

Gonzo Marketing:

Winning Through Worst Practices

Reviewed by Wendy Soucie, Sortis Marketing

A client of mine from a software development firm, recently mentioned this book during a meeting about branding and marketing. At first I thought he was joking with me based on the title. Why would such a book even be on the radar of this man – a Danish software programmer and founder of a business? How helpful can a book with the title *Gonzo Marketing: Winning Through Worst Practices* be?

So I searched out the book by author Christopher Locke and was so intrigued by the reviews and other information posted online, I purchased both *Gonzo Marketing* and *Cluetrain Manifesto* (Locke's first book which defines his beliefs on micromarkets – individuals – and how they should be served). Although *Gonzo Marketing* was first published in 2001, it is still valid, if not moreso now, as evidenced by the success of social marketing networks in a variety of forms.

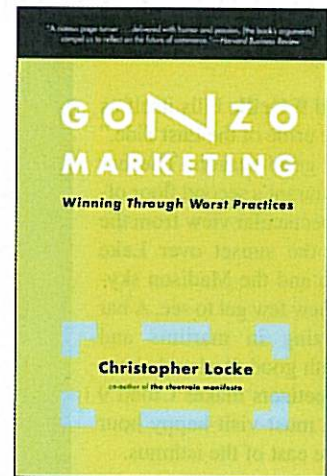
In a nutshell, I found Locke to be an Internet philosopher, an online marketing guru with a very real perspective on what the Internet has enabled us (consumers) to do and say when it comes to products and services we need and want. As Locke defines it, gonzo marketing "is marketing from the market's perspective. It is not a set of tricks to be used against us. Instead, it's set of tools to achieve what we want for a change." Not everyone agrees with his take on the Internet and marketing, but frankly, Locke doesn't care.

The book makes a case for tapping into the pulse of micromarkets to stay in touch with them. But manufacturers, service providers and business in general need to change. Businesses will need to find unique ways to tie a strong social marketing component in their marketing planning. Even today, there are companies that just gather and monitor information of this kind. (Here in Madison, Networked Insights, www.networkedinsights.com, is such a company.)

The global marketplace has slowly become fragmented over the past 10 to 15 years, and the Internet has fueled the rapid growth of micromarkets. Locke, who was in marketing for several global concerns, explains that early on, this fragmentation affected just the largest companies operating, but now companies of all sizes are in the mix. The Internet has allowed the consumer to search when and where they want to. It has given micromarkets a voice through blogs, forums, message boards and Web sites. On a daily basis, micromarkets say what they think about their daily lives and what changes they want to see in the world.

The message in *Gonzo Marketing* is really that markets now are conversations. No one wants to be sold to. They want to have conversations with others who enjoy the same passions and interests. They want to gather word-of-mouth referrals back and forth across the Internet ocean. Then, by linking to information, they can research before making a purchasing decision. People believe others like themselves. If we as marketers wish to participate in this conversation, we need to change our thinking and approach.

The book presents a great example of how this works. In 2000, Ford Motor Company gave each of its 350,000 employees a computer and Internet access. They turned these 350,000 ambassadors loose on the Internet and encouraged them to listen to what was being said. Then they encouraged them to engage and talk on subjects they were interested in. Could it happen that on one of the Web sites, perhaps discussing organic gardening, that people would talk about the benefits of having a truck to haul rich manure to your garden? Might someone mention that a Ford F150 has served them well? You can see the implications when some Web sites and blogs are getting hundreds of thousands of visitors



each day. Think about Amazon.com and the review feature they offer for books. Anyone can submit and review; and everyone can read the good and the bad, making the decision to purchase or not based on this info.

Not everything in this book is so clear and straightforward, however. As I mentioned, Locke is an Internet philosopher (slightly wacky, too!) and definitely gets off on a few rants within this book. Philosophy never was my best subject, so trying to make the leaps between concepts in a few places made me just want to leap pages, which I gratefully did. But this book did get me excited about different ideas and ways to approach several clients and markets.

I happily give this book a thumbs-up as a great read for anyone trying to understand Internet marketing and why it should be in your marketing mix. ■



Wendy Soucie is director of business development and a senior strategist at Sortis, LLC, a branding, marketing and Internet development firm in Madison.

>> **Gonzo Marketing:**
Winning through Worst Practices

By Christopher Locke
ISBN-13: 9780738207698
Format: Paperback, 256 pages
(also available in hardcover)
Publisher: Perseus Publishing, 2001
ISBN: 0738204080