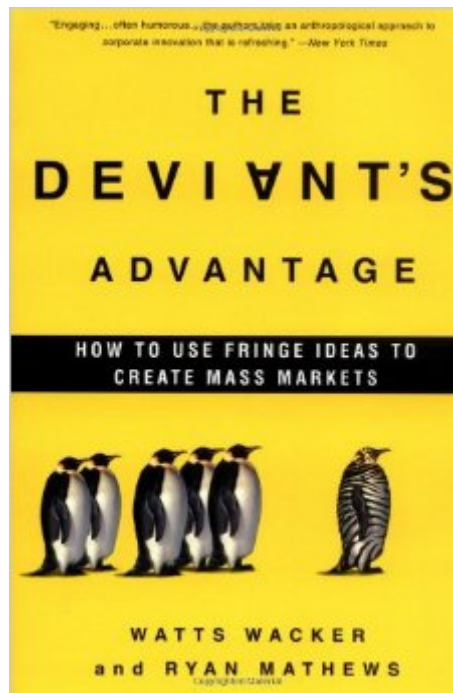


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The Deviant's Advantage: How To Use Fringe Ideas To Create Mass Markets



Synopsis

Don't be afraid of deviants. They just may save your business. In today's challenging and sometimes puzzling business environment, deviance equals innovation--the kind of breakthrough thinking that creates new markets and tumbles traditional ones. In *The Deviant's Advantage*, two of America's most respected futurists show how this deviance proceeds along a traceable trajectory, explaining how and why: • Christian fundamentalism morphed from college Bible studies to Republican party king-making • Reebok cares more about what's on the feet of kids in Detroit and Philadelphia than what the so-hip-it-hurts set is wearing in New York or on Rodeo Drive • Hugh Hefner, the creator of Playboy, transformed into a cultural icon with decidedly Puritan sensibilities Tomorrow's breakthrough concept is lurking out there right now in the mind of a deviant individual. Your choice is simple: find it and exploit it or be buried by those who do.

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Mathews and Wacker explain that, by definition, "deviant" and "deviance" refer to "someone or something operating in a defined measure away from the norm....[therefore] everything that is different is deviant." They go on to observe that positive deviance can be a "force for transformation" whereas negative deviance can be a "source of unspeakable evil." In the context of this volume, deviance "irrigates the imagination; offers an inexhaustible font of new ideas, products, and services; and in the end, is the source of all innovation, new market creation, and, for business, ultimately represents the basis of all incremental profit. Deviance equals innovation and innovation

equals opportunity. Opportunity creates markets that in turn are destroyed by deviance." Mathews and Wacker assert that deviance follows a linear pattern: Fringe > Edge > Realm of the Cool > Next Big Thing > Social Convention > Cliché > Icon or Archetype or Oblivion. In other words, what began "operating in a defined measure away from the norm" eventually becomes the norm and thus vulnerable to something else "operating in a defined measure away from the norm" which eventually.... You get the idea. Mathews and Wacker describe the voice, spirit, or incarnation of deviance with a neologism, the devox. Used as a metaphor, the devox illustrates that "things have changed -- and continue to change -- at such a rate that conventional language is no longer an effective tool for describing what's going on around around us." Nor can then conventional language describe what has yet to occur. "Remember the first rule of the devox: Nothing's more foolish than conventional wisdom.

The Deviant's Advantage is primarily a sociological look at where new ideas and trends come from. The book goes on to make a linkage to how businesses can better monitor and apply the emerging inputs to make existing and new products and services more successful. The authors are usually speaking about deviants and deviance in the positive sense of "something or someone operating in a defined measure away from the norm." In our quest for the "new" and "authentic," such deviances sometimes attract a wider audience. In the process of attracting that audience, the deviance is "cleaned" up to be acceptable to a broader group of people until a majority find it appealing . . . at least until the novelty wears off or something more "authentic" shows up. To understand this process, readers will probably benefit from also reading *The Tipping Point* and *The Anatomy of Buzz*. The authors go on to point out why this process operates more rapidly than in the past. They primarily focus on language becoming more ambiguous, science making reality less objective, and the impact of a more visually stimulated culture. The point about language is particularly well done. Finally, the authors look at how corporations, those models of conformity, can incorporate deviance by becoming aware of it and incorporating more external perspectives. Hire differently, get new stakeholders involved, and use creative brainstorming techniques to look for potentially more valuable core competencies). This last section is filled with examples of the authors' consulting experiences with major corporations. They end up with an entertaining use of social archetypes to discuss how to disseminate ideas (trickster, clown, wizard, shaman, seer, provocateur, fool).

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