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Play Bigger: How Pirates, Dreamers, And Innovators Create And Dominate Markets



Synopsis

The founders of a respected Silicon Valley advisory firm study legendary category-creating companies and reveal a groundbreaking discipline called category design. Winning today isn't about beating the competition at the old game. It's about inventing a whole new game—defining a new market category, developing it, and dominating it over time. You can't build a legendary company without building a legendary category. If you think that having the best product is all it takes to win, you're going to lose. In this farsighted, pioneering guide, the founders of Silicon Valley advisory firm Play Bigger rely on data analysis and interviews to understand the inner workings of “category kings” — companies such as , Salesforce, Uber, and IKEA—that give us new ways of living, thinking or doing business, often solving problems we didn't know we had. In Play Bigger, the authors assemble their findings to introduce the new discipline of category design. By applying category design, companies can create new demand where none existed, conditioning customers' brains so they change their expectations and buying habits. While this discipline defines the tech industry, it applies to every kind of industry and even to personal careers. Crossing the Chasm revolutionized how we think about new products in an existing market. The Innovator's Dilemma taught us about disrupting an aging market. Now, Play Bigger is transforming business once again, showing us how to create the market itself.

Book Information

Hardcover: 272 pages

Publisher: HarperBusiness (June 14, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0062407619

ISBN-13: 978-0062407610

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.9 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 68 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #13,749 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #28 in Books > Business & Money > Small Business & Entrepreneurship > New Business Enterprises #41 in Books > Business & Money > Marketing & Sales > Consumer Behavior #71 in Books > Business & Money > Processes & Infrastructure > Strategic Planning

Customer Reviews

“Every entrepreneur looking to alter the landscape and every CEO looking to reimagine their business can learn from this book. Play Bigger provides inspiration and a framework for building companies that transcend gravity.” (Marc Benioff, Chairman and CEO, Salesforce)
 “Play Bigger is the new how-to guide for entrepreneurs and executives who want to build legendary, enduring companies.” (Jim Goetz, Partner, Sequoia Capital)
 “Business leaders of the future need to create movements with passionate employees and fans that change the world—our point of view, not just companies with employees that sell products. Play Bigger shows how category design is the roadmap for making this happen.” (Mike Maples, Founding Partner, Floodgate)
 “Every entrepreneur who wants to take their game to the next level needs to read this book. Category design applies to sports governing bodies, event owners, national teams and even athletes.” (John Bertrand, Americas Cup winner, Olympic medalist)
 “Category design is a principle that every successful entrepreneur has intuitively embraced. Now it is outlined here in Play Bigger for all business executives to learn and apply. An absolute must read for every person interested in the secret sauce found in Silicon Valley.” (Ann Miura-Ko, Lecturer, Stanford University and Co-founder Floodgate Fund)
 “Play Bigger shows why it’s so important to build category kings and what it takes to succeed in this new discipline of category design. This is must read book for all brand marketers, VCs, and board of directors who want to take market creation into their own hands.” (R “Ray” Wang, Principal Analyst & Founder, Constellation Research, Inc. Author Disrupting Digital Business)
 “This important work should be available to everyone thinking of pursuing a business career.” (Library Journal)
 “This is a very special book, and it will make a huge difference to businesses trying to understand how they can succeed initially and for the long term. Play Bigger ranks up there with Christensen’s “Innovators Dilemma” and Moore’s “Crossing The Chasm” as the three must-have books to succeed.” (Kathleen Goolsby, Managing Editor, SandHill.com)
 “a new spin on the ‘something from nothing’ concept”
 “Aimed at entrepreneurs, this book has practical advice for anyone in business.” (Booklist)

Too many innovations fail to find their place in the world. They never achieve company/category fit. We want to help fix that. This book is more than a book. It’s a mission. The goal is to incite a new global business dialogue about categories. Over years we discovered a connection, based on data science, research and experience between the way markets work, brain science, and the

intuitive approaches used by the most successful entrepreneurial innovators. It's the culmination of our life's work. And it's called category design. Category design is a new, management discipline that increases the odds of winning by teaching business leaders how to build a product, company and category at the same time. - A category designer is anyone who chooses not to compete in an existing market and create their own. - A category designer is anyone who has re-imagined an existing market and made it their own. - A category designer is anyone who has tried to introduce the world to a new way of thinking, living, learning or working.

PlayBigger should be required reading for any "business builder" who dreams, doesn't remember their dreams or just needs to start thinking bigger. While the book is a guide to designing, creating, owning and continually evolving a market category, it is also a manual full of highly motivational and practical life lessons. Full disclosure, I have the personal pleasure of knowing the PlayBigger founders. They have taken their many years of pushing the marketing envelope, combined it with validated market data, leveraged Kevin Maney's great writing talent and created a must read "classic" that allows room for each individual's voice and wisdom to shine. There is a 1981-1983 comedy TV program "The Greatest American Hero" about a guy walking the beach who finds a superhero suit left behind by space aliens. In his excitement, he drops the suit's manual on the beach and now he has to learn the powers of being a super hero alone. How many early stage companies, established businesses, brilliant MBA students and those of us who are veterans of a long list of adventures still keep searching for "The Manual." Start with this book. I admittedly am scared as hell to go down a ski slope at 80 MPH, let alone lean into it. I don't work for SAP, but know many who have and don't any longer (page 26). But, I do know innovation and wisdom. This world desperately needs new ways of thinking, impacting and solving a long list of problems. PlayBigger delivers on a clear road map to category design and points the way for those brave enough to seek to "dent the universe." All of us who are serial entrepreneurs, impassioned change agents, strategic marketing gurus, investors, mentors, voices of written and verbal reason can learn a great deal from the vision and grounded reality shared by the authors.

Play Bigger is highly recommended and a must read book regardless of the industry or field you are in. For people in technology - the industry that the authors have built their reputations in - it is a fascinating view into the process of defining, creating and winning a category. The book is filled with

excellent examples of how category leading firms - from Birdseye Foods to Uber - have created and dominated markets by focusing on category design as well as product and company design. I particularly appreciated two of the chapters - Chapter 5 on the importance of a Point of View and Chapter 10 on how you can play bigger. In the final chapter, the authors connect the concepts of the book to the reader personally and help empower the reader to 'play bigger'. I also greatly appreciated the footnotes and encourage the reader to check each one out - the authors have great insights and a wonderful sense of humor. Play Bigger has a personal connection for me in that I have been on the receiving end of the power of category design. I competed with one of the authors who was at Mercury Interactive. Mercury brilliantly re-defined the software testing market, introduced a compelling point of view (Business Technology Optimization), secured alignment with thought leaders and industry analysts and became the overwhelming category leader leaving all the other firms behind. It happened quickly (within a year) and once it was over it was over. Mercury went on to have a successful acquisition by HP and other firms fell by the wayside. The lesson was painful at the time but was also a front row seat to the power of category design and a fascinating lesson. Proof that much can be learned from failure as well as success. Play Bigger is a great read and the authors have a fascinating point of view. I am confident that Play Bigger will eventually be considered one of the must read books. Enjoy.

This book lays out how technology companies such as Uber, Airbnb and others formulated new categories and created the ecosystem to support them. It is followed by steps you can take to take your next entrepreneurial idea a step further to be different from the rest of the market and position yourself to become a category king. If you are familiar with many of the companies' stories to the top of their industries, it can sometimes feel like a slow read, but the authors are quick to eventually point on the lessons learned which makes revisiting the history worth it in the end. It also composites important business lessons every entrepreneur should know, when pitching their companies to investors and customers.

Great book. Didn't think it would apply to the space my business occupies, but I was hooked and taking notes after the first few pages. It is so much more than another business book and you will learn a lot about the way products and services come to dominate the marketplace. It's an easy read. So even if you're on the consumer side it's extremely interesting. There's a ton more to it, but you can just read the other reviews. I think it applies to any business, investor or customer so go for it.

Entertaining and immensely informative. This book made me think bigger and deeper about my idea by expanding my focus beyond just building a great and valuable product. Grounded in research, the authors posit that truly great and enduring companies must master product design, company design, and category design. The focus of the book is on category design which was a new concept to me. The idea is that, rather than build something that is simply better than the competition in an existing market category, why not build something that is different and solves a specific need in a brand new category? The authors provide plenty of examples of how this concept has helped companies dominate the markets they have created.

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