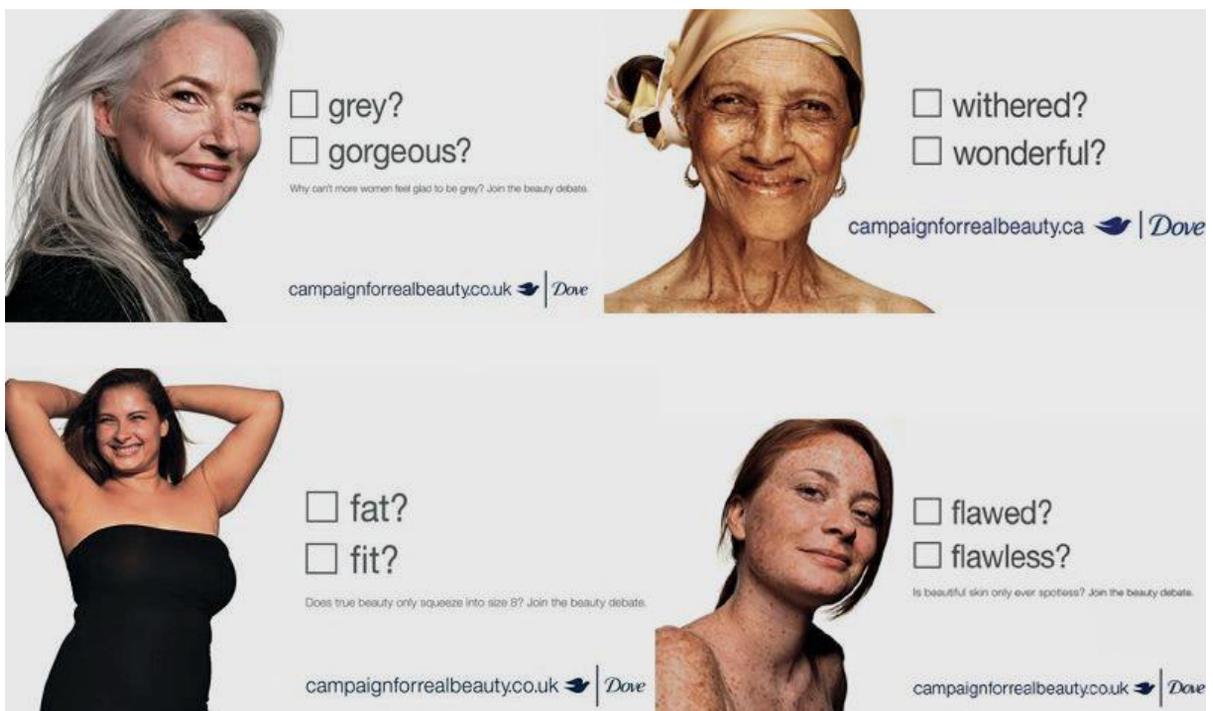
## Checkpoint 4: Serve the forgotten people

In any market, there is always a group of people that are overlooked by the leading businesses or brands. You can't please everyone, right?

Apple took advantage of this by appealing to the so-called crazy ones – the artists, innovators, entrepreneurs and social activists that IBM didn't think about. They weren't considered because the category's narrative was about hardware, software and functionality while these forgotten people were about creativity and aspiration. Apple swooped in with their renowned "Think Different" campaign and won customers for life.

Sometimes the 'forgotten' ones are the most obvious audience. The Dove Real Beauty campaign tried a radically different approach by quite simply designing their marketing for the everyday woman. They went against the mainstream idealistic beauty pushed by most other companies and instead focused on real women of all shapes, sizes and colour, shining a light on inner beauty and uniqueness.

While other companies might think they were targeting the same audience, Dove proved that they understood the audience and related to them. Real women had been forgotten by other big beauty brands.



A great recent example of finding a forgotten audience is the New Zealand company Gen Less. Their TV ad shows environmental protestors marching the streets of Wellington, carrying signs about climate change and renewable energy, as expected.

The guy narrating the ad appears to have an epiphany: Why is saving the world about giving up stuff we love? Why not give up the stuff we don't love – the wasted energy spent on doing things because we think we should? He starts walking against the crowd (perhaps he didn't really love being part of the protest) and says, in a catchy rhyme:

*“Like getting the latest whatever you're not that into.  
Flying to that work thing you'd secretly rather sleep through.  
Sitting in traffic on the way to somewhere you don't even want to get to.”*

Gen Less has cleverly intersected saving the planet with personal happiness. The tagline “Live more with less energy” implies we can be happier, more fulfilled people if we are more mindful of our energy use.

They targeted the people who are likely already engaging in some environmentally responsible behaviours, who don't need to be reminded about how to recycle or the dire effects of a plastic bottle, and who want to be happy – which is probably most of us. Nice one, guys!



## Find your forgotten people

To find the underserved segment of your market, you have to use your business judgment and be willing to take a chance.

Admittedly, defining who is being underserved can take a bit of guesswork. Here are a few sources of information to help you uncover your forgotten audience:

**Personal experience.** If you are dissatisfied with the way you are being served in a category, chances are other people are too. Many entrepreneurs started their business because of discontent and ended up finding their own audience of like-minded people.

Dog lovers Brett and Jonathan found themselves frustrated by the lack of actual healthy food available for dogs – they didn't feel good feeding their beloved pets processed brown balls. So, they started The Farmer's Dog ([www.thefarmersdog.com](http://www.thefarmersdog.com)). They create fresh meals (never frozen) that are tested on people but catered to your specific dog's needs and deliver them to your door. They have a team of over 100 staff and deliver millions of meals every month!



**Friends.** What are your friends' buying habits like? Why do they choose the products or services they do? Do they have ideas for how something can be done better, no matter how far-fetched? Don't discredit the value of casual banter in revealing a gold nugget idea once in a while.

**Research trends.** Commit to spending time researching and reading about your category and other closely related categories. Insights may help you uncover audiences and niches. In Chapter 6, I covered methods to scout out your terrain and you can use most of these same methods to also look for trends.

**Look to the edges of society.** This is often where you find the most interesting ideas, particularly in fast-changing categories like fashion and food. Try a Google search for ‘unusual’ or ‘crazy’ businesses in your category – you’ll unveil some *radically different* ones for sure.

Such a search turned up a lady named Sarah Kaufmann, known as The Cheese Lady – she carves cheddar cheese sculptures for businesses and events across the U.S. If you need a 6-foot gator or a replica of Martha Stewart or Snoop Dogg, she’s your lady (really, you can see them at [sarahcheeselady.com](http://sarahcheeselady.com)).

She’s been making consumable art from cheddar as a full-time job for over 8 years. Who could have predicted there would be a significant market for that?

Spend some time searching for a forgotten audience in your category. Find your own band that marches to the beat of your drum. Once you’ve found them, it’s time to get to know them.





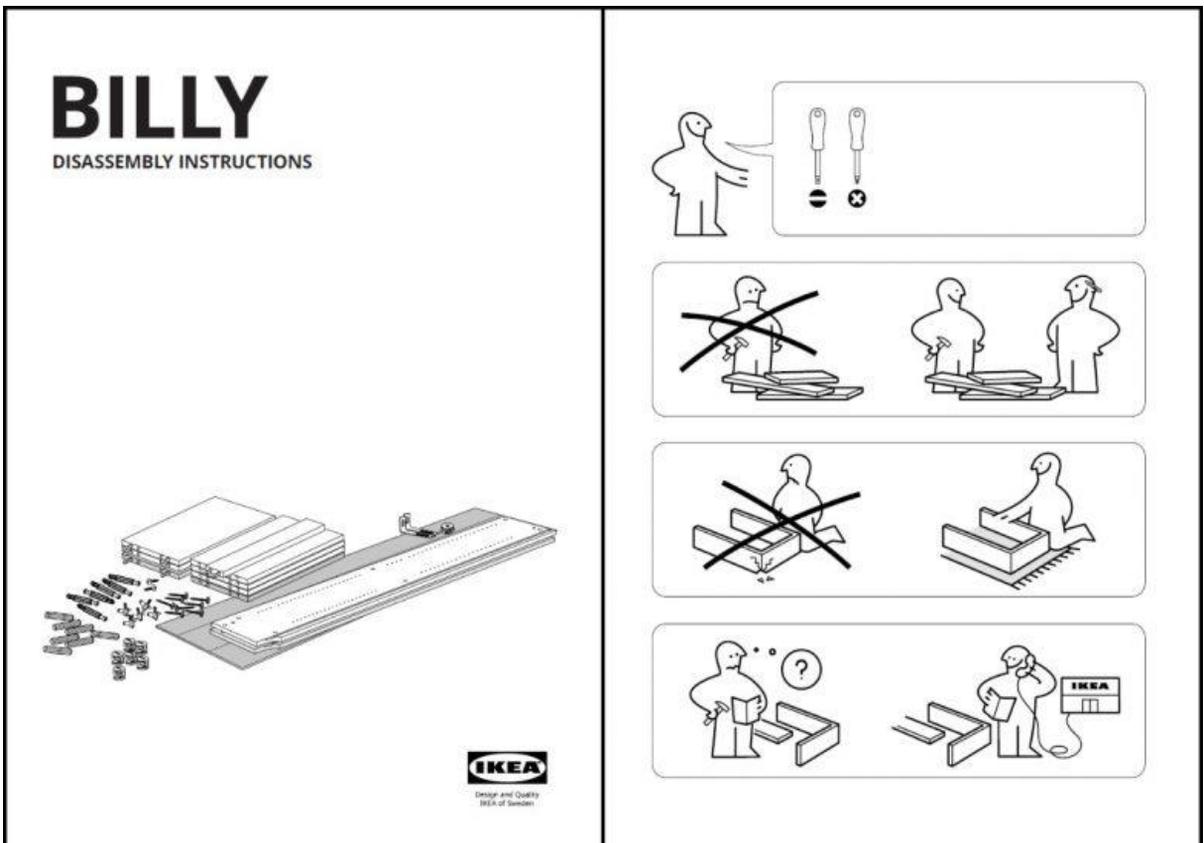
## Empathy beyond the point of purchase

Furniture store IKEA showed that they really empathised with their customers when they recently started offering “disassembly instructions” for their most popular products.

It can be challenging to put the furniture together, but anyone who has ever had to move furniture (whether moving to a new house or selling it to someone else) can easily see the benefit of being able to take it apart and pack it back into a box.

IKEA says they have done it to encourage reusing and recycling of their product and to enhance the lifetime of their furniture, all good news for the planet. It shows empathy beyond the point of purchase, that they understand their customer’s lifestyle and values, and that they care.

It’s another innovative idea from a company that is always challenging conventions and reinventing the homeware category.



## OfficeMax finds an underserved audience

Several years ago, I worked with OfficeMax, a major retail chain selling office supplies in NZ. I was originally called in to help them engage more effectively with small business owners. Their research showed that the owners of these businesses were mainly men aged 35 to 55. The problem was, male business owners don't purchase office supplies. There was a huge underserved market here – the staff who did the actual ordering!

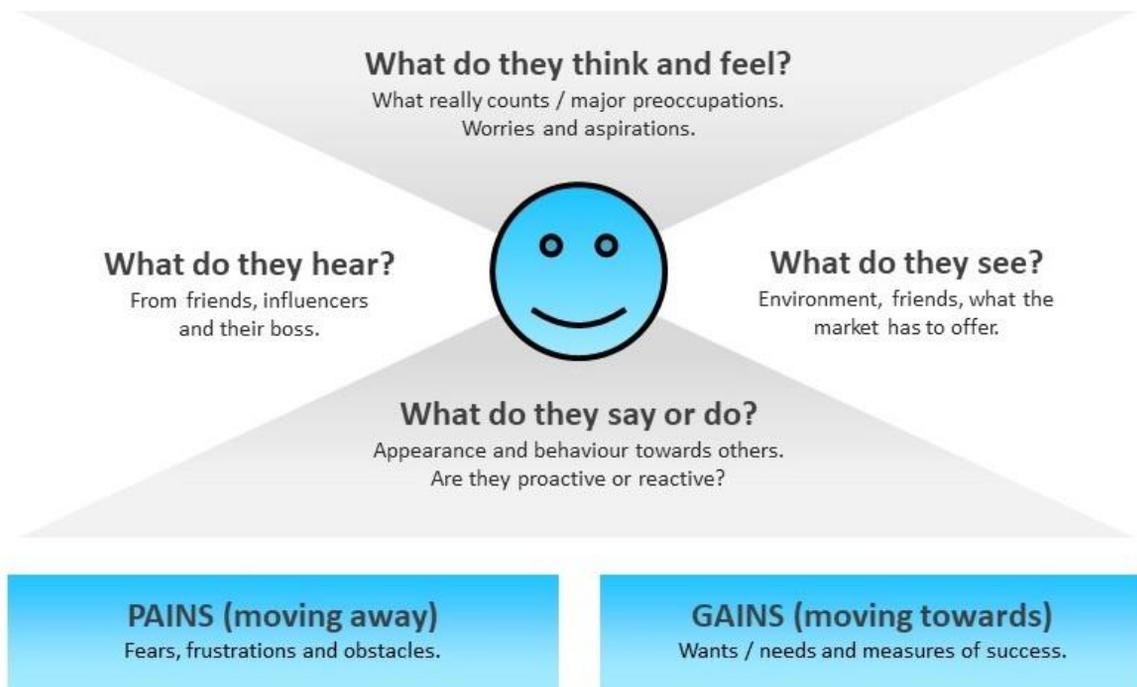
We started with a strategy workshop and then developed two customer personas to help us understand the real buyers and dive deep into their emotional drivers. "Jo" is the office manager in her mid-40s who has been at her job for some time. "Jasmine" is an admin assistant in her mid-20s. Both are incredibly busy and feel that no one understands what their workload is like. They often must deal with difficult tasks that no one else wants to do. They feel overworked, underpaid and undervalued.

We designed a campaign to empathise with Jo and Jasmine. We flipped the usual approach of focusing on product features and benefits on its head with the campaign "Let's Get It Done." We acknowledged how busy Jo and Jasmine are and focused on making their jobs infinitely easier. We redesigned marketing materials with a more fun, feminine look and made social media posts styled after fashion magazine layouts. The campaign was very successful.



## A practical tool for understanding your customers

You can learn to empathise with your customers and develop your own customer personas. Here's a framework I use with my clients to guide you through the process. It's called the Customer Empathy Map.



The strongest competitive advantage in today's market is empathy. This tool will help you get there. Use the questions in this framework to research your customer and get a feel for what it's like to live in their world.

Too often people get hung up on demographic data – age, gender, income etc. – but that is just the tip of the iceberg. What's below the surface are the real emotional drivers. You must engage with their emotions to drive action. The Dove Real Beauty campaign is a brilliant example of this. They showed an understanding of the pain women feel from the pressure of society to meet unrealistic ideals about beauty.

Empathy is more important than ever today because of our digitised world. The decrease in face-to-face interactions makes it harder for us to empathise with each other. When we can't see facial expressions, read body language or hear a tone of voice it is more difficult to connect emotionally. The business that can show empathy and truly connect with their audience will have a major advantage.

The Customer Empathy Map will help you to get a deep understanding of your customers and uncover what motivates them. You'll see things from their perspective, take a walk in their shoes.

In every interaction in life, we are either moving away from pain or towards a gain and it's important to understand where your customers sit on this spectrum. For instance, in the clothing industry you could say that people either want to look good (gain) or fit in with a social crowd, avoiding rejection (pain).

If you have a financial consultancy, your clients may be looking to grow their income through investments (gain) or get out of debt (pain).

Go through this exercise and develop your own customer personas. From there, you can position your brand in a *radically different* way to reach them.

### **KEY TAKEOUTS FROM THIS CHAPTER:**

Get to know the kind of people you serve – but also, look for ones who no-one serves. If your service is outsourcing and everyone in this category targets the professions like legal, accounting and admin, look at advertising, sales, marketing.

Anyone can  
do my job,  
but no one  
can be me.

*Harvey Specter - Suits*



## Checkpoint 5: Build a strong personal brand

The fifth checkpoint on our Road to Differentiation is about building your personal brand.

Having a strong personal brand is one of the key components of being radically different. Why? Because when it comes down to it, people do business with people.

*“With so much content and so many small businesses popping up online, a brand that connects to a person’s face is much easier to trust faster. It takes less time and effort to build a relationship with a personal brand as compared to a business brand.”*

Pia Silva, Worstofall Designs

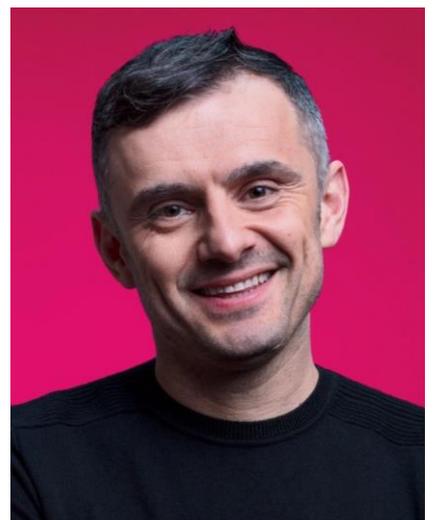
### What is a personal brand?

Personal branding is essentially your story amplified in the marketplace. It’s your unique identity, including your values and what you stand for, communicated to your customers. It’s your reputation, your unique attributes and the strengths you bring to the marketplace. A personal brand builds trust and allows you to position yourself as a thought leader. It makes you relatable as a person.

For instance, more people follow Elon Musk on Twitter than all three of his companies combined (Tesla, SpaceX and SolarCity).

Richard Branson has built his brand on his personal story, radical publicity stunts, core values, and ensures everything he does stays true to it.

Gary Vaynerchuk (*on the right*) has gained a loyal following and earned millions of dollars by putting his personal brand front and centre, and he has clearly positioned himself as the go-to expert when it comes to content marketing.



But you don't have to be as famous as Oprah to have a personal brand. Have you Googled yourself? What kind of impression are you making? Your personal brand could be developing without your input.

So how do you go about purposefully building your personal brand in a way that resonates with your ideal target audience?



## **10 tips to build your *radically different* personal brand**

Here are ten questions to explore to nail down your personal brand and begin gaining recognition.

### **1. Who are you?**

Time to get to know yourself. Recognising your strengths will give you a starting point to building them into your personal brand.

**What motivates you?**

**What projects do you spend hours on without noticing time passing by?**

**What characteristics do people complement you on?**

**What's your story?**

**Who do you want to be?**

It can be helpful to ask friends and family how they would describe you. Personality inventories like Myers-Briggs can give insight into ingrained patterns you may have and not recognise.

*“When you build a brand that’s 100% based on you, you lay the foundation to capitalise on your own blue ocean – a space where you can operate in an uncontested marketplace, free from traditional competitive forces – because none of your competitors can replicate or clone all that’s unique and proprietary to you.”*

Paul Ramondo, Digital Marketing Consultant

## 2. What do you want to be known for?

Your brand isn't just about who you are, but who you want to be. It's as much where you're going as where you are at. What sort of legacy will you create? Imagine your business five years in the future. What does the environment look like? Who are your clients? What's your focus?

Do you want to be known for your humanitarianism? Your skills in motivating others? Your 'rags to riches' story? The possibilities are endless and it is up to each one of us to build our personal brand around what we desire to leave behind, all the while radically differentiating ourselves from the crowd.

In 2014, when accepting an Academy Award for Best Actor, Matthew McConaughey revealed that he credits his success to his hero – which is himself 10 years in the future.<sup>1</sup> He continually aspires toward the version of himself that he wants to be.



This can apply when it comes to your personal brand as well. Acknowledging who you are now and who you want your future self to be gives you something to work towards.

*“To have a strong personal brand, you have to stand for something, believe in a certain way of doing things, and proudly communicate those beliefs from your platform.”*

Amanda Bond, Owner & Founder of The Ad Strategist

### 3. Who is your audience?

Knowing who your audience is will make it easier to craft your style and place it where they'll see it and identify with it. Use their language, metaphors and style to communicate with them. An obvious example is if you're targeting teenagers, you would use vastly different language than if you were talking to Baby Boomers – you would also be all over current social media platforms that are likely unused by an older audience.

So, who are you targeting? In Chapter 9, I discussed serving the forgotten people and developing customer profiles using the Customer Empathy Map. You should have a good idea of who your audience is, so now refine where you will reach them.

If you work in a visual craft like design – whether it's landscape design, home interiors or graphic design – your personal website and visual platforms like Instagram and Pinterest can help showcase your work. If you work as a consultant, you may find more of an audience on LinkedIn.

### 4. Who's already in your space?

Find the experts in your field, find out where they are speaking and writing - then do it better. You don't want to imitate - personal branding is all about authenticity and how you're different. But seeing what is out there will give you a platform to start from.

Let's say you're a health coach. You have a good look around and see that the leading health coaches in your category are writing longer format articles and personal blogs. Most of the content is informative, but a little fluffy.

How can you be *radically different*? Maybe you can start by being more polarising and controversial – debunking some of the myths about health coaching, and challenging some of the views of other coaches.

You could also choose an untapped media platform to focus on. As the majority of content in your category is written, creating dynamic videos and infographics will really help you stand apart. No one is doing a great job of marketing themselves on Instagram - so that could be an opportunity as well.

## 5. Are you contrarian?

As we have mentioned in chapter 4, being a contrarian thinker in your category is an incredibly effective way to radically differentiate your business.

**CONTRARIANS get noticed**

**CONTRARIANS get talked about**

**CONTRARIANS get quoted in the media**

**CONTRARIANS get a fanatical following**

So how do you do it? Start by making a list of all the common operating principles and conventions in your business category. Then think about how you can deliberately tip some of these on their head - and get noticed for it.

**Mark Ritson** is a sublime example of contrarian thinking. He is a well-known marketer with a PhD in Marketing and has taught in MBA programmes (like at London Business School and MIT). He's built his reputation being deliberately contrarian and provocative.

When giving his opinion on the failure of Google Glasses he said, "it made people look like wankers, or, as they became known, 'Glassholes.' If you don't believe me, try a, ahem, Google image search for 'people wearing Google Glass.' See what I mean? You get the usual blend of supermodels and fashionistas but they all, without exception, look like wankers."<sup>2</sup>



**Ricky Gervais**, known for his blunt, unfiltered comedy, is a real contrarian.

When invited to host the Golden Globes for the fifth time, Ricky thought about how to choose his audience: was he going to ‘pander to the egos in the room’ or entertain the global audience sitting at home? <sup>3</sup>

Describing himself as “the bloke sitting at home who shouldn’t have been invited” it’s clear which audience he chose.

He held nothing back as he called out hypocritical celebrities and joked about diversity in Hollywood. He made offensive jokes about people who were sitting in the audience.

His disruptive, contrarian approach generated millions of dollars of media coverage, both highly critical and heaped with praise. Whether you loved it or hated it, everyone was talking about it.

In true contrarian form, when accused of ‘crossing the line’ Ricky says, "I didn't draw a line, you did."



## 6. What's your elevator pitch?

Boil your story down to an effective 30 seconds. When networking or meeting new people, a snappy description of what you do and where you'd like to go with it will intrigue and make an impression. Think of what keywords you'd like associated with your personal brand.

The next time someone says, 'What do you do?' will you say something drab like "I work in sales" - or will you say something intriguing like:

"I help salespeople become the fly on the wall.

I sell a platform that lets salespeople see how their prospects interact with their proposals after they send them out. At the moment, I'm working with one customer to change how they prioritise deals based on how engaged prospects are with the proposals."

I took the above example from [saleshacker.com](http://saleshacker.com). There are thousands of elevator pitches online that can inspire you to craft your own. Keep it simple, to the point and interesting – with a hook to start.

*"People need to know who you are and what you do in the most simple way possible. Keep it simple. You should be able to brand yourself in 5 words or less."*

Grant Cardone, CEO of Cardone Enterprises



## **7. Do you love networking and speaking?**

If you want to develop a personal brand, you have to learn to embrace it. It is the most straightforward way to continually grow your contacts and begin to be recognised.

Look for opportunities where you can speak about your contrarian insights and ideas at conferences, industry gatherings or charity events.

I have found in my brand consultancy, Story IQ, that speaking at a range of conferences and events is an effective way to build my credibility and visibility in the market.

A good model to use here is to think about how politicians use networking and speaking to build their personal brands in the national political arena. They adjust the language they use to match the crowd they're addressing.

They emulate their personal brand in the way they dress and carry themselves. Speaking opportunities are used to increase their credibility and relatability. If politicians can do it, surely you can be even more effective with your authentic voice.

## **8. Who will recommend you?**

Recommendations from clients and colleagues are a compelling way to communicate your values. The experience other people have had with you, in their own words, is powerful testimony to who you are and what you stand for. The ease of looking up online reviews and recommendations means it can strongly influence your customers choices.

Brainstorm who you can ask to give you a recommendation – go through past and present colleagues and clients who you have built a relationship with.

A personal mentor or coach can be a great source as they have seen the hard work you put in to progress towards your goals.

LinkedIn is a simple way to ask for endorsements and it's likely prospective clients will look you up there. Adding recommendations to your personal website is key as well – which brings us to the next point.

## 9. How will you establish your online presence?

One of the most important aspects of personal branding is making sure your online presence is strong and engaging. Your messaging needs to resonate through your content on every platform, from your personal website to social media platforms. And it needs to be cohesive as well.

Again, Gary Vaynerchuk comes to mind. He is an entrepreneur in several different areas, yet his personal brand is consistent whether he's on Instagram, LinkedIn or whatever new technology he's taking on. His manner of speaking to the camera in a candid way makes it feel like he's talking directly to you, like his advice is doable because he has been in your shoes and understands your issues. He has also been known to put his personal mobile number on Instagram and invite text messages.

His encouragement to 'hustle' makes you feel like you can achieve what he has achieved. His dynamic yet humble persona is expressed in a consistent way across all his social media platforms. Whether in human or cartoon form, he's always dressed casually in jeans, sweatshirts and sneakers.

With personal branding, consistency of messaging, imagery and the tone and style of your communication is vitally important. This is so that people begin to recognise your brand and associate it with the characteristics you desire. Every bit of content you produce is important as over time, if done well, it will help you gain a committed audience. Engage with questions, invite your audience to share their experience or opinion. Make sure you respond or at least acknowledge their comments. Putting a bit of human touch into every connection will help build your online reputation.

The next question is...where will you interact with people online? Do you need a website, or will social media platforms be more effective? With the ability to shop, book appointments or make reservations via Facebook, you could save yourself a lot of the expense of building a website.

Once again, look to your competition and do it one better. If everyone seems to be using the same platforms in the same way, how can you do it differently?

Pay attention to every opportunity to direct people to your platforms. One simple tip: add links to your email signature in a way that gets noticed. Instead of the same old boring social media logos, design them with your brand's colour, or change the shapes. Use your signature to highlight an award, drive sales of your latest offer with an image and hyperlink or insert a call to action. Use every available opportunity to showcase your brand.

## 10. How can you increase your visibility?

Beyond your own channels, get exposure through other people's audiences.

**Collaborate.** Create partnerships that are mutually beneficial. Can you both broaden your audiences by working together? What have you got to share with each other? Perhaps it involves guest blogging, referrals, or coming together to offer a package that would appeal to both of your audiences.

*If you have a small winery, perhaps a local chocolatier would collaborate on a Valentine's Day promo. By working together collaboratively, both of you can expand your foodie audiences.*



**Interviews.** Offer to be interviewed as a guest expert for podcasts, radio or television. If you have your own podcast or have appeared as a guest on other podcasts before, this can be a powerful 'in' as it gives people the chance to see what your tone and style are like and that you handle yourself with professionalism and confidence.

**Write.** People are always on the lookout for quality content. Write articles for blogs and other online publications where people who are likely to share the content will see them. Promote your writing through your online presence.

**Speak.** As I mentioned before, public speaking is a great way to increase visibility and establish credibility. Seek opportunities for conferences or live events. Often, further opportunities reveal themselves from there.

## Your personal brand is all about you

These ten questions should open your mind to how you want to establish your personal brand.

**Next up I'll help you explore how to disrupt and attack the status quo.**

### KEY TAKEOUTS FROM THIS CHAPTER:

Work on your personal brand development. Create an elevator pitch that's different and riveting. Put yourself out there and make yourself known. Make yourself famous. Get noticed, talked about and followed.

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The world is  
**not static**  
and the  
status quo  
is not  
sacred.

*Truman Doctrine*

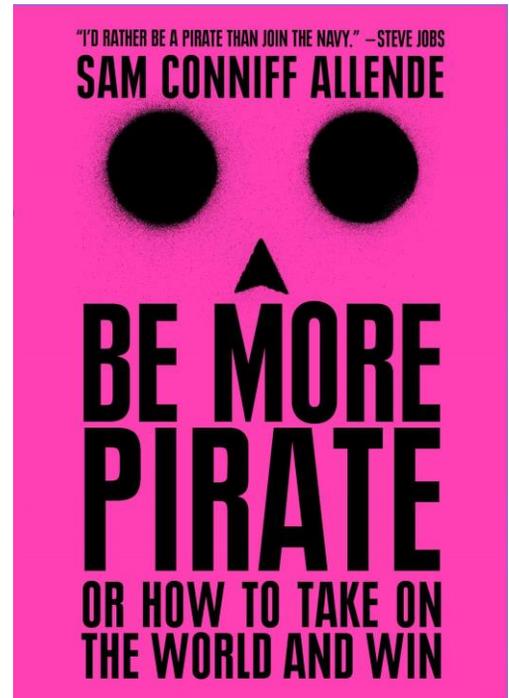


## Checkpoint 6: Attack the status quo

In his ground-breaking book *Be More Pirate*, author Sam Conniff says that the Golden Age pirates (those who ruled the waves from around 1690 to 1725) are the ideal role models for anyone trying to make their mark in the twenty-first century.

Why? They didn't just break rules, they rewrote them. They didn't just reject society they reinvented it. They didn't just challenge the status quo, they challenged everything, and once the dust had settled, their alternative society and strategies changed the world for good.

As he puts it in his riveting book, "Pirates challenge the Establishment's authority and ownership of new ideas. Pirates innovate at the margins, free from the order of the ordinary. Pirates incubate their ideas in an intensive, open-space environment. Pirates have a dual focus: fortune, then fairness."



Pirates are confident, daring, rebellious and crafty. Break the rules, rewrite them and change the game. To be *radically different*, you must go beyond improving on the competition; you must attack the status quo and change the game – like a pirate.

### Or like a daft punk

A couple of guys formed a rock band in 1987 that lasted only six months. They were written up in British music magazine *Melody Maker* which described their music as "daft punky trash."

The duo was inspired to start again, calling themselves Daft Punk and producing high-energy electronica music. Five years later, they signed with Virgin Records.



From the beginning, Daft Punk had their enemy in their sights: the glamorous superstar world, complete with fake personas and made up images. In the fashion of true contrarians, they moved in the opposite direction. They remained anonymous and kept their personal lives separate from their music life. They merged multiple genres, making music like no one else could. They won over rock music fans to a new genre of electronic music.

They sold millions of albums over a 28-year career, until they decided enough was enough and it was time to retire. What did they do right? They focused in on their true audience: the early adopters who wanted something new.

They used surprise to their advantage, often performing unannounced (with Kanye West at the Grammys and Pharell Williams at Coachella) or with fantastic stage setups. To create mystery, they kept their identities secret in contrast to fame-seeking, image-obsessed celebrities.

In other words, they did something *radically different*. They attacked the status quo and maintained their attack for 28 years.

They stole the spotlight by doing the opposite of what everyone else was doing at the time.

## Record-breaking sales day? Nah, let's go outside

Outdoor retailer REI established themselves as contrarian, swashbuckling pirates in the retail world when they decided to close all 168 of their stores on the single busiest shopping day of the year in America: Black Friday.

The day after Thanksgiving officially kicks off the Christmas shopping season, with retailers competing for customers dollars by offering ridiculously low prices on desired objects. People camp outside of stores to be the first in so they'll be sure to get the prized offers, sometimes resorting to aggressive behaviour and violence (horrifyingly, people have even been trampled to death in the crowds).

REI's president and CEO, Jerry Stritzke, didn't feel that Black Friday fitted in with their value of being stewards of the outdoors. Instead of joining in the mad rush to get their share of the spending spree, REI closed their stores and paid their 12,000 employees to get outside.<sup>1</sup>

Their #OptOutside campaign started in 2015 and is still running. By prioritising people over dollars – and proving it – they have asserted that their way of doing business works and they're sticking with it.



## A brand without a brand

One way to attack the status quo – anti-branding. Sort of.

“We are very much a brand,” says Aaron Magness, CMO of Brandless.<sup>2</sup> “We’re just reimagining what it means to be a brand in today’s world by encouraging people to live more and brand less.”

The Brandless product range features household, health and beauty, and food items – starting at just USD\$3 each, in minimalist packaging. They prioritise organic, non-toxic, cruelty-free products. Brandless removes the extra costs of marketing and promotion by sticking to a simple formula: every product has been researched to meet the “gold standards” to be good for you, your family and the planet.

A straightforward, no nonsense value that guides every product they sell without the competition of fancy brands. If you search their site for coconut oil, you get one option for coconut oil – organic, unrefined and cold pressed – because their research proved it to be the best product.

Removing the brands to create your own brand – that’s pirate bad-assery.



## Winning the new game

One of my favourite brand narrative strategists is a guy called Andy Raskin.

Based in San Francisco he works with many tech companies (both start-ups and established companies) on their positioning and narrative strategies. He's also led strategic storytelling at Salesforce, Uber, Square, Intel and General Assembly.



In one of his articles he talks about 'attacking the old game' and 'naming the new game.'<sup>3</sup> Then positioning your business as the link to help your customers win the new game. He says if we can help our customers make sense of a changing world, we can help them thrive – and they'll feel like they are winning, all because of you.

Look, whether you go in with the mindset of a pirate, a punk or of 'changing the game' it boils down to the same thing: changing what has always been to a new, *radically different* way of doing things.

## Attack the status quo checklist

Here's a go-to list to help your brand achieve radical difference by attacking the status quo.

**Take a stand.** Boldly, publicly and firmly define your enemy and call them out while stating where you stand.

Example: If your business is about making offices more efficient, your enemy might be unnecessary paper trails or hard copies of files. Your stand is to simplify and streamline every small detail for a more efficient bigger picture.

**Be contrarian.** List out all the normal, traditional practices in your category. Then do the opposite.

Example: Traditional bookstores are quiet, with cosy chairs tucked amongst stately shelves to encourage a peaceful browsing experience. The opposite might be a bookstore that plays punk music, with bright neon signage and décor that encourages anarchy and anti-establishment views, with stripped-back branding to discourage materialism. It could work.

**Unify your look.** Identify your colour, logo, how you present your business. Symbols are powerful – a country’s flag, a sports team emblem, pride rainbows – people unite behind these representations of identity. Your look should be about what you embody and the values you represent.

The simple three-bar logo of Adidas is universally recognised. Founder Adi Dassler simply referred to his brand as ‘the brand with three stripes’ after purchasing the design from a Finnish shoe company (for a couple bottles of whiskey and about €1600).



In the late 1990s, the three stripes were set on an angle to represent a mountain, reflecting the athlete’s challenges and hard work to achieve their goals.

At first it was used on performance sportswear but was later expanded to all the Adidas product range, carrying the symbolism through all their branding.

**Create hype.** Keep an eye on trends and imagine how they might pan out in the future. Use your creative mind to contemplate scenarios and make predictions. Consider it mental time travel. Do this regularly and people will begin to be attracted to what you are going to think up next.

Example: Elon Musk is the penultimate example – there are articles and books written on how to learn to think like he does. He has had success in diverse areas and tends to go for less crowded ventures, like space travel. (When a SpaceX rocket blows up, he calls it a “rapid unscheduled disassembly.” Even his failures get hyped.)

**Make your own language.** Create your own jargon, catchphrase, terminology. Talk about it like you know it inside out.

Example: I don't think it's an accident that we 'Google' things we need to know. Larry Page used the term before the company launched, by signing off on a listserv for Google-Friends with "Have fun and keep googling!" The term started as part of the insider's language and quickly took off, making it into the Oxford English Dictionary in 2006.

**Further Reading:**

*The Hype Handbook: 12 Indispensable Success Secrets from the World's Greatest Propagandists, Self-Promoters, Cult Leaders, Mischief Makers, and Boundary Breakers* by Michael F. Schein.

## KEY TAKEOUTS FROM THIS CHAPTER:

Attack the status quo. Call them out and show off your uniqueness.

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If you can't  
spend your  
way into  
getting noticed,  
behave your  
way into  
getting noticed.

*Adam Morgan – Founder of Brew Dog*



## Checkpoint 7: Communicate your difference

Henry Ford famously said that if he had asked his customers what they wanted, they would have said they wanted a faster horse. No one could have imagined the automobile he was about to make available to the public.

Your customers cannot dictate what your difference is, nor will they intuitively recognise it as the better choice.

Throughout the book I have talked about how to radically differentiate your business using a number of deliberate marketing strategies. I have also talked about the importance of having a contrarian mindset in everything you do, as this becomes your guiding force for every marketing initiative.

This is particularly relevant for this final chapter about how to communicate your difference.

In this chapter I talk about how to apply all of the radically different thinking into the communication channels you use to get the word out to your prospective customers. I have focussed my efforts on helping you use offbeat, unconventional media and using traditional media in unusual ways. Ways that will get people talking.

The 19 ideas I share are mostly practical, cost-effective, and easily executed with smaller marketing budgets. Buckle up. Things are about to get weird.

### **What's the point of all this marketing weirdness?**

People like when your brand does something different than everyone else. Don't be afraid to mix it up and see what happens. Nothing risked, nothing gained. So get out there and do something weird.

Your messages, presentations, and conversations need to deliberately provoke and disrupt the status quo in order to "wake up" our brains.

Businesses need to be different. Different from their competitors, different from their previous selves. If they fail to be different, they fail.

# 19 ways to communicate your difference:

## 1. Create unusual social media content

Our screens are overloaded with content that looks much the same. We quickly scroll without even noticing some things, as our brains block out familiar images as low priority information.

Harking back to our Stone Age ancestors, we are hardwired to notice what's different. So people notice the unusual and outrageous. Particularly if it has a dose of humour or irreverence.

*For instance, you're scrolling through your social media feed and you see this:*



Denny's is a chain of mediocre 24-hour diners in the US, mostly known for big cheap breakfasts. Their social content doesn't address any of that. Rather, it grabs attention by being a bit weird, memorable, and shareable. Their absurd images instantly make you take notice, pay attention and maybe even laugh.



Denny's @DennysDiner · Aug 26

bark if you love purebreads

[#nationaldogday](#)



## ***What can you do to create weirdness in your category?***

Can you give a personality to something inanimate?

Iceland gave their country its own conversational voice to encourage tourism with the campaign “Iceland Wants to Be Your Friend.” Across their website and social media channels, Iceland spoke directly to people with an authentic, human voice, trying to make friends on “the Inter-nets”.



Can you involve your audience? Remember Charmin’s “tweets from the seat”



One unique audience-involved promotion resulted in one person winning the opportunity to live inside a museum for 30 days. All they had to do was share their experience on social media platforms. Visitors to the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago increased as people wanted to meet the person who was living in the museum. The longer term effect was the museum’s reputation as a cool place for learning and entertainment increased.

## 2. Add irreverent humour to your promotions

Humour helps reach more people. People like to be entertained, and they like to share entertaining posts with their friends – especially ones that push the boundaries a little with irreverent humour.

Laughter relaxes us and is a means of relating to each other as regular people. Plus it releases all those feel-good chemicals like serotonin and dopamine.

The El Paso Zoo realised the value of irreverent humour with their special Valentine's Day promotion. How would you like to name a cockroach after your ex and then feed it to a meerkat? This idea cleverly involved their community, with a live Facebook stream and names of the exes featuring in their social media for the week. The campaign was a huge success.



**Quit  
Bugging  
Me !!!**

EL PASO  
ZOO

**Name a cockroach after your Ex!**

---

**Names will be displayed on our meerkat exhibit  
and on our social media starting Feb. 11th!  
Watch live Feb. 14th at 2:15pm on Facebook or  
our meerkat webcam to see our meerkat mob  
crunch down on these little bugs!**



### 3. Try some publicity stunts

Doing wacky things in public can really show how different you are.

Richard Branson has to be the king of publicity stunts. When Virgin launched Virgin Brides – a bridalwear store – Branson turned up in a wedding dress with full makeup (he even shaved his beard).

When they launched Virgin Cola, he drove a tank through Times Square to blow up the Coke sign (well, pretend to blow it up). He rappelled down the side of the new Spaceport air hanger while drinking champagne. These are just a few examples of the far out things he did to get attention.

Now you may not be quite as adventure-seeking (or with as much disposable income) as Branson. But check out what a Canadian company did to raise awareness of global warming.



By hanging life rafts from the side of buildings and placing lifeguards in the middle of the city, they drew attention to the rising sea levels that will flood coastal cities if we don't all do something to prevent global warming. It was a low-cost campaign that made a visual impact and grabbed attention.

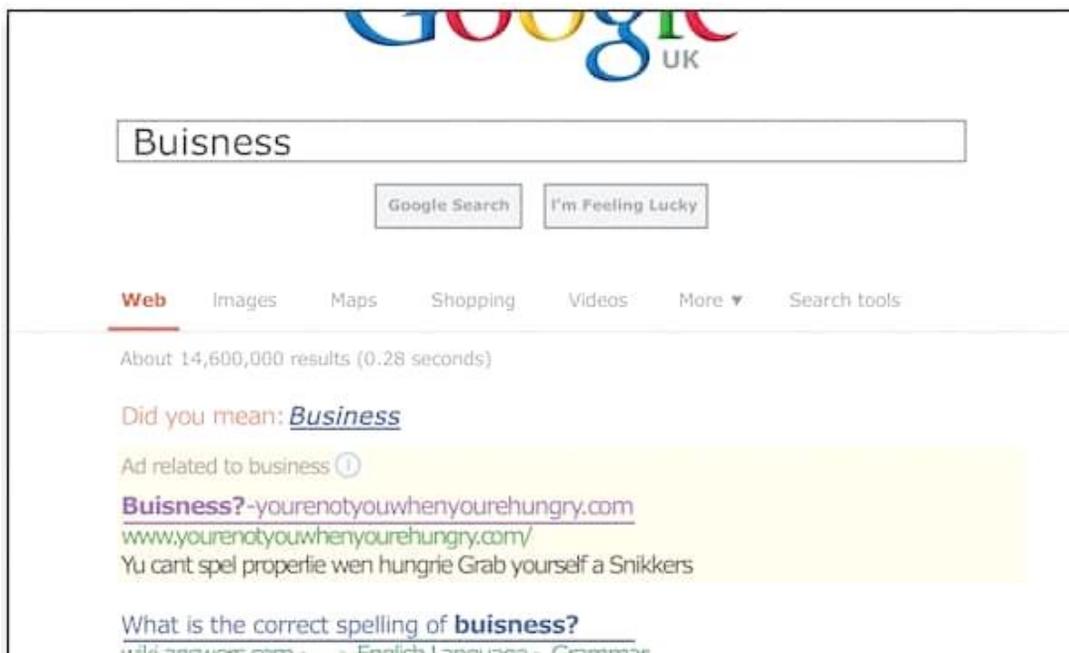
## 4. Use Google AdWords disruptively

Google AdWords is one of the most cost-effective mediums for many small businesses - particularly in consumer retail and B2B services. But most business go the conventional route, competing for common keywords with ads that say the same thing as their competitors.

Imagine flipping this on its head. In 2013, Snickers launched their famous “You’re not you when you’re hungry” campaign.

They did an intriguing thing when it came to Google Ads: they bid on misspelled words that didn’t have anything to do with Snickers.

Say you’re googling something about business and you type the word incorrectly. The search results would then look like this, with Snickers’ ad front and centre:



The idea of “you can’t spell when you’re hungry” linked in to their campaign brilliantly and gave people a bit of a surprise. They bought the 500 most misspelled words on Google, and hit their target of reaching 500,000 people within three days of launching.<sup>1</sup>

How are your competitors using AdWords? How can you do the opposite?

## 5. Create talk worthy signage

One simple way to showcase your difference is through your signage. Signs work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, so it's worth putting some effort in to make them spectacular. The average small business can get up to 50% of their business from signs – they're like a silent salesperson.

Craft something unique that will get people talking, like this "Downward Dog" yoga sign from Flow Yoga Studio in Vancouver.

Elegantly simple, but very effective.



Another great example from Canada.

A simple graphic on Yuzu Sushi's vehicles.

I can't think of a better way to use a spare wheel cover to advertise your business.



Whether it's your street-facing signage, footpath sign, or a vehicle wrap, it's worth your while to make your signage work for you by making it radically different and creative.

## 6. Give away free stuff to generate buzz

Who doesn't love a Slurpee? Discovered by accident when sodas were put into a freezer after the soda fountain broke down, the slushie soda was installed in every 7-Eleven by 1967.<sup>2</sup>

To celebrate their 75<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2002, 7-Eleven hosted National Free Slurpee Day where everyone could get a free small Slurpee. It was such a hit they continue to hold the giveaway every year on July 11, at the height of America's summer season, in all 9000 stores nationwide.

The day has turned into the likes of a national holiday, garnering customer loyalty and its own fandom in a category that – let's face it – people use because it is convenient (thus the term 'convenience store.') Even Covid-19 couldn't get them down, they had to cancel Slurpee Day but instead gave 1 million meals to non-profit group Feeding America.

(Fun fact, 7-Eleven trademarked the term "brain freeze.")

As a small to medium size business, what can you afford to give away? It doesn't have to be something huge. Small gestures make a big impression.



## 7. Reach out with guerrilla stickers

Stickers are a cheap, easy avenue that with a little creative thought can set you apart from the crowd.

Pro blogger Kyle Taylor has a blog called The Penny Hoarder where he gives financial advice and actionable tips on saving and earning more money.

Rather than advertising online to promote the purpose behind his site (to save money) he focused on promoting one particular article in a novel way. One of Kyle's most popular articles was titled "I Get Paid to Buy Beer."

So he went out and bought the domain [iGetFreeBeer.com](http://iGetFreeBeer.com), redirected it to the article on his site, and promoted it by getting some college students to place stickers around their campus and hangouts.

The stickers simply listed the website.

It cost him about \$120 (printing the stickers and paying the students) and netted him 300 new visitors after two weeks.<sup>3</sup>

He figures at about 40 cents per visit, it's much cheaper than AdWords, and probably reached a different audience.



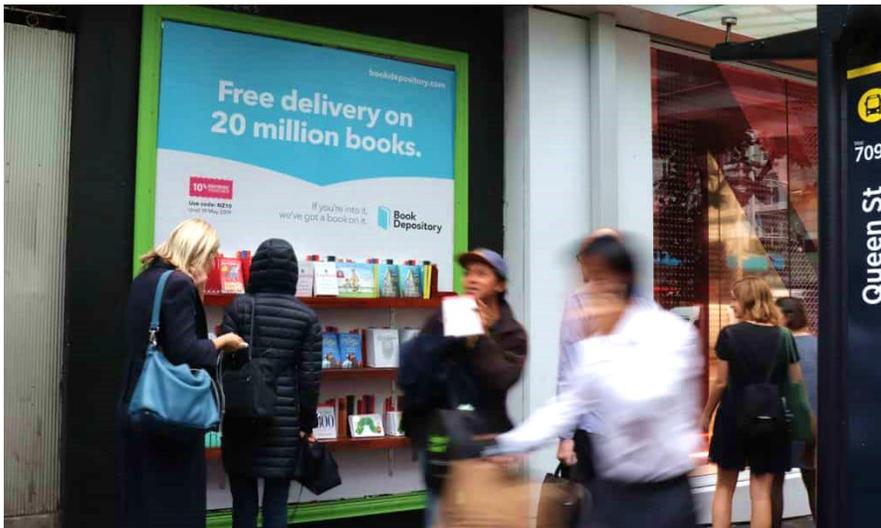
## 8. Use creative street marketing

Traditional billboards and eye-level screen displays get their share of attention. But street marketing can take it a step further, incorporating art, street fixtures, or interactive displays.

Nationwide Insurance made an unmissable statement with this display in the U.S. featuring a fictitious paint company:



In New Zealand, Book Depository generated some buzz by giving away free books in this poster frame designed by Phantom Billstickers:



## 9. Manufacture momentum like Ecko

In *The Hype Handbook* author Michael F. Schein shares a great story about how the streetwear brand Ecko got a start by creating its own momentum.

When Macy's approached Marc Ecko and offered to give his hip-hop influenced clothing line a try in one of its stores, he was both elated and terrified. He was elated because, well, it was Macy's.

He was terrified because this single rack in a single store was his one and only chance to prove himself.



Ecko knew there was a distinct possibility that customers would pass the rack by without buying a thing. He also knew that this would kill any momentum he had already built for his brand. He couldn't let that happen.

So, what did he do? He contacted members of his street teams—kids he paid to plaster clubs and lamp posts with the Ecko logo in various forms. Then he handed them some cash and told them, on the down low, to go into Macy's and buy his stuff. The rack soon sold out.

Macy's expanded its order. With a bigger blueprint in the store, non-street team members started purchasing Ecko clothing. In turn, Macy's expanded its order. It was the beginning of an empire.

How can you manufacture momentum for your business? Start by identifying some influencers in your field and giving them product to hype. Hold a launch event and get every friend and family member you have to fill the room and generate buzz.

Gather a crowd. It doesn't have to be filled with genuine fans at first – just enough people to get the attention of your future fans.

## 10. Write a book

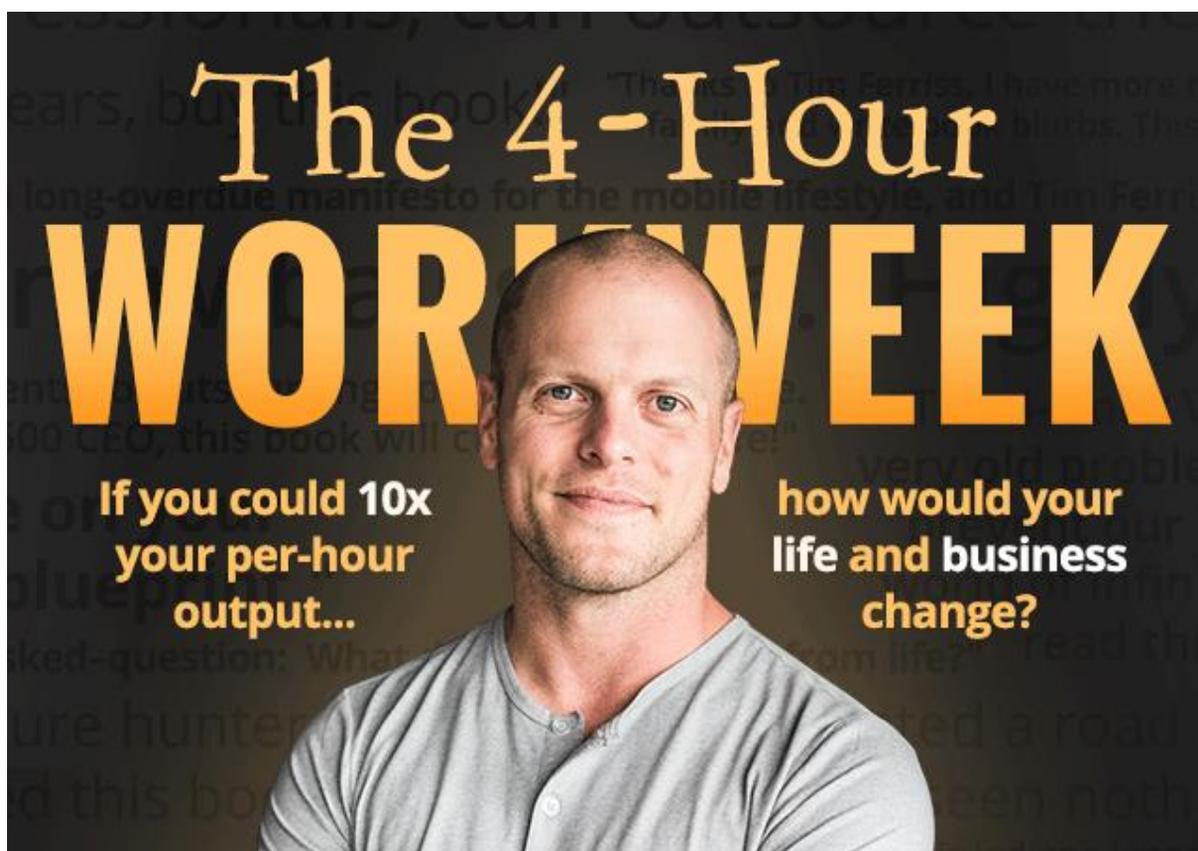
Writing a book is possibly one of the most underrated marketing tools around. It will set you apart from your competition once and for all and attract more prospects and customers. It will establish your credentials as a thought leader in your category or area of expertise and provide a simple way to educate your prospects about your unique methodology.

Finally, it's one of the most effective ways to build your brand and grow your business. That's why I've written this book.

Some books have attained almost a cult status for their authors.

Tim Ferriss's *The 4-Hour Work Week*, Simon Sinek's *Start With Why*, Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

They all promise to be the go-to guide to everything you need to know to work smarter, make a killer marketing campaign, or be more productive and efficient. What could you write a book about?



## 11. Steal ideas from other categories

One way to find fresh ideas about how to market your product or service is to steal ideas from other completely different categories.

I had to smile when I was in Bali a few years ago and passed by roadside warungs displaying petrol for sale for the thousands of scooters on the road. Most of the bottles of petrol were 750ml Absolut Vodka bottles. Obviously the brand is well-known to the point that the petrol sellers saw it as adding value to their sale. I wondered what Absolut would think of the “remix” of their brand – rather than vodka spirits it was being used for gasoline spirits!



I’m not saying to go use someone else’s brand for your own benefit. What I am saying is to go look at what successful brands outside your category are doing, and see how you can use it in your business.

If you have an online wine shop, what can you learn from the marketing strategies used by Apple? They targeted the audience that IBM overlooked. Is there a forgotten audience outside of what you would consider the traditional wine buyer?

If you have an accounting firm, can you learn from a major beauty brand like Sephora? Their success is largely attributed to the way that customers can try products on their own without pressure to buy, their loyalty program and personalised experience. Can these concepts be applied to the way you interact with your clients?

More recently, KFC South Africa did some fast footwork when their slogan “It’s finger-lickin’ good” suddenly didn’t fit with the times – coronavirus swiftly made it highly inappropriate.

So, what did they do? Borrowed slogans from other well-known brands outside of their category.



KFC placed a digital ad van outside of Nike’s Oxford Street store with a parody of their slogan.

And then produced this smart ad for Twitter using Red Bull’s famous tagline.



## 12. Start a rumour that becomes your story

Rumours travel fast. Use it to your advantage.

Casillero del Diablo (The Devil's Cellar) wouldn't exist today if it weren't for the fear of the devil.

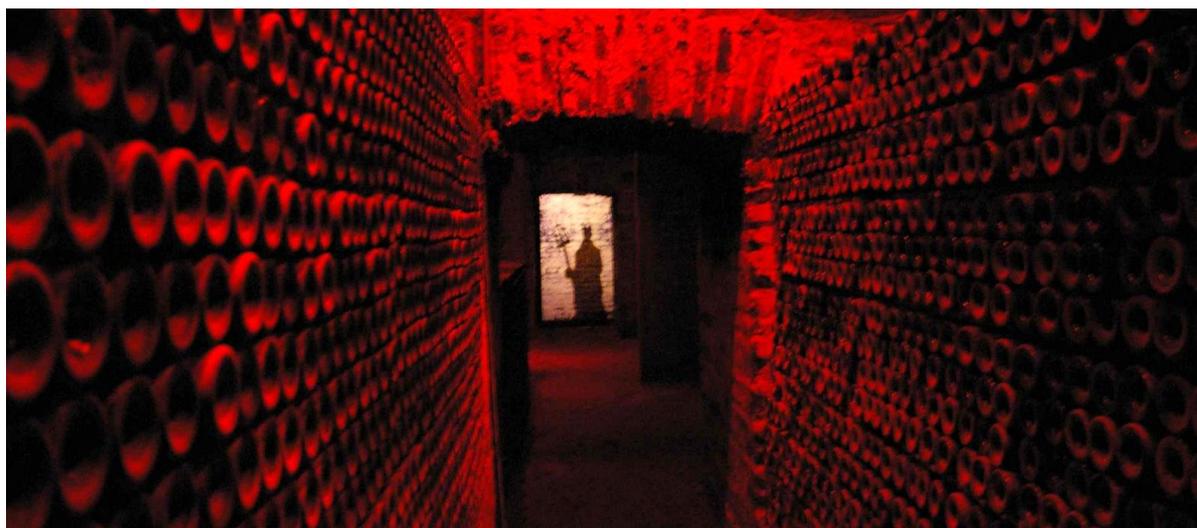
Back in the late 1800's Don Melchor, owner of the Concha y Toro winery (which owns Casillero del Diablo), had a major problem with theft of his best wines from his cellar. Rather than calling the authorities, Don Melchor took a more subtle approach to security.



Well-versed in local superstitions, he spread the rumour that the cellar was inhabited by the Devil, referencing the culturally strict adherence to Catholicism that would empower such a rumour. His legend worked. Never again did another bottle of wine disappear from his cellar.

The rumour that became a signature story for the brand has helped to cement the brand's position as the most famous Chilean wine in the world.

What rumours can you start that will help to build a *radically different* position for your business? Perhaps it has to do with how you got started, a 'secret recipe' or bit of advice you will never share. Anything with an element of mystery can get people talking, and anytime they're talking about your story is a good thing.



### 13. Use video emails

Using video in email marketing is a real opportunity to not only reach your customers at critical points but showcase how your brand is radically different.

A couple of years ago I purchased an online digital marketing training course on a Sunday morning. 15 minutes later, I received an email with a personal video from the course creator James Kemp – using my name and thanking me for buying the course.

To make it more memorable, the video was made while James was at the gym having a Sunday morning workout. He had taken a short break just to acknowledge my purchase. The gesture made me feel good and it has always stood out in my mind. It added that unique human touch that is increasingly important in a world of Zoom calls and virtual meetings.

At what points of interaction would a video email suit your customers?

After subscribing to your newsletter is an obvious one, as they are interested at that very moment and a personal, human touch helps build a rapport.

Perhaps immediately after they purchase a product you send a personal thank-you video, give a few tips on using the product, and ask for a review or invite them to join a Facebook community.

Use the footer of your email newsletter to embed a behind-the-scenes video. Just remember to use the opportunity to show how you are *radically different*.

If you're feeling intimidated by the technical aspect of using video email, I can assure you that there are plenty of platforms that make it easy. With a few clicks you can record your video, personalize it, and send it.

Bonjoro, BombBomb, TailoredMail, and Constant Contact are a few that I've come across, and most give you a free trial so you can make sure it is the platform for you.

## 14. Use reverse psychology to generate curiosity

There's a barbecue joint called Rudy's in Texas that advertises itself as "the worst BBQ in Texas." The founder of Rudy's, Phil Romano, developed the memorable slogan back in the early 1990's because he felt that all his competitors were claiming to be the best, so he decided to go in the opposite direction and say that Rudy's was the worst. Advertising yourself as the worst isn't generally the best marketing ploy, but it turns out people flock to Rudy's BBQ to judge for themselves. A place that calls themselves the worst must surely be the best!

Reverse psychology works because some of us don't like to think we are being persuaded. We like our freedom to choose and if we feel someone is telling us what to like or do, we have an instant reaction to like or do the opposite. Or at least, it raises our curiosity.

A classic example is outdoor clothing company Patagonia's "Don't Buy This Jacket" campaign – featured on the following page. They released it around Black Friday in the U.S. (the maniacal shopping day) to encourage people to think twice about the planet before buying things. It also subtly instantly makes you want that jacket.

Patagonia has built a culture around being good to the planet. Since 1985 they have been part of the "1% for the planet" alliance, pledging 1% of sales to grassroots environmental groups every year.<sup>4</sup> Their mission statement says, "We're in business to save our home planet."

Last year, they put their money where their mouth is by taking Trump's \$10 million tax cut and giving it to environmental causes.<sup>5</sup> They acknowledge that their clothing, while made from recycled or organic materials, still makes an environmental impact. How can such a company balance the need to drive sales with their total commitment to the planet?

A few years back they accomplished this by addressing Black Friday. Of course, they need to sell products, but the rampant consumerism associated with this sales day doesn't match their ethos. It would be hypocritical of them to encourage people to buy stuff. Thus, "Don't Buy This Jacket" ran in the New York Times.

While the message is blatantly saying not to buy the jacket, it makes such a strong statement about their company that you want to buy the jacket and other outdoor wear from Patagonia.

# DON'T BUY THIS JACKET



It's Black Friday, the day in the year retail turns from red to black and starts to make real money. But Black Friday, and the culture of consumption it reflects, puts the economy of natural systems that support all life firmly in the red. We're now using the resources of one-and-a-half planets on our one and only planet.

Because Patagonia wants to be in business for a good long time—and leave a world inhabitable for our kids—we want to do the opposite of every other business today. We ask you to buy less and to reflect before you spend a dime on this jacket or anything else.

Environmental bankruptcy, as with corporate bankruptcy, can happen very slowly, then all of a sudden. This is what we face unless we slow down, then reverse the damage. We're running short on fresh water, topsoil, fisheries, wetlands—all our planet's natural systems and resources that support business, and life, including our own.

The environmental cost of everything we make is astonishing. Consider the R2<sup>®</sup> jacket shown, one of our best sellers. To make it required 135 liters of

## COMMON THREADS INITIATIVE

### REDUCE

WE make useful gear that lasts a long time  
YOU don't buy what you don't need

### REPAIR

WE help you repair your Patagonia gear  
YOU pledge to fix what's broken

### REUSE

WE help find a home for Patagonia gear you no longer need  
YOU sell or pass it on\*

### RECYCLE

WE will take back your Patagonia gear that is worn out  
YOU pledge to keep your stuff out of the landfill and incinerator



### REIMAGINE

TOGETHER we reimagine a world where we take only what nature can replace

water, enough to meet the daily needs (three glasses a day) of 45 people. Its journey from its origin as 60% recycled polyester to our Reno warehouse generated nearly 20 pounds of carbon dioxide, 24 times the weight of the finished product. This jacket left behind, on its way to Reno, two-thirds its weight in waste.

And this is a 60% recycled polyester jacket, knit and sewn to a high standard; it is exceptionally durable, so you won't have to replace it as often. And when it comes to the end of its useful life we'll take it back to recycle into a product of equal value. But, as is true of all the things we can make and you can buy, this jacket comes with an environmental cost higher than its price.

There is much to be done and plenty for us all to do. Don't buy what you don't need. Think twice before you buy anything. Go to [patagonia.com/CommonThreads](http://patagonia.com/CommonThreads) or scan the QR code below. Take the Common Threads Initiative pledge, and join us in the fifth "R," to reimagine a world where we take only what nature can replace.

**patagonia**  
patagonia.com



TAKE THE PLEDGE

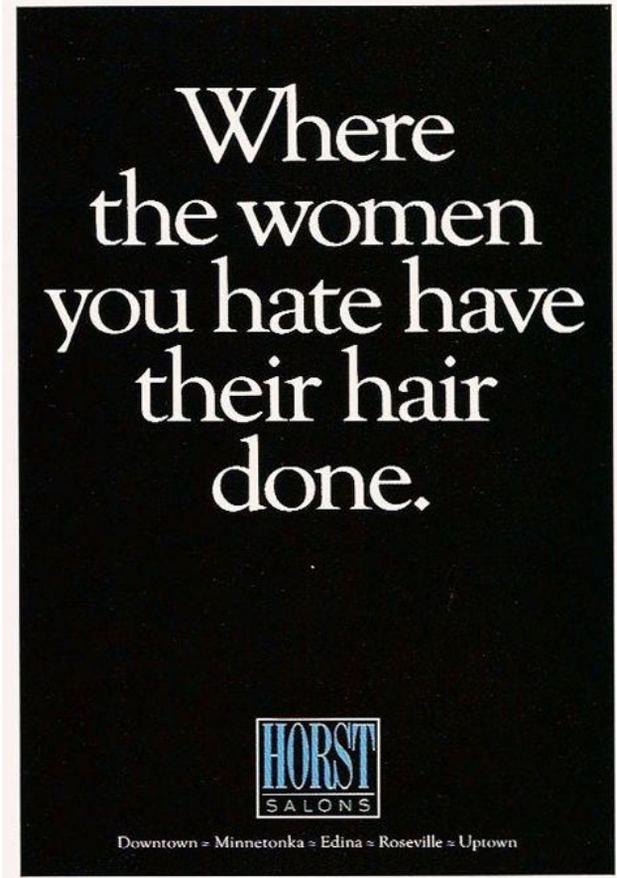
\*If you sell your used Patagonia product on eBay<sup>®</sup> and take the Common Threads Initiative pledge, we will collect your product on [patagonia.com](http://patagonia.com) for no additional charge.

Here's another take on reverse psychology from a hair salon in the United States:

It could say, 'where women with perfect hair have their hair done' but no one would believe that.

This approach plays on emotion, bringing to mind that person with perfect, envious hair who seems to have it all together.

If that's where she's going, you want to go there too.



Where  
the women  
you hate have  
their hair  
done.

**HORST**  
SALONS

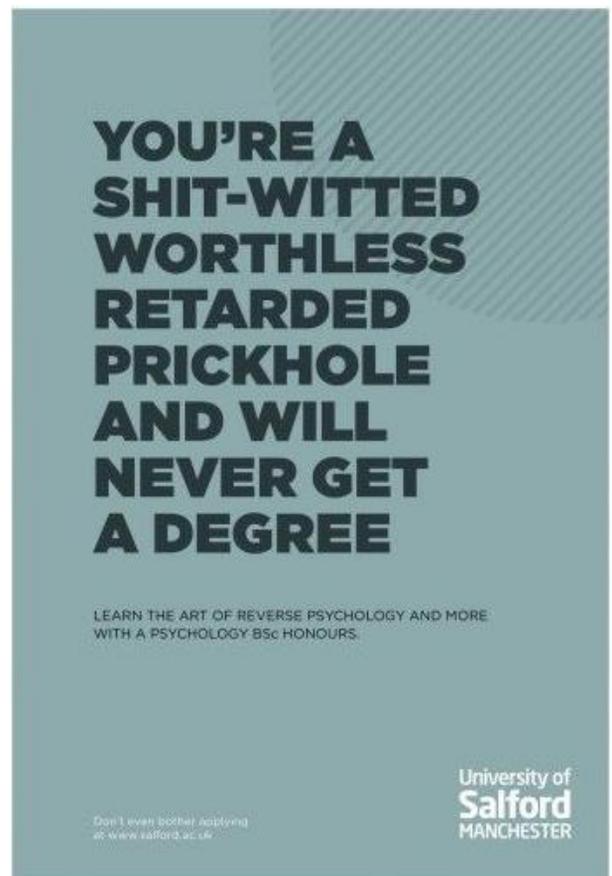
Downtown = Minnetonka = Edina = Roseville = Uptown

And one extreme example from a Manchester University offering a degree in psychology:

The last one might be taking it a bit far and I would caution against using such language.

However, this University certainly took a radically different approach to recruiting!

It has a bit of shock value, vulgar language, insults the person reading it – and sparks instant curiosity.



**YOU'RE A  
SHIT-WITTED  
WORTHLESS  
RETARDED  
PRICKHOLE  
AND WILL  
NEVER GET  
A DEGREE**

LEARN THE ART OF REVERSE PSYCHOLOGY AND MORE  
WITH A PSYCHOLOGY BSc HONOURS.

Don't even bother applying  
at [www.salford.ac.uk](http://www.salford.ac.uk)

University of  
**Salford**  
MANCHESTER

## 15. Weird product placement

Product placement can reap rewards. How many people wore Ray-Ban Wayfarer's after Tom Cruise wore them in the 1983 film Risky Business? Apparently over 360,000. And Tom again chose Ray-Ban's when he filmed Top Gun – this time it was the classic Aviators and sales increased by 40%.<sup>6</sup>

Fortunately, you don't need someone as famous as Tom Cruise to promote your stuff (though it wouldn't hurt). Use radically different thinking to find places outside of the usual routes for product placement opportunities.

Colgate's "Don't Forget" campaign in Thailand utilised ice cream sticks that looked like toothbrushes, so when the consumer finishes the ice cream, they are left with an ice cream stick "toothbrush" with a reminder from Colgate not to forget to brush their teeth. Unexpected and clever.

Giving out product samples would have been much less effective – kids don't want toothpaste, but they want ice cream. And who doesn't love a hidden message?

The surprise 'toothbrush stick' made an impression because it was totally unexpected. It made Colgate look like a fun brand and boosted their online reputation when it went viral.



In an unusual pairing, coupons for a men's razor were placed in egg cartons with masculine faces stickered on the eggs.

(Yes, this actually happened, in Belgium. I did say things would get weird in this chapter).

The idea is that the egg showed what smooth skin you would have by shaving with this razor.<sup>7</sup>

Imagine every morning, you go to fix yourself some eggs and are greeted with these faces. No one would expect razors and eggs to go together.

Definitely some *radically different* thinking behind this product placement!



How about advertising stock photos on tees?

That's what Adobe did to promote their Creative Cloud app.

They partnered with Swedish agency Abby Priest to develop a fashion clothing line ("Stock Apparel") using overused or outdated stock photos to promote the fact that their new service meant you would never again have to spend hours scrolling through stock photos to find what you needed.

By using obvious stock images like "man at desk frustrated with technology" and "laughing woman eating healthy vegetable salad" they poked fun at stale, clichéd stock photos that belong to a different era. It implies that their free stock photo service won't waste your time with cheesy pics.



A yoga studio in Shanghai targeted health-conscious consumers with these straws at fruit juice bars:



To be *radically different*, think beyond your usual routes and explore product placement that engages with surprise – getting a little weird will get you noticed.

Use your contrarian mindset to come up with product pairings that on the surface seem unusual. Just make sure there is a connection, so customers feel like they understand your cleverness.

Random pairings will only frustrate people when they try to make a connection that isn't there. Making people feel like they 'get it' creates a positive emotional bond to your brand.

## 16. Blur the line between fact and fiction

Remember *The Blair Witch Project*? It was a movie released in 1999 that sparked many debates of whether it was fact or fiction. The way the movie was filmed – as if three documentary filmmakers got lost in the woods and recorded it all on their Hi8 – created a feeling of reality.

But more than that, the filmmakers used the web to create a backstory about an urban legend and continually fed “updated” information about the fate of the doomed backpackers. Remember, this was in the late ‘90s, long before things went viral on the internet.

The hype around the movie resulted in global earnings of \$248.6 million – for a movie that cost \$60,000 to make and market.<sup>8</sup>

Their genius marketing campaign created buzz by causing people to question whether the movie was something that actually happened or not. You might find a story that you can weave into your marketing in a similar way.



## 17. Turn informational videos into entertainment

Most airline safety videos used to be boring as hell until Air New Zealand completely re-invented them. While a relatively small airline in a global context, they have managed to create a safety video style that is both educational and entertaining and showcases the destinations they fly to.

Over the years they have used a variety of famous people and themes from the All Blacks to Betty White, Bear Grylls, Cuba Gooding Junior, Katie Holmes, Men in Black and comedian Rhys Darby. Their most famous safety video is probably the Lord of the Rings themed video, which has been viewed 21 million times on YouTube. Some years back, they also featured Richard Simmons (fitness icon of the '80s) and the video had 1 million hits in 3 days.

Not all are great hits, but they still garner publicity. A recent safety video featuring the rap “It’s Kiwi Safety” (based on Run-DMC’s “It’s Tricky”) was pulled after 3 months due to complaints about it being awful to listen to and undermining the safety messaging. To address the issue, Air NZ cheekily posted a job listing for “Head of Safety Videos” on their social media accounts.

Many businesses have a requirement to produce informational videos for their prospects and clients. Air NZ is a great example how a *radically different* approach can create a massive impact in a competitive category.



## 18. Use 3-dimensional direct mail

These days we are so used to getting emails, texts and online messages that receiving a letter or 3-dimensional pack via courier is a real novelty.

A number of years ago my ad agency was tasked with helping Canon Australia's B2B sales team secure meetings with the top 50 CIOs in Australia. These were the highest level, hardest to reach CIOs in the country, working for companies such as Qantas, Telstra, Commonwealth Bank etc.

Canon knew that just cold calling them wouldn't work because their gate keepers would probably filter out the calls. So, we were tasked with creating an innovative mail piece that could be sent out to these prospects, and warm them up a little before the sales staff called. Canon was selling a managed document service that was going to save these companies hundreds of thousands of dollars. In fact, Canon had calculated how much money it could save each company.

We developed the idea of sending a real suitcase full of fake money out to each CEO. The money in the briefcase representing the amount of money Canon could save them. The campaign was a huge success. Canon were able to secure meetings with 40% of the CIO from the top 50 list.



## 19. Just be controversial

Sometimes the best approach to take is just to be controversial. Not just for the sake of being controversial, but to make a strong point. This ad is a brilliant example of this principle. This print ad is part of a campaign by ad agency J. Walter Thompson to address the pay gap between women and men.

The ads take messages and block out certain letters to suggest alternate, offensive phrases – the message being that choosing to pay female members of your workforce significantly less than their male counterparts is just as offensive as other, more obviously sexist behaviours.<sup>9</sup>

**FOLLOW YOUR PURSE**

**TAKING AWAY 25% IS OFFENSIVE**

Yet globally women still earn a quarter less than men.  
Let's stop insulting women and **close the pay gap.**

F | E | M | A | L | E  
T | R | I | B | E | S

[jwt.com/femaletribes](http://jwt.com/femaletribes)  
**#FTHEPAYGAP**

## Keeping it weird

Being radically different requires a commitment to developing your difference and communicating it faithfully to your specific audience.

The tips in this chapter should spark some unconventional ideas for you to brainstorm unique methods of communicating your radical difference.

My hope is that your journey through this book has taken you on your own *Road to Differentiation* and that you have developed some solid strategies to set your business apart.

But there is one more potential step to truly dive in and put these strategies into practice.

**Read the next chapter to find out about my coaching session offer.**

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## Final words and a 60-min coaching session offer

Firstly, thank you for taking the time to read this. I hope it has given you valuable insight into practical ways you can make your business radically different.

Secondly, I'd like to extend an additional opportunity for you to go further in your journey.

### **I'd like to offer you a 60-minute intensive, one on one coaching session via Zoom.**

Remember, if you don't stand out, you're invisible. I want to work with you to get attention and grow your business. This session is just \$200 to you, to show my appreciation for reading my book. And if you don't get value out of it, I won't charge you.

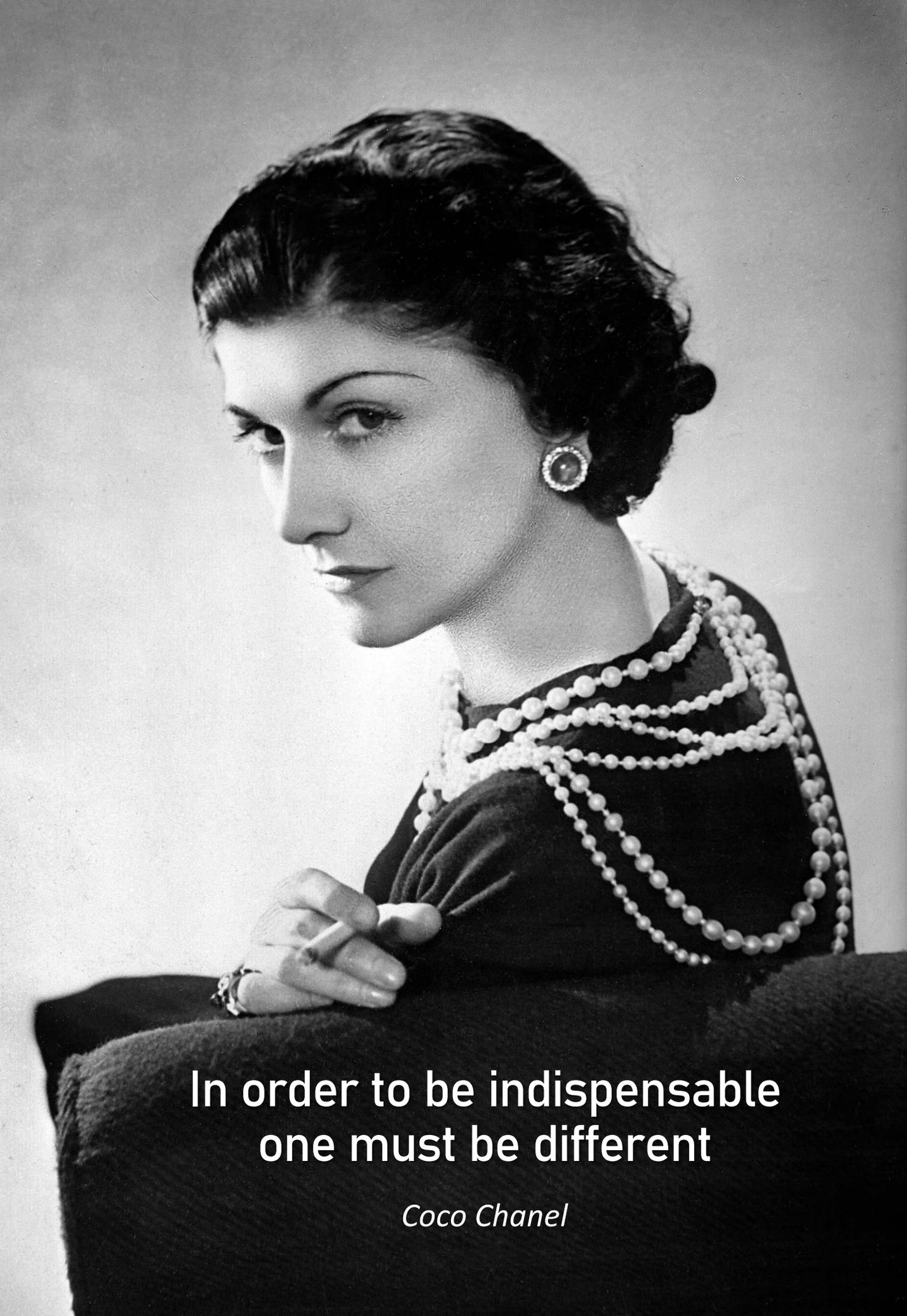
You can [book your session here](#).

I look forward to hearing about your journey and guiding you on the road to being radically different.

Steve Ballantyne  
May 2021

P.S. I also invite you to check out my website at [www.brandiq.co.nz](http://www.brandiq.co.nz) for case studies, blog articles and more information about what I do.

Also, if we haven't already, let's connect on [LinkedIn](#) or you can email me: [steve@brandiq.co.nz](mailto:steve@brandiq.co.nz)



**In order to be indispensable  
one must be different**

*Coco Chanel*

# The radically different ad gallery

**A collection of radically brilliant  
controversial ad campaigns**

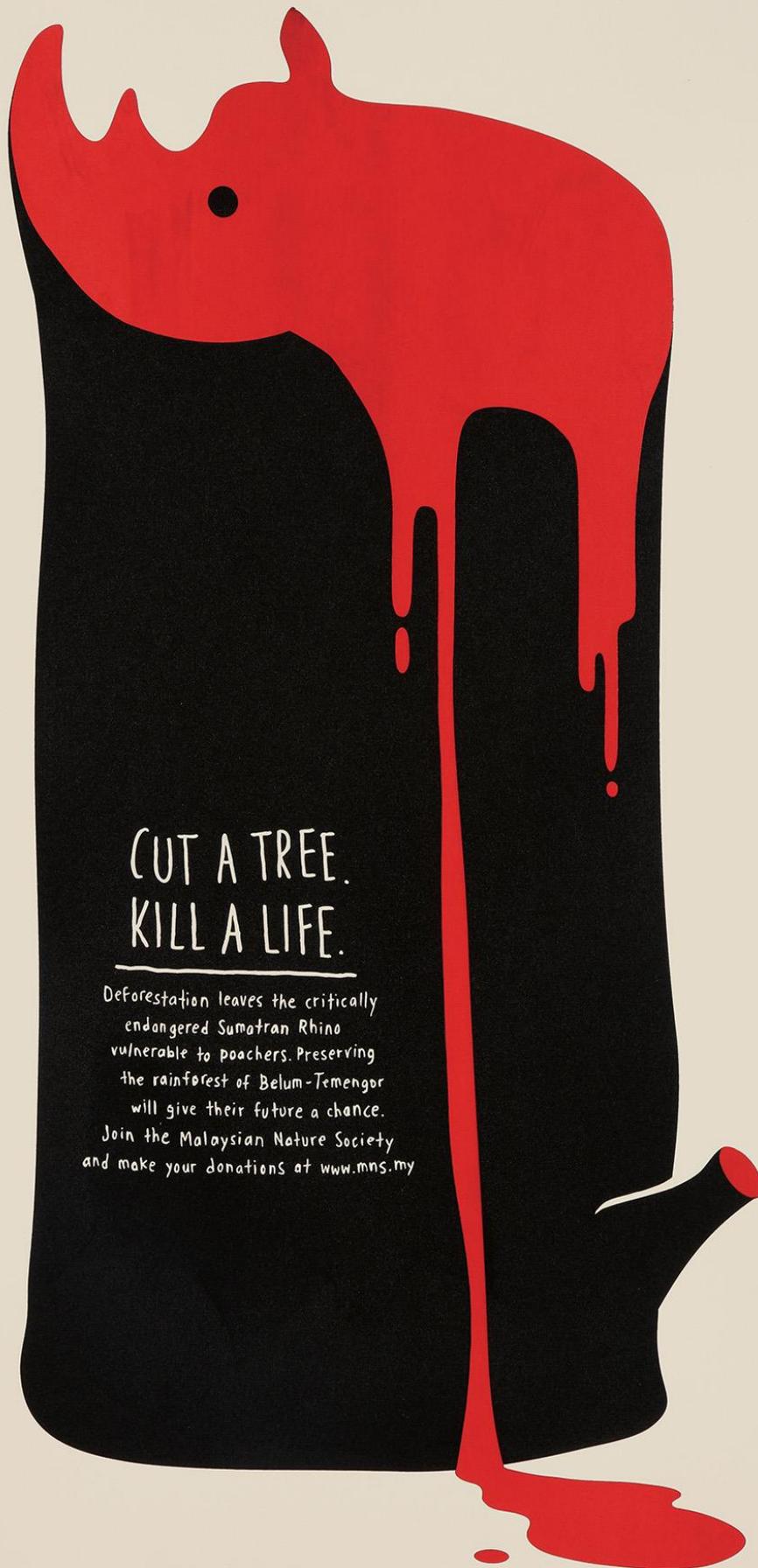
Italian fashion brand Benetton knows how to court controversy.







A provocative campaign from the Malaysian Nature Society.



CUT A TREE.  
KILL A LIFE.

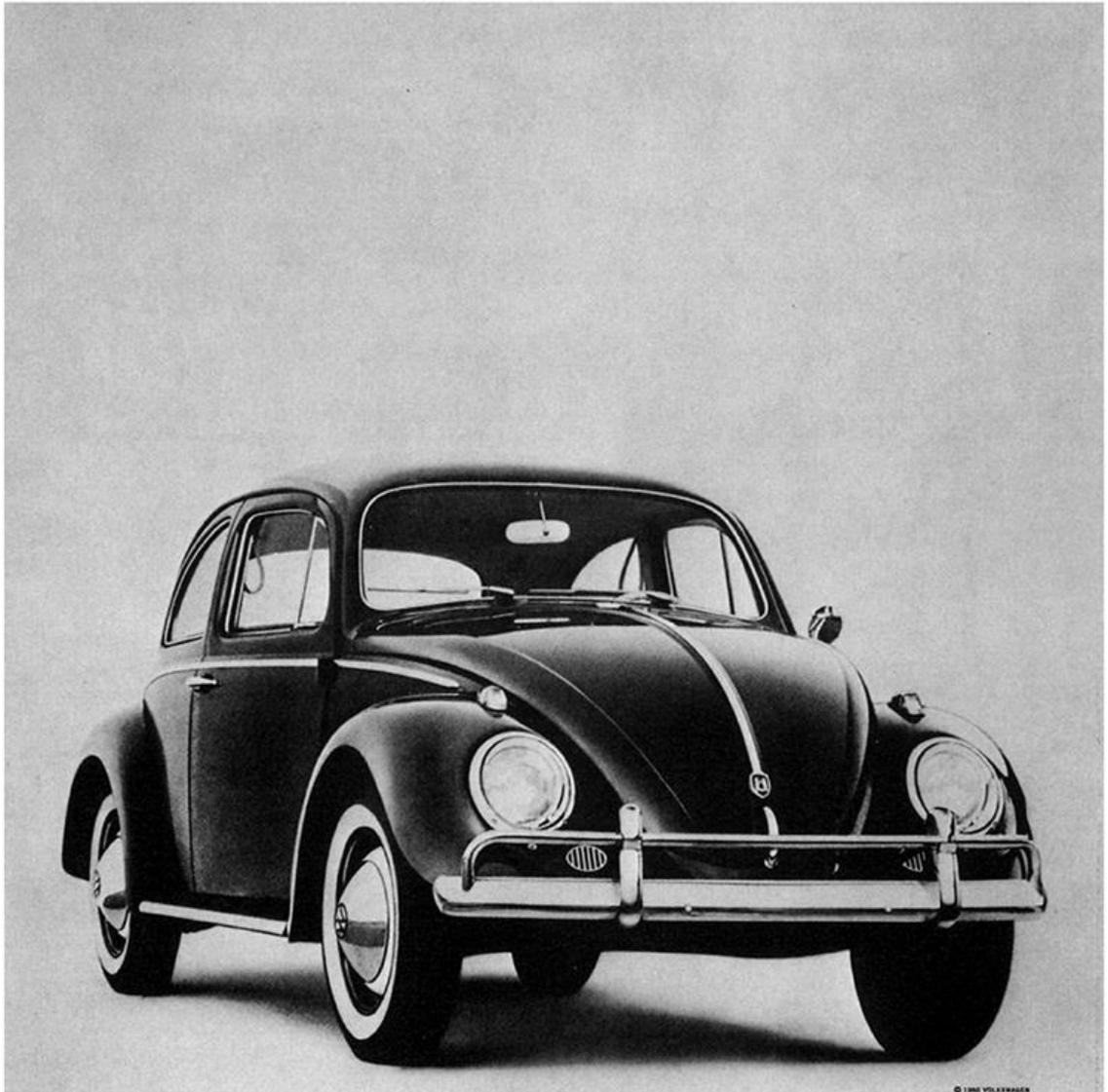
Deforestation leaves the critically endangered Sumatran Rhino vulnerable to poachers. Preserving the rainforest of Belum-Temengor will give their future a chance. Join the Malaysian Nature Society and make your donations at [www.mns.my](http://www.mns.my)



CUT A TREE.  
KILL A LIFE.

More hornbills die from  
deforestation than hunting. Preserving  
the rainforest of Belum-Temengor  
will give their future a chance.  
Join the Malaysian Nature Society  
and make your donations at [www.mns.my](http://www.mns.my)

## The famous radically honest ad from Volkswagen.



# Lemon.

This Volkswagen missed the boot.

The chrome strip on the glove compartment is blemished and must be replaced. Chances are you wouldn't have noticed it; Inspector Kurt Kröner did.

There are 3,389 men at our Wolfsburg factory with only one job: to inspect Volkswagens at each stage of production. (3000 Volkswagens are produced daily; there are more inspectors

than cars.)

Every shock absorber is tested (spot checking won't do), every windshield is scanned. VWs have been rejected for surface scratches barely visible to the eye.

Final inspection is really something! VW inspectors run each car off the line onto the Funktionsprüfstand (car test stand), tote up 189 check points, gun ahead to the automatic

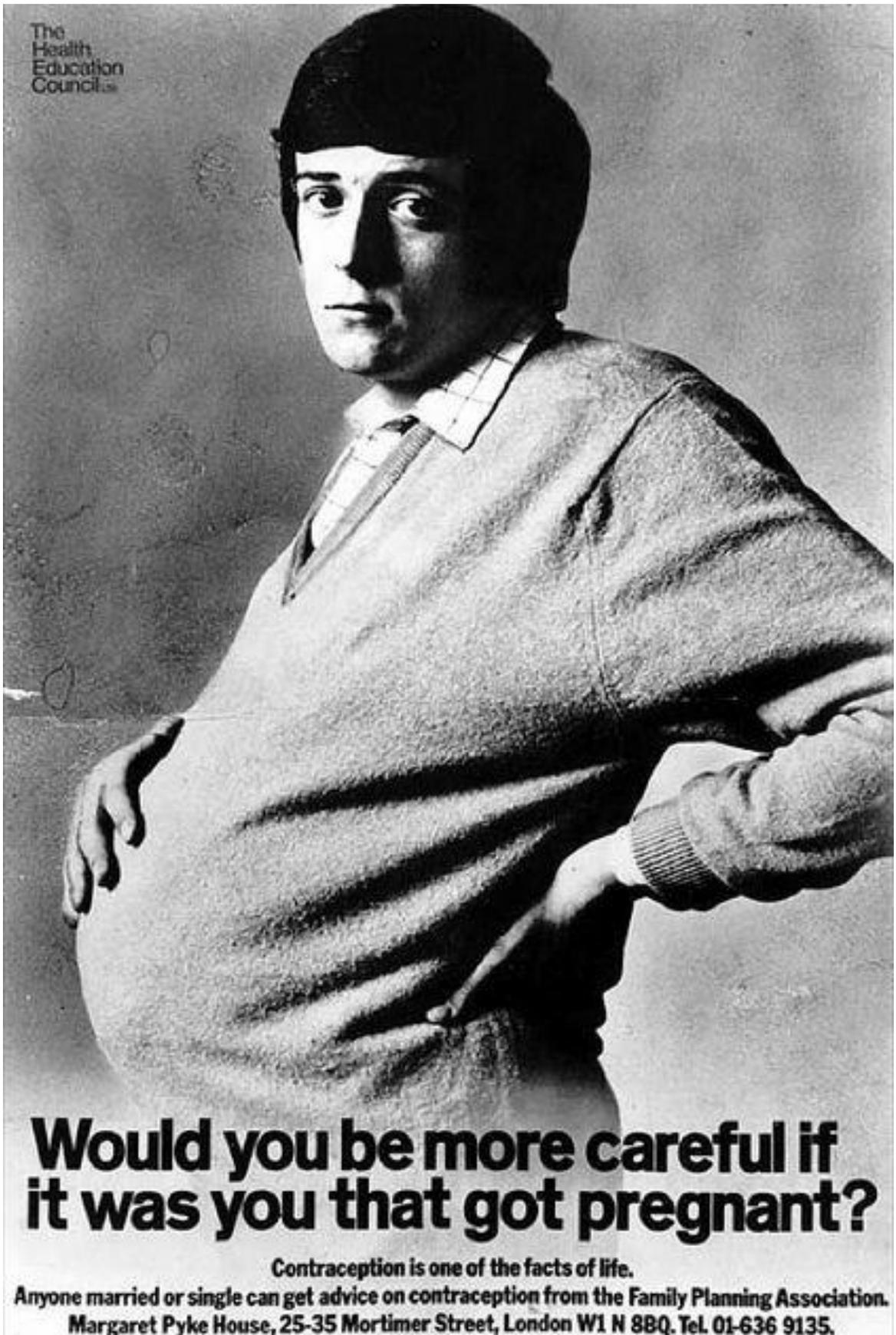
brake stand, and say "no" to one VW out of fifty.

This preoccupation with detail means the VW lasts longer and requires less maintenance, by and large, than other cars. (It also means a used VW depreciates less than any other car.)

We pluck the lemons; you get the plums.



An immaculate contraception campaign from 1970.



The Health Education Council

**Would you be more careful if it was you that got pregnant?**

Contraception is one of the facts of life.

Anyone married or single can get advice on contraception from the Family Planning Association.  
Margaret Pyke House, 25-35 Mortimer Street, London W1 N 8BQ. Tel. 01-636 9135.

You couldn't run this ad today, but I like it!

**You don't have  
to be Jewish**



**to love Levy's**  
*real Jewish Rye*

Simple, thought provoking concept from Nicotinell.



**SMOKING CAUSES PREMATURE AGEING**  
Lose the smoke, keep the fire this World No Tobacco Day, 31<sup>st</sup> May

Nicotinell  
MINT 4mg  
EXTRA  
STRENGTH  
Helps You  
Stop Smoking  
8mg

Wow. That gets the message across.



**EACH TIME YOU SLEEP  
WITH SOMEONE, YOU ALSO  
SLEEP WITH HIS PAST.**

GET TESTED FOR HIV | [AREYOUATRISK.CA](http://AREYOUATRISK.CA)

Clever, controversial, and probably banned.

ANTONIO  
**FEDERICI**  
PASTICCERIA  
Gelato

*Immaculately  
Conceived.*

ANTONIO  
**FEDERICI**

THE BEST  
ICE CREAM  
IN THE  
WORLD

INTERNATIONAL  
ICE CREAM  
CONSORTIUM

*Gelato Italiano*  
ICE CREAM IS OUR RELIGION

[WWW.ANTONIOFEDERICI.COM](http://WWW.ANTONIOFEDERICI.COM)

*Antonio Federici*

The advertisement features a woman in a black and white nun's habit, holding a small package of Antonio Federici Gelato. She is looking down at the package with a slight smile. The background is dark and ornate, suggesting a church interior. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the woman's face and the gelato package. The overall tone is sophisticated and religious, playing on the theme of 'Immaculately Conceived'.

# Controversial, comparative ads are powerful.

ONE CHILD IS HOLDING SOMETHING THAT'S BEEN BANNED IN AMERICA TO PROTECT THEM.  
GUESS WHICH ONE.

We keep 'Little Red Riding Hood' out of schools because of the bottle of wine in her basket. Why not assault weapons?  
MOMSDEMANDACTION.ORG

**MOMS DEMAND ACTION**  
FOR GUN SENSE IN AMERICA

The image shows two young girls sitting on a library floor. The girl on the left is holding a book titled 'LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD'. The girl on the right is holding an assault rifle. The background includes bookshelves, an American flag, and a rocking chair.

ONE CHILD IS HOLDING SOMETHING THAT'S BEEN BANNED IN AMERICA TO PROTECT THEM.  
GUESS WHICH ONE.

We won't sell Kinder chocolate eggs in the interest of child safety. Why not assault weapons?  
MOMSDEMANDACTION.ORG

**MOMS DEMAND ACTION**  
FOR GUN SENSE IN AMERICA

The image shows two young children in a classroom. The boy on the left is holding a Kinder chocolate egg. The girl on the right is holding an assault rifle. The background includes a chalkboard with an agenda and classroom desks.

Probably Nike's best campaign ever

Believe in something. Even if it  
means sacrificing everything.

 Just do it.

A challenging message and provocative image from WWF.



for a living planet™

*Consuming the Earth  
is consuming our future.*



Simple concept brought to life with an unconventional illustration.



**I'd like to thank my co-writer  
Mindi Picotte and editor Nicqui Redman  
for helping me create this book.**