

Radically Different

**Radical strategies to help you
differentiate your business in
a hyper competitive world**

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If you're a small
business or
brand, or want to
behave like one,
this book will
radically change
how you think
about marketing.

A few words before we get started

One of the frustrations I have with most marketing books is that they're often written around one idea. One idea that the author keeps regurgitating, in a whole bunch of boring in-depth case studies starring all the predictable suspects - Apple, Google, Virgin, Tesla, Uber etc.

This book is a little different.

It's based on a 7-stage framework (called The Road to Differentiation) that I've developed to help small brands and businesses radically stand out from their competitors. I'll talk more about this on page 34.

It also includes lots of practical, real world examples that will inspire you to be *radically different* in your business category.

There's over 80 examples in the book!

The advice in this book is not academic theory – it is practical wisdom distilled from over 30 years working at the marketing coalface throughout Australasia and the world.

My ideas are based on real world insights and experiences.

Throughout my career I have worked for hundreds of small and medium-sized businesses and have founded / invested in a number of consultancies in recruitment marketing, digital marketing, B2B marketing and branding. I currently run a brand story consultancy called Story IQ.

I'm passionate about helping people find their radical difference. Over my lifetime I've found that every time I've made a big step forward that's dramatically changed my life, it's been because there's been a radical change to my mindset and approach. I encourage you to do the same.

My sincere hope is that after reading this book, you'll be able to use the practical ideas within it straight away to help you radically differentiate your business or brand.

Whether you run a small brewery, a software company, a consulting business, a retail store, a gym, educational institute or a health coaching business... this book will give you the tools to stand out from your competition and thrive. Ultimately, and ideally, to win more customers, make more money and have fun along the way.

And in the spirit of differentiation, I'm going to do something you wouldn't ordinarily do – and that's offer you something right at the outset.

If you get to the end of this book and write me a review, I'll give you a free 30 minute Discover Your Difference session via Zoom.

I'll quickly talk about how you can apply the principles in this book to radically differentiate your business or brand in its category.

I hope you enjoy the book and if you have any ideas or general feedback about how I can improve the next edition, please email me at:

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Steve Ballantyne
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Don't forget to check out The Radically Different Ad Gallery on page 136 where I have collated some of my favourite ad campaigns.

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You must be radically different to survive

You're at a party. Everyone there is cool, with their groovy threads, perfect hair, dance moves, and easy knack of banter. Your jeans are, well, jeans; your hair is styled, and you dance like everyone else. But although you spent some time and effort preparing, no one is checking you out. You feel invisible, and certainly not in the mood for a party.

Sucks, doesn't it? But, you know, you'll get over it. But it's a lot more serious when it happens in business.

The bad news is there are a lot of small businesses and brands feeling invisible and ignored. Small businesses today face a more competitive atmosphere than we've ever witnessed. The internet, along with the coronavirus pandemic, has created an environment of extreme global competition.

The good news is, you can change that

How? Turn on the news and the message couldn't be clearer. The more radical you are, the more attention you get. Radical entrepreneurs, activist groups, artists, politicians, leaders, ideologies, and marketers - these are the ones getting airtime and attention.

So, it's simple. To get noticed, you must be *radically different*.

When everyone's wearing blue jeans, chuck on the fluoro pink pedal-pushers. When everyone's presenting in PowerPoint, make a video, complete with your favourite obscure song. Because if you're not standing out, you're invisible, and to survive in today's cut-throat marketplace, you can't afford to be.

In this book, I'll show you how to be *radically different* - without breaking the bank - and I'll share plenty of inspiring examples to help you get there.

Competition is global

Competition is intense. The digital revolution has resulted in facing off against your competitors on a global field.

The overload of media, ads, messages and information gives customers unlimited options at their fingertips – options that create competition across product categories. Your prospective customers might have been ready to buy your product, but they often get disrupted by a barrage of ads for a multitude of other products and services clamouring for a share of their wallet.

In this context, consumers are less likely to be loyal to a particular brand when they are inundated with offers from cheaper, better, or more convenient alternatives. And because consumers want instant gratification, you can lose them in a click.

The coronavirus pandemic has amplified the competition. Our homes have become the center of our lives as public places carry the risk of virus transmission. Businesses have adjusted by catering to less physical interaction and more digital interaction. As a result, people are buying differently - even people who had never purchased anything online prior to the pandemic have been persuaded by the ease and safety of online shopping.

With digital transactions, chatbots and virtual consultations now the norm, the playing field for businesses is indeed massive. If you have a small business in Australia, you can sell to anyone in the world. We are in uncharted waters. And the disconcerting fact is, you're only going to survive and thrive if you can clarify and amplify what makes you meaningfully different.

We see what is distinct

Speaking of survival, as our human ancestors evolved on the savannah our Stone Age brains preserved the traits that contributed to survival. After all, if you didn't have strong survival traits, you weren't likely to produce offspring that would survive either.

As our ancestors' eyes surveyed the plains, their brains prioritised what to observe and what to ignore. It was a matter of energy conservation. They couldn't squander precious carbohydrates processing every little thing.

But noticing something unexpected in the corner of your vision could either save your life or provide food, so that thing that stood out from the landscape was worthy of attention.

Believe it or not, our brain hasn't changed much in the last 10,000 years. It's not enough time for significant genetic modification to have occurred. We still don't process everything we see. We are hardwired to notice what is different. The more extreme the contrast is, the more visible the contrasting element becomes.



Recent studies show how our brain uses neural patterns to compare our expectations – what we've experienced in the past – with what is happening in the present. Researchers identified a feedback loop where high frequency waves of neural activity relayed an error message when we see something we don't expect.

In other words, noticing something different makes our brain light up and pay attention immediately.

Ok, so what does this mean for your small business or brand in a world where there are many others targeting the same audience as you?

You must be *radically different*

You may have heard of the term differentiation. David Parker defines it as a benefit or set of benefits that meaningfully and favourably distinguishes you from your competition and for which customers are willing to pay.

But that's not enough anymore. To survive - and thrive - you must be *radically different* in a meaningful way that your customers value.

People expect outstanding customer service.
They expect a high-quality product or service.
They expect to have multiple options laid out on a slick website.
And most of your competitors are delivering all the above.
So, excelling in any or all these areas will not make you *radically different*.
They simply make you the same as everyone else.

As a small brand or business owner, you need the skills, knowledge and desire to be *radically different* or you will end up looking and sounding like everyone you're competing against. Being reliable is no longer enough anymore - you must be remarkable in a way that's meaningful to your customers.

"In a crowded marketplace, fitting in is failing. In a busy marketplace, not standing out is the same as being invisible."

Seth Godin

It's David vs Goliath on a global scale

The problem is that small businesses don't have the resources that big businesses have to make this happen. They don't have the spending power to dominate the media.

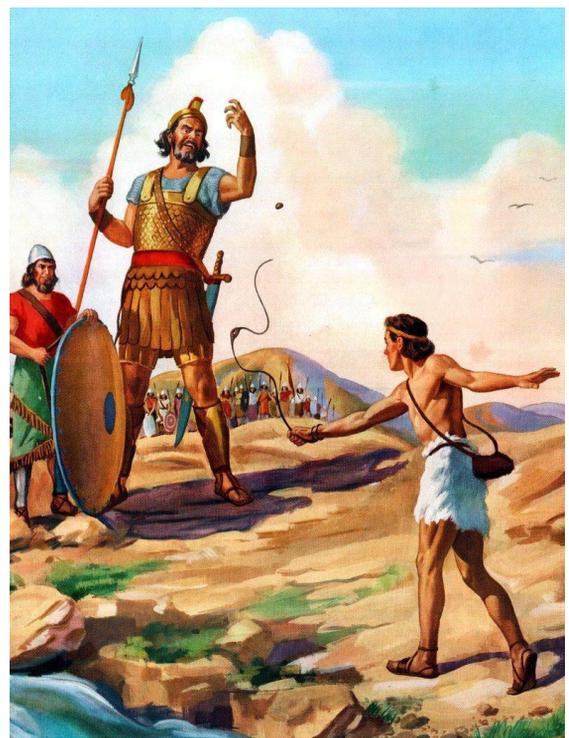
It's like the Biblical story of David attacking the giant Goliath armed with a slingshot - it's not a fair fight.

In America, many small towns feared the day Walmart moved in.

The smaller retailers - in every area from groceries to hardware - couldn't compete with the big box store. Their massive media combined with low prices, late hours and convenient one-stop shopping destroyed a lot of small businesses in heartland America.

That fear is now felt on a global scale. Whether you're a retailer in Auckland or a consultant in Toronto, you're not just competing with your neighbours. You're competing with thousands of companies around the world.

And the larger companies have no problem using their loud voices and powerful dollars to buy up all the media they can to drown you out.



The big players have worked hard to convince people that being the same is the pinnacle of perfection – their chains of identical stores replicated across the nation turn every town into a diorama of the same shops.

There's only one way to compete, and that's to be different.

Radically different.

But how do I become *radically different*?

Grow some balls. No, I'm not sorry if that's offensive, because your success as a small business or brand depends on you having the courage to go against the fads, to resist the obvious strategy of doing what everyone else is doing and steer your own course.

The comfort zone might be comfortable, but nothing grows there. Instead of competing, the *radically different* business focuses on separating.

This book is your shake-up. Within these pages is a proven methodology to make your business *radically different*, stand out in the market and reach your target audience effectively without spending a fortune.

But first, we'll talk about the big dumb mistake nearly every small business and brand makes – because they've been taught to think that way.



In a sea of
sameness,
you have to
be radically
different to
get attention.

Avoid the competition trap

Most of us were taught from an early age that if you want to succeed, you have to be better than the competition. Whether it's academically, in sports, or getting a job, you just have to prove yourself to be better than the next person.

So having had that drummed into us in our formative years, it's natural that it carries over into the business world as well.

But that's a very dangerous trap to fall into.

When you're busy looking at what the competition does so you can do it better, you have no time to develop original and unique ideas of your own. You simply end up doing the same as them (albeit a tad better).

In the words of Jerry Garcia from the band The Grateful Dead:

"You don't want to be the best of the best. You want to be the only one who does what you do."

It's a small imitation world

Thank you, internet. You've made it so simple to see what competitors are doing anywhere else in the world. Now everyone is copying everyone else on a global scale. The result is less originality and more sameness, with more businesses looking just like the next one.

Take hotels for instance. Almost every hotel offers a clean room with toiletries including shampoo, soap, lotion, and a shower cap. Why these but not other items we're likely to use daily, like toothpaste? I'm pretty sure most of us brush our teeth more often than we worry about getting our hair wet!

Most hotel rooms offer the same thing because they have copied one another. Whether it's a cheap family motel or a five-star establishment, we now expect our hotel rooms to come equipped with these toiletries. Everyone does it because everyone else is doing it.

The madness of benchmarking

If you're imitating the best, you can't be the best. It's nonsense, but so many businesses put it into practice that it even has a name: benchmarking.

Benchmarking is the tool of sameness.

The strategy of looking at what other businesses have implemented successfully and copying them means you're always a step behind. You're following the pack, and while you might be surviving you are certainly not standing out. Instead of paving your own path to success, you're riding the coat tails of someone else, continually comparing your progress with theirs.

If you're copying others' products, strategies, price points, technology, or value propositions, you'll end up looking and sounding just like them. Another small business in the shadows of others' success.

Benchmarking is the killer of creativity and innovation. It sucks the very life out of small businesses and ensures you remain invisible. Boring. Stagnant.

Don't let your competitors distract you

But, you may be wondering, if I'm not comparing my business to the competition, how do I gauge performance?

By changing your focus from being 'best in class' to 'only in class.'

Al Ries, author of *Differentiate or Die* says that instead of "competing to be the best," businesses should "compete to be unique." Instead of focusing on being better than someone else, direct your energy to what you do that is unique.

The best way to make sure you are truly unique from your competition? Ignore them. Don't let them distract you.

Apple did this well. They didn't look at what IBM was doing and try to do it better. In fact it seemed that Steve Jobs had blinders on when it came to what his competition was up to. He ignored traditional marketing and business advice and created what he thought people wanted in the best way possible, down to every detail.



Think different.

Imagination is more
important than
knowledge.

Albert Einstein

Apple's famous 'Think Different' campaign is the epitome of being *radically different*. Launched in 1997, the campaign still resonates today.

While IBM's ads at the time focused on "business solutions" featuring people in formal business attire working in offices, Apple launched their famous campaign with this narration.

Here's to the crazy ones.

The misfits.

The rebels.

The troublemakers.

The round pegs in the square holes.

The ones who see things differently.

They're not fond of rules.

And they have no respect for the status quo.

You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them.

About the only thing you can't do is ignore them.

Because they change things.

They push the human race forward.

While some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius.

Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.

Apple successfully appealed to a unique audience – the quirky creative people going against the grain, and the everyday people aspiring to be like them. They didn't try to have a better business solution than IBM. They forged their own distinctive identity and established themselves as different. Their continued success over 20 years later is obvious.

Imagine if ten start-ups in the same type of business launched tomorrow without looking at what each other was doing. I bet we would get some wildly original companies.

That's essentially what Apple did - they ignored what everyone had done before and created a *radically different* business and message that stands alone in the marketplace.

With some work and clever thinking your business can do the same.

Punks of the beer world

Being *radically different* is a matter of survival, and UK based Brew Dog Brewery knows all about that. Starting a brewery in the midst of a recession would seem to be a recipe for failure. Brew Dog not only rose to the challenge – they grew their business by 200% in 2009. How? You guessed it – by making themselves *radically different*.

They started selling their craft beer at markets in 2007 and quickly grew into Scotland's largest independent brewery. But then the recession hit. Adam Morgan says in his book about Brew Dog's success, "If you can't spend your way into being noticed, one of your strongest strategic options is to behave your way into being noticed."

Brew Dog capitalised on their anti-establishment punk attitudes. They brewed unique beers (including the world's strongest at 32% abv). They projected themselves naked onto the houses of Parliament and made a special beer for the Olympics – "Never Mind the Anabolics."

On top of all that, they launched a crowdfunding program called Equity for Punks – an anti-business business model – and now give away 20% of their profits annually. Their *radically different* stance led to huge success.



A sample of Brew Dog's irreverent advertising



Being radically different is about innovation

But back to you. Are you ready to stop focusing on what everyone else is doing? What would happen if you just did business differently?

Instead of incrementally adopting your competitors' ideas, why not reinvent them? Instead of chasing improvements, chase radical innovation.

You might piss a few people off, but so what? Look for innovations that will disrupt the status quo. With each new improvement, thinking in a radically different way can achieve a step change in performance that sets your business apart from the crowd.

To truly be different, you have to focus on being *radically different* through innovation, invention and creativity.

It's no easy task. Innovation takes work. I'll show you the way.

KEY TAKEOUTS FROM THIS CHAPTER:

Ignore your competitors. Don't copy them, don't try to be better than them. Doing what they do just makes you the same as them.
Do something *radically different*.

Buy the whole book for just \$9 USD

Click here: <https://storyiq.co.nz/radically-different/>