

Bookshelf



In today's overcrowded world of endless new products and constant interruptions, it's not the brand-new innovation or the splashy ad campaign that is going to grab customer attention. It's the fun thing, the value-added extra that comes with the product the consumer actually wants to buy and makes it cool. In his remarkably enjoyable book *Free Prize Inside*, Seth Godin compares that value-added extra to the prize that comes in every box of Cracker Jacks. He believes any employee, at any company, serving any market, can come up with a similar free prize that will make existing products desirable. It might be finding a new outlet for sales—or putting a freebie inside the box. As Godin asks, “Do people want the fortune cookie or the fortune?” The book goes on to explore how to invent the free prize and how to get others onboard with the new idea. And yes, there's a free prize at the end. (Portfolio, \$19.95)

What does a Harley Davidson rider have in common with a devout Mormon? According to Douglas Atkin, author of *The Culting of Brands*, they're both members of powerful, suc-

cessful cults—and that's not as pejorative as it might sound at first. Determining what makes a cult member loyal to his organization offers clues into what makes a consumer loyal to a specific brand,

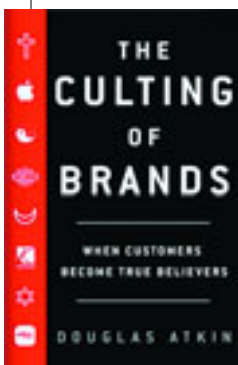
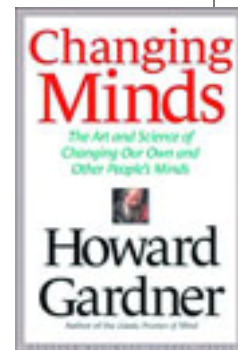
and Atkin has come up with a four-step process. A person feels *alienation* for the world around him; he becomes *open* to a different environment; he feels *safe* among the members of this new group; and there he blossoms into a *self-actualized* individual. Thus maverick brands like Apple Computers, which have thousands of evangelical consumers, must position themselves, not as the product for everyone, but as the product for someone who is just a little outside the norm. “One of the greatest dreads marketers have is turning off any potential customers,” writes Atkins. “Well, to generate cultlike devotion to your brand ... you must target the alienated and simultaneously separate your organization from the mainstream.” To research his book, Atkin interviewed sorority sisters, Deadheads, cult deprogrammers, Marines, Wiccans, and fan club members. He explains the cultlike appeal generated by Saturn, Nike, jetBlue, and eBay. It's a whole lot of fun—and eye-opening at the same time. (Portfolio, \$24.95)

In 1991, Royal Dutch Shell planned to dismantle an oil storage tanker and platform in the North Sea by blowing it up and allowing its oil sludge and heavy metals to sink to the bottom of the sea. The environmental organization Greenpeace mounted a vehement—and visible—campaign that ultimately persuaded Shell to tow the tanker back to shore for environmentally sound disposal. This example shows the growing power of today's movement toward social responsibility, which forces companies to consider their reputations and their expanded circle of stake-

holders if they want to continue to do business. *What Matters Most*, by Jeffrey Hollender and Stephen Fenichell, is unapologetically passionate about CSR and its profound implications. It covers the entire field, from the origins of socially responsible investing to case studies of committed entrepreneurs. Corporate social responsibility, the authors believe, is “a broad social movement, centered in the corporation much as the antiwar movement was centered on college campuses. It will, we believe, have deep and lasting effects on our values and beliefs as well as the world's future.” (Basic Books, \$26)

While leaders must

have a variety of powerful skills, one of the most important is the ability to convince employees, stakeholders, and consumers to agree with them—that is, they must be able to change people's minds. Anyone who's ever tried to do that knows it's not simple, but a fascinating look at how the process is achieved is laid out in Howard Gardner's *Changing Minds*. Gardner, a professor of cognition and education at Harvard, opens with a detailed dissection of various types of intelligence and the factors that work at shaping them. He also examines the levers that come into play as an individual shifts his beliefs: reason, research, resonance, redescription, rewards, real-world events, and resistances. Once leaders—or politicians or CEOs—understand the factors that influence people's minds, they can “conceptualize



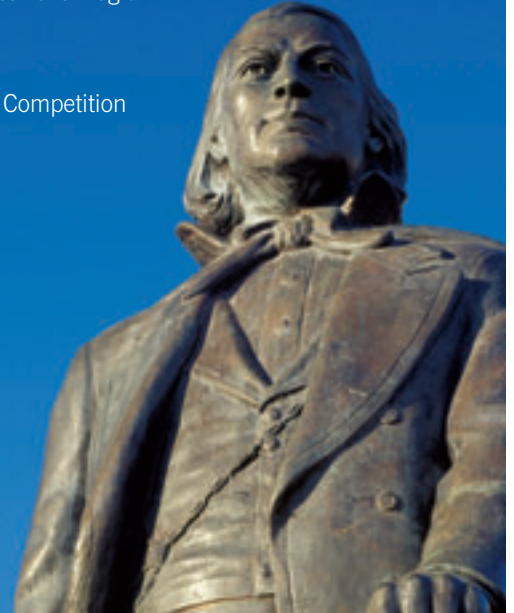
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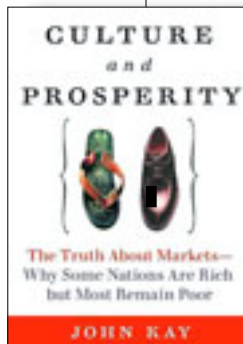
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what people are thinking, how they are thinking, and how, when necessary, that thinking can be changed,” Gardner writes. The book is sometimes humorous, always clear, and unfailingly thought-provoking. (Harvard Business Press, \$26.95)



Why are some countries rich while other countries are poor? John Kay attempts to answer this overarching question in the detailed, dense, and absorbing book *Culture and Prosperity*. Not surprisingly, the answer is complicated. “There can be no one-sentence or one-paragraph description of how the market economy works, just as there can be no one-sentence or one-paragraph description of how the human body works. The market economy and the human body are both complex, interdependent systems, and they are the product of evolution, not

design,” he writes. That said, he traces the evolution of wealth throughout the world’s countries through the effects of climate, geography, history, culture, resources, and society. His thesis is that “market institutions, characterized by disciplined pluralism, function because of the social

context in which they are embedded.” For a book that is nothing less than a history of world economics, *Culture and Prosperity* is a surprisingly accessible read, filled with facts, analysis, and insights. (Harper Business, \$25.95)

Learning assessment has become the mantra for institutions of higher education, but implementing a cohesive plan to measure learning still remains a tough challenge for most schools. Mary J. Allen’s *Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education* aims to make the process a little easier. The book—which is written for all

disciplines—outlines in clear prose the steps that faculty must take to design a program of student assessment. These are: develop learning objectives; align the curriculum with the objectives; develop a plan; collect data; use results to improve the program; and examine the program regularly. The book is divided into in-depth examinations of how each of these steps can be accomplished, and many chapters include discussions of schools that incorporated assessment plans. Allen knows that both students and faculty may resist the restructuring required to build a curriculum around learning assessment, but she also knows how important the task is. “In this era of accountability, we no longer have the luxury of being vague about what we expect from our graduates,” she writes. “Not only does the assessment process demand clarity, but also students and the public deserve to know what they are getting in return for their money and time.” (Anker Publishing Co., \$39.95) 