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Book Reviews

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Googled: The End of the World As We Know It

Ken Auletta

Virgin Books, 2009; 384pp. £8.39 (from Amazon);
ISBN: 9780753522424

A must-read

This latest analysis of Google is a must-read for everyone in the industry.

The internet made everything available, Google made anything findable. Google has changed our worlds and our lives in a way unparalleled by any other brand. It has become synonymous with the web and its name a verb for searching. Every industry sector has been touched by it and its presence extends into every country at every level. Whether you are a marketer by trade, or a newcomer finding that the web has landed in your job goals for the first time, it is hard to imagine discovery in search engines not being high on the agenda. As search engine marketing has grown to become the critical link in connecting customers with companies, interest in search marketing has crossed from the geeky world of search engine optimization and mainstreamed.

A Brand biography

That is why *Googled* is such a fascinating and essential read, and has such incredibly broad appeal. It is a biography of the brand from its birth as one of founder Larry Page's computer science projects, through the early days in a garage running from any server space that could be found, into its adolescence where pizza delivery vans and new hardware suppliers fought for car-parking space.

A gripping thriller

Ken Auletta had unprecedented access to the founders and the campus. He followed the rise of the world's most successful dotcom, pureplay, from deep inside the brand and paints the most vivid picture of the vision and philosophies of 'Larry&Sergey' from classroom to boardroom. For digital specialists, it is the most gripping of thrillers, with a high-octane plot of digital product development that peels back the layers of the web, creating a paradigm for navigating our knowledge. For business analysts, it is the story of staying true to a vision and investing ceaselessly in a digital product with only the best of the best people. For the marketer, it gives a sense of the nature of game-changing disruptive behaviours, and reiterates both why the industry continues to change so rapidly, and why the marketing mix has to fight to keep up.

A fly-on-the-wall report

Auletta's pedigree as a leading US business journalist records this through the dispassionate lens of true investigative journalism.

He was on the campus for solid weeks more than a dozen times, interviewing 150 people and probing the founders many many times over. He took part in the Friday company briefings, the meetings with outsiders, and reports the conflicting abrasion and evangelism of those conversations. *Googled* is a genuine fly on the wall report that adeptly captures the spirit of being inside Google; the culture, the beliefs, the DNA and the difference from the other heavyweight dotcoms it displaced.

A disruptive business

In dissecting the language and confrontations with traditional media groups, Auletta adeptly describes the nature of a disruptive business. With so many media groups trying to size up their new competitor, *Googled* is rich in insights about the way the company behaves and thinks. Through this, he offers brilliant insights about why Google is so different and why its business model is so threatening.

Today, Google has expanded far beyond those origins in search. Its margins on pay per click advertising revenues fuelled expansion into the full range of portal services, desktop software, mobile and advertising platforms. With 200 factors currently driving the rankings of firms in Google's algorithmic listings, product development in the core business has continued to be strong. The focus on visual and audio search, translation and the connections with location underscore the continued development, and what this book succeeds in achieving is giving a clear lens through which to judge what happens next.

To be a successful digital marketer means thinking beyond today's marketing mix. Google is changing the role of media and the way customers communicate with brands. By understanding the direction of these changes, marketing teams can create structures and processes that ensure their content and messages continue to achieve cut-through, and that their approaches do not rapidly lose their impact.

Changing the game

The digital marketing industry is characterized by rapid change, and *Googled* helps show this through the lens of the largest player in the market. Along the way, there are some painful truths about the reality of marketing in traditional channels, and the relative lack of proof in the effectiveness of advertising. By showing the world from the perspective of Google's engineers, where the focus is all about problems to solve, Auletta succeeds in forcing marketers to question deeply how they use their existing budgets both online and offline.

For a company this game-changing, and insights this deep, *Googled* is a must-read.

Danny Meadows-Klue Hon F IDM

Fast.MAP/DMA Sustainability Tracking Study

29pp.

The DMA has published this tracking study conducted by *fast.MAP* and sponsored by ONEPOST, which examines consumer attitudes to the environmental consequences of a number of aspects of marketing practice and different marketing media. In some cases, comparisons are made with results to an identical survey conducted in 2008.

Also explored is consumer reaction to recyclable logos on packaging, and consumer beliefs (highly inaccurate) about the relative size of carbon footprint produced by a number of different forms of activity.

While it contains material relevant to all forms of marketing, this report is particularly relevant to direct mailers, and to all those involved in product packaging for the consumer market.

To obtain a FREE copy of the full report, apply to:
david.cole@fastmap.com.

Robin Fairlie Hon F IDM