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The Myths Of Writing: Have You Bought Into These?

By David B. Silva

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There is an image most people carry of the artist (think Van Gough's self-portrait, the one with his ear bandaged), working in solitude in a barren garret in a dark corner of the city. Everyday is a struggle. He continually walks between moments of brilliance and moments of insanity. It's a romantic image, I suppose. Built around the belief that an artist must suffer for his art.

This applies not only to the painter, mind you, but also to the actor, the dancer, the photographer, the writer. We all must suffer for our art.

But image and reality are often two different things. Writing, for example, does NOT have to be a torturous process of endurance and pain. In fact, it should be exactly the opposite. Liberating. Joyous. Enlightening. Why else would you want to invest so much of yourself in it?

So let's take a closer look at a few common writing myths.

This first one actually applies in all areas of a person's life. Simply stated: Having a big ego is a bad thing. It's unbecoming. It's boastful. It puts you in a negative light.

The truth is ... if you want to be a success at anything, you need an ego. It motivates you, keeps you moving, pushes you to do your best. It's not your enemy. It's your ally.

The key to making it work for you is to keep it directed inward. Pump yourself up silently. Let it fill you with pride and a sense of possibilities. That's what the ego does best. Used wisely, it will move you toward your writing goals, not away from them.

Our next common writing myth is one you hear all the time: you have to write something original.

What is originality?

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There's only one thing in the world that can make your work original. That's you. Because that's all you have to bring to the table as a writer. Who you are. Your history. Your experiences. Your family. Your beliefs.

When a publisher says he wants something original, he's saying he wants something fresh, something that reflects you the writer. He wants your voice, your honesty. The world already has a Stephen King and a Mary Higgins Clark and a John Grisham. It doesn't need more of them.

Our final common writing myth (though there is no shortage of such myths, we are limited by space): the slower you write, the more time you spend with each and every word, the better your writing will be.

The catch to this one is simple: there's a time and place for writing, and there's a time and place for editing.

When you mix the two activities (which are very different in their requirements and purpose), you rarely do either one justice. If anything will suffer, it will be your writing. Because suddenly you'll be under the constraints of the editor sitting on your shoulder. You'll be fretting over the words while losing perspective on the more important elements of the story. Does the scene work? Are your characters being true to their nature? Does this move the story forward?

The truth is this: your writing will ALWAYS be better when you write in the moment. Remember when you were a child? When you could spend hours building a sand castle or playing catch or flying a kite? Those were moments when nothing else in the world existed because you were completely absorbed in the activity. Write with that same captivation, as if each scene were unfolding right before your eyes, and you'll find your writing will not only be vivid and powerful, it will flow faster than you ever imagined possible.

Writing does not have to be a torturous, exacting process.

Allow yourself to have fun with it, and you'll be a better writer for the effort.

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Book Review – Loyalty Myths: Hyped Strategies That Will Put You Out Of Business - And

Proven Tactics That Really Work

By Adam McFarland

Did you ever wonder if some of those age old sayings about marketing are true? For instance, we've all heard "It costs five times more to acquire a new customer than to retain a current customer." But does anyone have any proof of that? That is exactly what a group of authors set out to do in Loyalty

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Myths: Hyped Strategies That Will Put You Out of Business - and Proven Tactics That Really Work. The authors, Timothy L. Keiningham, Terry G. Varva, Lerzan Aksoy, and Henri Wallard are all experts in consumer loyalty and use their wealth of knowledge to dispel common myths and offer insight into what really works.

The book chooses an interesting format - the first six chapters are devoted to dismiss over fifty common 'loyalty myths' and the final two chapters are used to learning about why customers are loyal and how a loyalty program should be managed. Each of the 'loyalty myths' chapters contains several 'myths' grouped together by common themes, such as Loyalty Myths That Subvert Company Goals and Loyalty Myths Regarding Employees. The chapters both begin and end with an example pulled from industry that encompasses all of the myths mentioned in the chapter, with the actual myths discussed in the middle.

The authors spend a couple of pages banishing each of the fifty three myths. Some of the myths are things that we tend to take for granted, such as "Companies tend to know their customers," while others like "share-of-wallet increases as customer lifetimes increase" would seem intuitively true. For each and every one, the authors use solid historical data to dispel the myth and show the negative business effects of believing it.

The final two chapters focus on seven 'loyalty truths' such as "Don't manage for customer retention before you manage for customer selection" and "Customer loyalty and brand imagery are far from independent; you must manage them hand-in-hand." The authors do a good job of going through how to build and measure a loyalty program around these 'truths.'

The book is an extremely fast paced, entertaining read. Anyone reading the book with an open mind will agree with the authors' solid reasoning. In particular, business owners, CEO's, and anyone in marketing or consumer affairs will directly benefit by eliminating these 'myths' from their business and implementing the 'truths.' This book can have a very real impact on your company's bottom line. Many businesses mindlessly pour money into customer loyalty programs without taking the steps outlined in this book. For some companies, a loyalty program doesn't even make sense. For others, their program needs a significant overhaul. This book will help you identify where your business is and give you the tools to make improvements.

The only downside with the book is the sheer number of myths. Many of the 'myths' blend together and readers would probably be more likely to retain the 'myths' if there were ten as opposed to fifty-three (similar to the seven 'truths'). The amount of myths also doesn't allow for the authors to go into quite as much detail as one would like for each 'myth.' There are several myths that aren't so much dispelled in the paragraph or two devoted to it, but within the context of the entire chapter. It just seems like it would have made more sense to combine many of the myths.

Overall, **Loyalty Myths: Hyped Strategies That Will Put You Out of Business - and Proven Tactics That Really Work** is a tremendously entertaining and enlightening read. Anyone that has an interest in consumer loyalty will learn a great deal of directly applicable information that can save their company money and help differentiate them from the competition.

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Adam McFarland owns

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mention in the Microsoft Start Something Amazing Awards. You can read Adam's blog about being a young internet entrepreneur by going to

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