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Book Reviews

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Key Account Management — The Definitive Guide

Malcolm McDonald, Diana Woodburn

Butterworth Heinemann, 2nd edn, 2007; paperback; £29. 99; 383pp
ISBN 10: 0-7506-6246-8

Pragmatic, with academic rigour

The matter-of-fact title of this book says it all — it is a carefully constructed and thought-provoking yet easy-to-read guide packed with practical advice for anyone involved in Key Account Management. It should be noted that this is not a book about sales or ‘selling’ which the book states ‘is a comparatively minor part of the role’. The authors clearly know their subject and manage to combine academic rigour with a pragmatic approach to implementation all supported with relevant yet succinct case study material.

Rate your own company

While the book may be usefully read in its entirety, it is written in a way that allows the reader to dip into any area of specific interest without loss of understanding or context. However, those choosing to dive straight into the chapters will miss what might well prove to be the most insightful part of the guide — a table that allows them to rate how developed Key Account Management is within their own organisation. If answered honestly, I suspect this will be enough to make many a Sales Director blanch.

Pithy summaries

Thoughtfully, for those in a hurry, each chapter starts with a ‘fast track’ — a pithy summary of the chapter’s content — allowing the reader to gain a general appreciation of the subject matter prior to reading in fuller detail or moving on. Furthermore, the book concludes with an ‘integrated fast track’ combining all the chapter summaries into a useful distillation of the book’s key points.

Chapters are sub-divided into clearly headed sections with important elements of the text being duplicated in the book’s margins. Figures, tables and case studies are used well and extensively to illustrate points and help to add interest. ‘Checkpoints’ are used throughout encouraging the reader to consider and question their and their organisation’s position thus helping to reinforce the learning for a given section.

KAM users must buy!

In summary, this is an excellent book that manages to achieve and maintain a good balance between academic theory and commercial pragmatism. Any person or organisation purporting to have a Key Account Management approach to business would be well advised to invest in a copy of this book — if only to check fitness for purpose against current best practice; otherwise, as the authors state, ‘caveat vendor’!

Keir Woolhouse, CM Insight

The Complete Guide to Copywriting

Nick Wrathall

www.thecompleteguidetocopywriting.com

Home study course, ring-bound; £495

Want to strike gold in the next DMA awards? Or land a top job at JWT? Then stop reading now. Nick Wrathall's *The Complete Guide to Copywriting* is not for you.

But maybe you're still stuck with the weird exercise machines you should never have imported from Taiwan. Or, worse, bankruptcy may loom unless you can shift those *Make Millions My Way!* videos double quick.

In any such predicament *The Complete Guide to Copywriting* could turn out to be the answer to a merchant's prayer. Intended for the would-be freelance copywriter or the small-scale business proprietor selling direct, *The Complete Guide* is not a book. It is a ring-bound manual you can use to teach yourself how to write copy that will generate leads and sales.

In his guide, Nick Wrathall sticks to what he knows best. What he knows best is how to write sales letters. In particular, how to write letters which promise their readers riches, social success and freedom from pain. Or their money back.

Reading it took me back to direct marketing's shabbier days. I thought of Leisure Arts' 400-day Black Forest clock that was guaranteed for one year...the Concert Hall record club for the socially inadequate...and the astonishing efficacy of those Harley Street-doctor-recommended slimming pills. What fun it all was!

Indeed, Wrathall's heroes include pioneers of the merciless mailings that sucked the pounds from punters' pockets like a hungry whale swallowing plankton.

The Complete Guide may be incomplete in that it deals solely with mailings, but it does not disappoint in other respects. Its examination of the subject is thorough and its guidance is comprehensive, extending far beyond the technique of copywriting. Where else would you find out how much to charge your clients? Or how to sell your services to prospective clients when you have no work to show them?

Moreover, Nick Wrathall makes acquiring the knowledge needed to write effective copy so much fun. *The Complete Guide* is utterly accessible, being written simply in the style of a self-improvement course. Each chapter is called a lesson and the ten lessons are arranged in a logical order. Every lesson is peppered with examples, anecdotes, snippets of advice and jokes. Excellent indexing and highlighting makes it easy to find things that you need to look up again or even to filch and adapt.

In the spirit of the mail order entrepreneur, the author throws in a couple of bonus publications. One features three case studies in which

**Freelance copywriter
or SME**

Merciless mailings

**Thorough and
comprehensive**

**Ten self-improvement
lessons**

Case study bonuses

aspects of the copy are highlighted and explained. The first case in particular (targeting would-be online entrepreneurs) struck me as pretty daunting. You wouldn't hire an inexperienced freelance to write an e-mail roughly equivalent to a 16-page direct mail letter. Many writers never learn how to command a reader's attention so well. And, persuasive as it was, I found the copy read more like a second draft than the finished article. A couple of simpler cases would, like the manual itself, make this arcane craft seem easier to master.

Graeme McCorkell Hon F IDM