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Business & Economics

Pioneers of Digital: Success stories from leaders in advertising, marketing, search & social media.

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With the title *Pioneers of Digital*, one might assume that this book features those individuals who have pioneered such well-known online companies as Amazon, eBay, Facebook, Google, and the like. Rather than tread common ground, however, the authors have endeavored to scour the world and bring to light twenty individuals responsible for "some of digital history's more unusual stories." The result is an eclectic compilation that ranges from the use of social media in Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign to a winning digital campaign for the beauty brand Dove to the unlikely story of Burger King's viral sensation called "Subservient Chicken."

What makes this volume particularly interesting is the fact that each story is based on interviews with the pioneers behind a particular digital idea or campaign. The reader gains first-hand insight into the challenges faced by the pioneer and what he or she aimed to accomplish. In the story of Subservient Chicken, for example, Alex Bogusky, whose ad agency came up with the idea, recalls that "this whole thing was an after-thought in their [Burger King's] minds. We thought it would be really cool, but in their mind we were meant to be doing TV spots. … They hadn't thought about digital." Subservient Chicken, a digital game that allowed users to type in commands and get an actor dressed as a chicken to perform, cost $50,000 to produce and got twenty million hits in its first week. Eventually, the game attracted fourteen million unique visitors and contributed to a 9 percent weekly sales increase of the "BK TenderCrisp" sandwich during the first month of the site launching.

In addition to profiling twenty digital pioneers, the authors include two chapters that offer further insight. A chapter called "Pioneering Places" focuses on the Internet environment in China, India, and the Middle East because, write the authors, "it is commonly assumed that these emerging countries will be at the forefront of pioneering digital." The closing chapter,

“Lessons from Pioneers,” distills information gleaned from the subjects and leads to several intriguing observations, such as “originality was not deemed the most valuable asset to be a pioneer” and “some of the best ideas come from stepping outside the sphere of digital.”

Springer and Carson have done a commendable job of collecting diverse examples representing a wide array of fascinating applications while drawing general conclusions about digital innovation. “Our aim with this book is to inspire,” write the authors. Most readers will find *Pioneers of Digital* does exactly that.

Barry Silverstein