

Will the Real You Please Stand Up: Show up, Be Authentic, and Prosper in Social Media

Kim Garst

Morgan James Publishing (Jan 15, 2015)

Softcover \$15.95 (172pp)

978-1-63047-270-2

A marketing expert urges brands to embrace authenticity if they want to succeed in social media.

Despite the popularity of social media, many businesses struggle with making the best use of this medium for marketing. Garst's message in this quick read is simple, sensible, and direct: In order to make the most of social media, brands need to be authentic so people "know what to expect from them, what they can count on." The author discusses why authenticity is important, how to create it by telling a brand's story, and how to use authenticity to break through in a "noisy social media world."

Garst cites numerous examples of how brands demonstrate their authenticity, or lack of it, via social media. The book covers familiar ground in relating the social media success of such brands as Coca-Cola and Starbucks; other stories, however, may not be as widely known but are equally compelling. The deodorant brand Old Spice, for example, created a video of a scantily clad man that went viral, receiving more than 47 million views. "Virality," writes Garst, is relatively inexpensive but can result in "massive exposure" of a marketing message. Just as impactful, but for the wrong reasons, J. P. Morgan's Twitter Q&A session backfired and was quickly abandoned because it was launched while the company was facing public legal problems.

The book details eight ways brands thrive on social media, ideas that should help both experienced and novice marketers up their social media game. Still, some of the book's most useful advice may, in fact, be about what not to do. The author does a commendable job, for instance, in detailing the "common traits of epic fails," and she offers sound suggestions for "how to minimize the impact of an authenticity meltdown."

Will the Real You Please Stand Up is easy to read, informative, and relevant to brand marketers. Garst makes it clear that even small-brand marketers can put the power of social media to work for them, as long as they are consistently authentic.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (Spring 2015)

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