Brand Failures: The Truth about the 100 Biggest Branding Mistakes of All Time
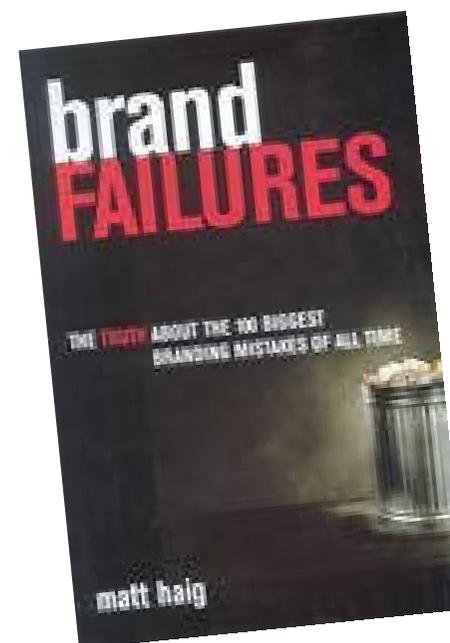**Digital Book Club**

Matt Haig
Kogan Page 2003

Drawing together an excellent array of corporate disasters …

DIGITAL STRATEGY CONSULTING
Making sense of a digital world
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Matt Haig, independent consultant advising organizations on creating integrated marketing solutions, challenges his readers to examine their own problems with branding.

Matt Haig, independent consultant advising organizations on creating integrated marketing solutions, challenges his readers to examine their own problems with branding. What are the seven deadly sins of branding? Haig describes them well: they're amnesia, ego, megalomania, deception, fatigue, paranoia, and irrelevance that stand behind the biggest failures in brand marketing. All filled with an abundance of recent cases studies.

As marketers we can learn as much from examining the causes behind these failings as we can from the MBA-taught models of success that we strive to follow.

About the Digital Book Club series

In times of huge economic and social change, knowledge becomes a critical success factor. We created the Digital Book Club reviews to bring you closer to the people and ideas shaping the digital networked economy. They are short reviews of texts we'd recommend, and are published monthly. We also publish similar Digital Thought Leadership interviews and Digital Insight Reports to accompany our own talks and training workshops. Knowledge and training can unlock the potential of your team.

Iconic failures

"The truth behind about the 100 biggest branding mistakes of all time", what marketer is not part of the target audience for that proposition? I ripped open my copy as the postman handed it to me and dived in with almost child-like enthusiasm.

Chapters headings are littered with headlines from the City news pages: Anderson's 'Shredding history', Enron's 'failing the truth', Ratners' 'When honesty is not the best policy' - all clamour for attention.

Haig has gone out of his way to find failures of all kinds from the iconic Sony Betamax to other historical legends: the infamous, mega-brand Coke Cola's attempt at New Coke and the embarrassing flop of McDonald's sophisticated Arch Delux product. To prove that lightening can strike twice McDonald's makes a second appearance for the McLibel trials, while and the technology sector offers us WAP telephony and the inescapable Boo.com – internet retail ahead of its time.

For the hungry there are even failures with food: Pepsi AM – that short lived breakfast cola; Clairol's brave attempt to mix yoghurt and shampoo; 'Thirsty Cat' the bottled water for AB pets.

Lessons to be learned

Congratulations to Haig for succeeding in drawing together an excellent array of corporate disasters which will appeal not only to the most morbid but also to the sharper marketer looking for the lessons learned. And that is exactly what Haig has really set out here; business school through theatre.

As marketers we can learn as much from examining the causes behind these failings as we can from the MBA-taught models of success that we strive to follow. While the points may lack depth, they provide deeply powerful and emotive reminders of the crisis that can befall a company who neglect good practice.

The book segments the concept of failure into different types: ideas, brand extensions, PR, culture, people, rebranding, internet new technology. It closes with a sleepy look through a portfolio of tired brands that Haig argues are simply slipping away because of their failure to maintain innovation.

Actions

Reflect and think where your branding decisions may take you. Investigate where any potential faults may be hidden and what the benefits are. Discuss the plans with your team.

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Invite us to come and talk with your team about changes in the near future and their impact on your business.

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• Customised in-company training programmes
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• Workshops for staff at all levels
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About the author

Danny Meadows-Klue has been a commentator on the digital networked industries since 1995. He managed the UK's first online newspaper and has helped run web businesses ranging from mass market portals and consumer magazines, to online stores, search and email services. Among his industry roles he is the co-founder and former chairman of the UK and European Internet and Interactive Advertising Bureau, and has been lecturing on digital marketing for more than a decade. He set up Digital Strategy Consulting in 2000 to help firms accelerate their businesses through digital networks.

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