



# *This is Marketing*

## You Can't Be Seen Until You Learn to See

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By: Seth Godin

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**#1 Wall Street Journal Bestseller || Instant New York Times Bestseller**

**A game-changing approach to marketing, sales, and advertising.**

Seth Godin has taught and inspired millions of entrepreneurs, marketers, leaders, and fans from all walks of life, via his blog, online courses, lectures, and bestselling books. He is the inventor of countless ideas that have made their way into mainstream business language, from *Permission Marketing* to *Purple Cow* to *Tribes* to *The Dip*.

Now, for the first time, Godin offers the core of his marketing wisdom in one compact, accessible, timeless package. *This is Marketing* shows you how to do work you're proud of, whether you're a tech startup founder, a small business owner, or part of a large corporation.

Great marketers don't use consumers to solve their company's problem; they use marketing to solve other people's problems. Their tactics rely on empathy, connection, and emotional labor instead of attention-stealing ads and spammy email funnels.

No matter what your product or service, this book will help you reframe how it's presented to the world, in order to meaningfully connect with people who want it. Seth employs his signature blend of insight, observation, and memorable examples to teach you:

- \* How to build trust and permission with your target market.
- \* The art of positioning--deciding not only who it's for, but who it's not for.
- \* Why the best way to achieve your goals is to help others become who they want to be.
- \* Why the old approaches to advertising and branding no longer work.
- \* The surprising role of tension in any decision to buy (or not).
- \* How marketing is at its core about the stories we tell ourselves about our social status.

You can do work that matters for people who care. This book shows you the way.

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## My Synopsis:

Very insightful, informative, and timely (for me). While this is admittedly a “Best of” book for Seth, reading some of the ideas again, in a different way and when I’m at a different point of my life, has sparked some new ideas. I’m sure it will do the same for you.

## **This Is Marketing**

### **You Can’t Be Seen Until You Learn to See**

- p. xi Like the fish who doesn’t understand water, we fail to see what’s actually happening, and don’t notice how it’s changing us.
- p. xii (This book is) ...about changing people for the better, creating work you can be proud of.
- p. xiii ...the best ideas require significant change.
- p. xvi The first step on the path to make things better is to make better things.
- p. 1 **Not Mass, Not Spam, Not Shameful...**
- p. 2 Marketing is the generous act of helping someone solve a problem. Their problem.
- p. 6 It’s easier to make products and services for the customers you seek to serve than it is to find customers for your products and services.
- p. 6 Marketing is the generous act of helping others become who they seek to become.
- p. 9 Your emergency is not a license to steal my attention.
- p. 9 Time to stop making average stuff for average people while hoping you can charge more than commodity price.
- p. 10 **The Marketers Learn to See**
- p. 11 Marketing in Five Steps
  1. Invest a thing worth making, with a story worth telling, and a contribution worth talking about.
  2. Design and build it in a way that a few people will particularly benefit from and care about.
  3. Tell a story that matches the built-in narrative and dreams of that tiny group of people, the smallest viable market.
  4. Spread the word.
  5. Show Up – regularly, consistently, and generously for years and years – to organize and lead and build confidence in the change you seek to make.
- p. 12 Ideas that spread, win.
- p. 12 Marketers don’t use consumers to solve their company’s problem; they use marketing to solve other people’s problems.
- p. 13 Committed, creative people can change the world.
- p. 13 You cannot change everyone; therefore, asking, “Who’s it for?” can focus your actions and help you deal with the nonbelievers (in your head and in the outside world).
- p. 14 Human beings tell themselves stories.
- p. 14 What you say isn’t nearly as important as what others say about you.
- p. 15 **Marketing Changes People Through Stories, Connections, and Experience.**
- p. 18 Desire for gain vs. avoidance of loss.
- p. 19 My narrative is simply my narrative, and if it’s not working, it’s arrogant to insist on it.

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- p. 19 The way we make things better is by caring enough about those we serve to imagine the story that *they* need to hear.
- p. 21 People don't want what you make. They want what it will do for them. They want the way it will make them feel.
- p. 22 Humans are lonely, and they want to be seen and known. People want to be part of something.
- p. 23 ...when you're market driven, you think a lot about the hopes and dreams of your customers and their friends. You listen to their frustrations and invest in changing the culture.
- p. 24 I'm not rational and neither are you.
- p. 25 **The Smallest Viable Market**
- p. 26 Perhaps it makes more sense to begin with a hurdle you can leap.
- p. 28 Your promise is directly connected to the change you seek to make, and it's addressed to the people you seek to change.
- p. 29 Begin by choosing people based on what they dream of, believe, and want...use psychographics instead of demographics.
- p. 30 ...as marketers, we must begin with a worldview, and invite people who share that worldview to join us.
- p. 31 The relentless pursuit of mass will make you boring...
- p. 32 Choose the people you serve, choose your future.
- p. 32 You'll never be able to serve everyone, which is comforting, since you're less likely to be disappointed when it doesn't happen.
- p. 32 What if you were specific about who you were seeking to serve and precisely what change you were trying to make.
- p.33 Make change happen. Change that's so profound, people can't help but talk about it.
- p. 34 Everything gets easier when you walk away from the hubris of *everyone*.
- p. 37 "It's not for you" shows the ability to respect someone enough that you're not going to waste their time, pander to them, or insist that they change their beliefs.
- p. 38 It's entirely possible that your work isn't as good as it needs to be. But it's also possible that you failed to be clear about who it was for in the first place.
- p. 41 Earn, and keep, the attention and trust of those you serve.
- p. 42 **In Search of "Better"**
- p. 42 Empathy is at the heart of marketing.
- p. 42 People don't believe what you believe. They don't know what you know. They don't want what you want.
- p. 44 Everything that we purchase...was worth more than we paid for it. Otherwise we wouldn't buy it.
- p. 44 Linear comparisons don't make sense when we're building stories and opportunities for humans.
- p. 45 We remember the best one. Best for what? And that's the key question. *Best for us*.
- p. 48 The people you seek to serve – what do they believe? What do they want?
- p. 50 We're seeking our own little pocket of uniqueness.
- p. 51 Not everyone will be interested. But if you do your job right, enough people will.
- p. 54 In a world of choice, where we have too little time, too little space, and too many options, how do we choose?
- p. 56 We're not so much interested in features as we are in the emotions that those features evoke.
- p. 60 ...without the magic of advertising, it's very difficult to grow in a quadrant that's crowded. Your customer doesn't know what to do, so he does nothing.

- p. 61 People are waiting for you...they're waiting for the connection you will offer. The ability to see and be seen. And they're waiting for the tension for the possible, the ability to make things better.
- p. 62 Better is what our market is waiting for.
- p. 64 If we can accept that people have embraced who they have become, it gets a lot easier to dance with them.
- p. 65 **Beyond Commodities**
- p. 65 ...we can change someone on an emotional level. Our calling is to make a difference.
- p. 67 ...your commodity work, no matter how much effort you put into it, is not enough.
- p. 68 When you know what you stand for, you don't need to compete.
- p. 70 ...once you commit to wanting to help people change, to take them on a journey from here to there – then you're on the hook. On the hook to deliver. On the hook for what happens next.
- p. 76 Emotional labor is the work we do to provide service.
- p. 76 The goal isn't to personalize the work. It's to make it personal.
- p. 77 **The Canvas of Dreams and Desires**
- p. 78 When you're marketing change, you're offering a new emotional state, a step closer to the dreams and desires of your customers.
- p. 78 We sell feelings, status, and connection, not tasks or stuff.
- p. 78 ...three common confusions that many of us get stuck on:
1. people confuse wants and needs
  2. ...(people) are absolutely terrible at inventing new ways to address those wants
  3. ...mistakenly believing that everyone wants the same thing
- p. 81 Don't begin with your machines, your inventory, or your tactics. Don't begin with what you know how to do or some sort of distraction about your mission. Instead, begin with dreams and fears, with emotional statues, and with the change your customers seek.
- p. 81 We take people on a journey; we help them become the person they've dreamed of becoming...
- p. 83 ...most of us do our most important work when we traffic in emotions, not commodities.
- p. 84 Find people worth serving, and then find a change worth making.
- p. 85 Always be seeking, connecting, solving, asserting, believing, seeing, and yes, testing.
- p. 86 In order to dramatically increase the size of your audience or the price that you charge, you'll need to do more than simply work more hours or interrupt more people.
- p. 87 If you run everything through a spreadsheet, you might end up with a rational plan, but the rational plan isn't what creates energy or magic or memories.
- p. 88 ...the heart and soul of a thriving enterprise in the irrational pursuit of becoming irresistible.
- p. 89 **More of the Who: Seeking the Smallest Viable Market**
- p. 89 Your best customers become your new sales people.
- p. 91 Growth creates more value, which leads to more growth.
- p. 91 ...seek a path, not a miracle.
- p. 92 If you can't succeed in the small, why do you believe you will succeed in the large?
- p. 93 The challenge for most people who seek to make an impact isn't winning over the mass market. It's the micro market.
- p. 94 Our hits aren't hits anymore...they are meaningful for a few and invisible to the rest.

- p. 98 We're intimately familiar with the noise in our own heads, and that noise is often expressed as personal and specific criticism.
- p. 100 People are quite likely to make perfectly rational decisions based on what they see, what they believe, and what they want.
- p. 101 When we find the empathy to say, "I'm sorry, this isn't for you, here's the phone number of my competitor," then we also find the freedom to do work that matters.
- p. 102 **People Like Us Do Things Like This**
- p. 102 Deep Change is Difficult, and worth it.
- p. 102 Everyone always acts in accordance with their internal narratives.
- p. 106 Normalization creates culture, and culture drives our choices, which leads to more normalization.
- p. 106 Marketers make change. And they do it by normalizing new behaviors.
- p. 107 In "People Like us do things like this," the "us" matters. The more specific, the more connected, the tighter the "us", the better.
- p. 109 Everything in our culture is part of a hierarchy between yesterday, today, and tomorrow.
- p. 113 It's a mistake to show up with an acorn and expect a crowd.
- p. 114 **Trust and Tension Create Forward Motion**
- p. 115 The pattern requires undoing before you can earn forward motion.
- p. 115 When you market to someone who doesn't have a pattern yet, you don't have to persuade them that their old choices were mistakes.
- p. 117 The very existence of an alternative causes something else to no longer be true.
- p. 118 There might be fear, but tension is the promise that we can get through that fear to the other side.
- p. 119 If you care enough about the change you seek to make, you will care enough to generously and respectfully create tension on behalf of that change.
- p. 120 We don't want to feel left out, left behind, uninformed, or impotent. We want to get ahead.
- p. 121 When you arrive on the scene with your story, with the solution you have in mind, do you also create tension? IF you don't, the status quo is likely to survive.
- p. 122 The status quo doesn't shift because you're right. It shifts because the culture changes. And the engine of culture is status.
- p. 123 **Status, Dominance, and Affiliation**
- p. 124 It's not irrational; status makes it the right choice.
- p. 126 ...the desire to change our status, or to protect it, drives almost everything we do.
- p. 128 It's a mistake to believe that everyone wants to make their status higher.
- p. 129 Status is not the same as wealth.
- p. 120 Six things about status:
1. Status is always relative
  2. Status is in the eyes of the beholder
  3. Status attended to is the status that matters
  4. Status has inertia
  5. Status is learned
  6. Shame is the status killer
- p. 129 Status is most relevant when we try to keep it or change it.

- p. 130 If we accept the shame someone sends our way, it undermines our entire narrative about relative status.
- p. 134 We each have our own narratives. The noise in our head, the worldview that is unique to us, the history and beliefs and perceptions that shape who we are and what we choose.
- p. 136 The people you're seeking to serve in this moment: What are they measuring?
- p. 140 The way you see the world isn't nearly as important as the worldview of those you seek to serve.
- p. 141 **A Better Business Plan**
- p. 143 The purpose of our culture isn't to enable capitalism, even capitalism that pays your bills. The purpose of capitalism is to build our culture.
- p. 143 Once you know what you stand for, the rest gets a lot easier.
- p. 145 **Semiotics, Symbols, and Vernacular**
- p. 146 We don't care about you, or how hard you worked on it. We want to know if it's for us and if you're the real deal.
- p. 148 Semiotics doesn't care who made the symbol. The symbol is in the mind of the person looking at it.
- p. 150 If we want to make change, we need to go first, hanging over one edge or another.
- p. 152 We're judging everything, and people are judging us in return.
- p. 154 If you want to build a marketing asset, you need to invest in connection and other nontransferable properties. If people care, you've got a brand.
- p. 157 **Treat Different People Differently**
- p. 158 Good marketers have the humility to understand that you shouldn't waste a minute (not of your time or of their time) on anyone who isn't on the left part of the curve. (early adopters)
- p. 159 Enrollment is what you need to earn permission to engage.
- p. 159 What do people want? That's probably the wrong question. Different people want different things.
- p. 160 The lesson: Always be wondering, always be testing, always be willing to treat different people differently. If you don't, they'll find someone who will.
- p. 161 ...when you find someone who is adopting your cause, adopt them back.
- p. 164 Amazement and delight go a long way.
- p. 165 **Reaching the Right People**
- p. 165 Your goal is the change you seek to make in the world.
- p. 168 An ad, unnoticed, doesn't exist.
- p. 169 ...online advertising is also the most ignored advertising ever created.
- p. 170 Please don't get distracted by the possibility of free attention...
- p. 170 Brand marketing makes magic, direct marketing makes the phone ring...
- p. 172 If you can't afford to be consistent and patient, don't pay for brand marketing ads.
- p. 175 ...you definitely, certainly, and surely don't have enough time and money to build a brand for everyone. You can't. Don't try.
- p. 175 We remember what we rehearse.
- p. 176 All the storytelling you do requires frequency.
- p. 176 The market has been trained to associate frequency with trust. If you quit right in the middle of building that frequency, it's no wonder you never got a chance to earn the trust.
- p. 177 SEO is the practice of ranking high in the search results for a generic term.
- p. 178 Step one is to make a product or service that people care enough to search for specifically...And then step two is easy to understand: to be the one they want to find when they go looking.

p. 179 **Price is a Story**

p. 179 Pricing is a marketing tool, not simply a way to get money.

p. 179 There are two key things to keep in mind about pricing: Marketing changes your pricing. Pricing changes your marketing.

p. 179 Your price should be aligned with the extremes you claimed as part of your positioning.

p. 181 Price is a signal.

p. 182 “Cheap” is another way to say “scared”.

p. 182 When you’re the cheapest, you’re not promising change. You’re promising the same, but cheaper.

p. 183 Scarcity, tension, and enrollment all exist when we must decide to make a purchase, and the marketer sacrifices all of these when a purchase is truly free.

p. 185 When people are heavily invested (cash or reputation or effort), they often make up a story to justify their commitment. And that story carries trust.

p. 185 Lowering your price doesn’t make you more trusted. It does the opposite.

p. 186 ...showing generosity with your bravery, your empathy, and your respect is generous indeed.

p. 189 **Permission and Remarkability in a Virtuous Cycle**

p. 190 Permission marketing recognizes the new power of the best consumers to ignore marketing.

p. 191 Every publisher, every media company, every author of ideas needs to own a permission asset, the privilege of contacting people without a middleman.

p. 193 Earn your own permission and own it.

p. 193 Communicate only with those who choose to hear from you.

p. 194 Permission, attention, and enrollment drive commerce.

p. 196 It’s worth noting that whether something is remarkable isn’t up to you, the creator. You can do your best, but the final decision is up to your user, not you.

p. 196 The best reason someone talks about you is because they’re actually talking about themselves...

p. 197 Ideas trend horizontally now: from person to person, not from organization to customer.

p. 198 People aren’t going to spread the word because it’s important to you. They’ll only do it because it’s important to them.

p. 199 **Trust is as Scarce as Attention**

p. 199 ...a moment in time when more people are connected, and fewer are trusted.

p. 201 ...the best way to earn trust is through action.

p. 202 The goal isn’t to maximize your social media numbers. The goal is to be known to the smallest viable audience.

p. 203 **The Funnel**

p. 207 Explore what happens if people engage in your ideas or your community before you ask them to send you money.

p. 207 Invest in the lifetime value of a customer, building new things for your customers instead of racing around trying to find new customers for your things.

P 207 The most important thing to figure out is the lifetime value of a customer.

p. 214 If you can aggregate a chunk of the long tail, you can make a go of it.

p. 216 ...you will make your impact by uniting those you seek to serve.

p. 218 The middle of the curve isn’t eagerly adapting. They’re barely adapting. That’s why they’ve chosen to be in the middle of the curve.

p. 218 Connected tribes are more powerful than disconnected ones.

p. 219 The bridge is built on two simple questions:

1. What will I tell my friends?
2. Why will I tell them?

p. 219 Make things better by making better things – things that have a network effect, a ratchet, a reason for sharing.

p. 229 The one question that every business buyer asks herself is, “What will I tell my boss?” You’re marketing the answer to that question.

p. 230 **Organizing and Leading a Tribe**

p. 230 The tribe would probably survive if you went away. The goal is for the to miss you if you did.

p. 231 ...a simple three-step narrative for action: the story of self, the story of us, and the story of now.

p. 231 *The story of self* gives you standing, a platform from which to speak...The story of self is your chance to explain that you are people like us.

p. 231 *The story of us* is the kernel of a tribe...The story of us is about together, not apart.

p. 231 *The story of now* is the critical pivot. The story of now enlists the tribe on your journey.

p. 234 When you’re so sure you’re right that you’re willing to burn things down, it turns out that everyone is standing in a burning building sooner or later.

p. 234 The Mission of the Marketer

“Put people to work. It’s even more effective than money.”

“Challenge your people to explore, to learn, and to get comfortable with uncertainty.”

“Find ways to help others on the path find firm footing.”

“Help others write rules that allow them to achieve their goals.”

“Treat the others the way you’d want to be treated.”

“Don’t criticize for fun. Do it when it helps educate, even if it’s not entertaining.”

“Stick with your tactics long after everyone else is bored with them. Only stop when they stop working.”

“It’s okay to let the pressure cease now and then. People will pay attention to you and the change you seek when they are unable to consistently ignore it.”

“Don’t make threats. Do or don’t do.”

“Build a team with the capacity and the patience to do the work that needs doing.”

“If you bring your positive ideas to the fore, again and again, you’ll raise the bar for everyone else.”

“Solve your own problems before you spend a lot of time finding problems for the others.”

“Celebrate your people, free them to do even more, make it about the cohort, and invite everyone along. Disagree with institutions, not with people.”

p. 235 Your opportunity as a marketer is the chance to connect the members of the tribe.

p. 236 Most of all, the tribe is waiting for you to commit.

p. 237 The alternative is to reinvest. To have the guts to sit with those you have instead of always being distracted to chase the next thing.

p. 238 The easy sales aren’t always the important sales.

p. 239 **Some Case Studies Using the Method**

p. 240 What matters is the connection you made.

p. 241 This audacity is available to more and more organizations as technology shifts from “Could it be done?” to “Do we have the guts?”

p. 243 If you go to her (your boss) with what you want...it’s unlikely to lead to the answer you seek.

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p. 244 **Marketing Works, and Now It's Your Turn**

p. 244 Perfect closes the door...Better opens the door.

p. 245 Ship your work. It's good enough. Then make it better.

p. 245 If there's no connection, we can't make things better.

p. 246 **Marketing to the Most Important Person**

p. 247 Just like every powerful tool, the impact comes from the craftsman, not the tool.

p. 248 What do we do about the noise in our heads?

p. 249 If we're going to take it personally every time someone doesn't click on a link, every time someone doesn't renew, we can't possibly do our work as professionals.

p. 250 We bring value to the world when we market. That's why people engage with us.

p. 252 It is the marketing we do for ourselves, to ourselves, by ourselves, the story we tell ourselves, that can change everything.

p. 257 A Simple Marketing Worksheet

→ Who's it for?

→ What's it for?

→ What is the worldview of the audience you're seeking to reach?

→ What are they afraid of?

→ What story will you tell? Is it true?

→ What change are you seeking to make?

→ How will it change their status?

→ How will you reach the early adopters and neophiliacs?

→ Why will they tell their friends?

→ What will they tell their friends?

→ Where's the network effect that will propel this forward?

→ What asset are you building?

→ Are you proud of it?