



# Gonzo Marketing: Winning Through Worst Practices

*By Christopher Locke*

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**Gonzo Marketing: Winning Through Worst Practices** By Christopher Locke

A Harvard Business Review Top-10 Business Book of 2001 Gonzo Marketing is a knuckle-whitening ride to the place where social criticism, biting satire, and serious commerce meet--and where the outdated ideals of mass marketing and broadcast media are being left in the dust. Invoking the spirit of gonzo journalism, Locke rails against business practices that treat customers like cattle, and urges marketers of all stripes to tap into Web-based communities, or "micromarkets," based on candor, trust, passion, and a general disdain for anything that smacks of corporate smugness. Gonzo Marketing shows how companies that support and promote these communities can have everything they've always wanted: greater market share, customer loyalty, and brand equity. Laced with Locke's inimitable wit and penetrating point of view, Gonzo Marketing is the raucous wake-up call that no one in business--from the trading-room floor to the boardroom--can afford to ignore.

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## **Gonzo Marketing: Winning Through Worst Practices** By Christopher Locke Bibliography

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Amazon.com Review**

The coauthor of the no-more-business-as-usual blockbuster *The Cluetrain Manifesto*--which basically told Net-age marketers to stop talking *at* their markets and start conversing *with* them--follows up with a book that's more a highly entertaining, nimbly erudite screed against our current mass-market, mass-media culture than it is a recipe book for e-commerce marketing success in the post-cyberboom era. Writing in a paler imitation of the profanely irreverent, freely associative "gonzo" journalism style pioneered by his obvious idol Hunter S. Thompson, Locke starts with the by-now-familiar idea that old-style mass-marketing "broadcast" advertising just won't work on the Web. Indeed, he says, conventional print-ad tactics as embodied online by banners and pop-ups might actually generate more ill will than sales, and that's why companies must use the Web to somehow enjoin their products and services to the quirky niche interests of the gazillion individual cybercommunities (or "micromarkets") whose greatest advantage for marketers is how freely and speedily their members talk among themselves, touting a brand when and if it's truly deserved.

Useful examples of such enjoinder don't appear until a slim, penultimate chapter, and they are mostly theoretical in nature, e.g., what if Ford, after giving its employees worldwide free home computers and Net access (which it did), got all of them who were into organic gardening to infiltrate organic-gardening Web communities to push (via the subtle art of persuasion, one supposes) the niftiness of Ford pickups for organic gardeners? Truth be told, Locke seems more like a social critic or humanist at heart than a marketing consultant, and his essential disdain for corporations (which are anti-human, he declares, despite all their philanthropic tootle) leaves the reader wondering whether he really wants e-commerce to effectively pervade the Web's truly democratic, populist microcommunities for its own purposes. As his wonderfully cranky cult Web zine, *Entropy Gradient Reversals*, and his alter ego therein, RageBoy, have proven, the man's a smart, witty, broadly read cyberpundit. In *Gonzo Marketing*, he tweaks everyone from Disney, Time Warner AOL, and IBM to fellow biz-book writers like Seth Godin (*Permission Marketing*), and if you read it first for its own eclectic, acerbic delights and second for a postboom e-marketing primer, you'll be rightly pleased. --  
*Timothy Murphy*

### **From Publishers Weekly**

This latest offering from the coauthor of last year's *The Cluetrain Manifesto* puts a new spin on the age-old approach to marketing, which says businesses need to establish common ground with potential customers before they begin to try to sell anything. "At its heart, gonzo is animated by an attitude of deeply principled anti-professionalism in the best sense," says Locke, who purports to offer a new business template and a futuristic view of the marketplace. Although this work suffers from frequent dead-end tangents, hopeless self-indulgence and endless references to Locke's last book and his former coauthors, it does have a few shining moments. His theories are intriguing; in Locke's world, for example, employees of Ford Motor Co. who like organic gardening would be given space on the Ford Web site to communicate with other organic gardeners, thus reaching people who eventually could become Ford's customers, thanks to their online relationship with the gardening Ford employee. To his credit, Locke's nine maxims ("best practices usually aren't"; "storytelling is the path" to marketing success, etc.) do make sense, and his avoidance of Internet advertising and embrace of community involvement are refreshing. (Nov.) Forecast: Perseus will have to do a little gonzo marketing of its own to help this title break out of the saturated new business category.

From Library Journal

Providing a lively reading experience through anecdotes and humor, Locke (coauthor, *The Cluetrain Manifesto*) here introduces Gonzo marketing, which he describes in terms of effective marketing strategies utilized by companies doing business on the web. According to the author, Gonzo marketing "provides a model whereby companies can stop manipulating people as if they were abstract demographic data, and instead create genuine relationships with emergent online communities of interest: powerful new web micromarkets." For instance, Amazon.com was innovative in creating "a marketplace where customers, not advertisers and marketers, could assess the value of products." In addition to describing Gonzo marketing, Locke provides specific examples and presents guidelines for its implementation. Bibliographical references to books, articles, and web sites are included. Libraries purchasing this book should make sure to have *The Cluetrain Manifesto* on hand, since it is frequently referenced here. This highly innovative work should inspire discussion in the business world and classroom alike. Recommended for marketing collections in both public and academic libraries. Lucy Heckman, St. John's Univ. Lib., Jamaica, NY  
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