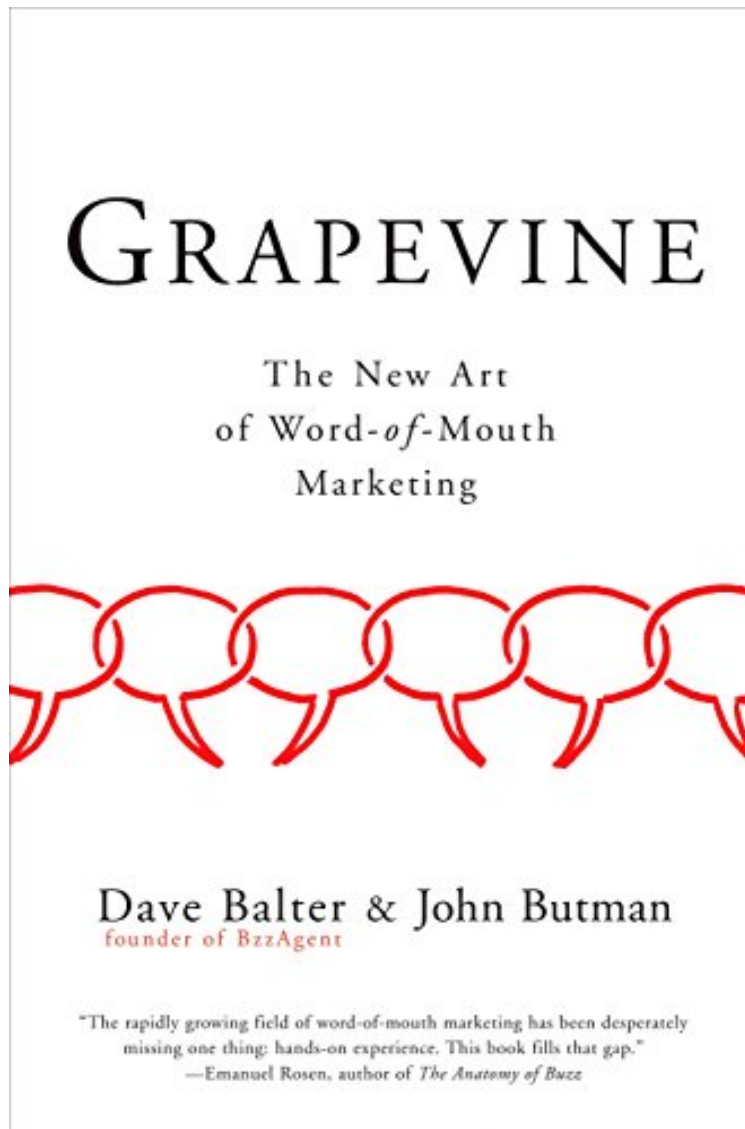


Grapevine: Why Buzz Was a Fad but Word of Mouth Is Forever

Dave Balter

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Dave Balter : Grapevine: Why Buzz Was a Fad but Word of Mouth Is Forever before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Grapevine: Why Buzz Was a Fad but Word of Mouth Is Forever:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Consumer evangelism how-toBy Ilya GrigorikGrapevine is centered around the idea that people are naturally inclined to talk about products. David Balter stresses importance of word-of-mouth, and even more importantly, the role of every consumer in this process. He tip-toes around the idea of empowering consumers and offers some great advice from experience.However, I don't think it's the inclination to talk about a product as much as it is about 'social currency'. Mark Hughes, in his book 'Buzzmarketing' nailed this concept.

It's not about the product, it's not even about your company, it's about the consumer and what you give him/her through your marketing. People like being listened to, to be on the 'inside', to have the scoop, this gives them 'social currency' - it makes them more interesting. In many ways, this is what Grapevine communication is all about, even if David Balter never put it that way. The book touches on a number of interesting aspects: value of transparency, consumer evangelism, word-of-mouth as storytelling, and even the power of blogs. It's an easy read with some interesting insights; overall, a worthwhile investment. 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. In a word, egoBy Brass in her Pocket This book is simply an ego boost for the author. I found absolutely nothing I could use in my own business, but was vaguely impressed with the writers "word of mouth" business. I kept reading, expecting to find the secrets to starting my own word of mouth campaign any minute, only to feel that final book readers frustration in the end. No good ending, no secrets revealed, this book is a waste of time. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A blurring of the lines By The Marketing Guy Who Drives Sales -r In this book Dave Balter talks primarily about his BzzAgent word-of-mouth agency experiences and details how the agency conducts campaigns for clients. He generously peppers the text with actual feedback he's gotten from his "BzzAgents" on numerous campaigns with which they've been involved. We get some insights as to how his agency helps these "agents" form their opinions and how they are provided a framework and context within which they are to create a story to tell others about the products they are helping to promote on behalf of his agency's clients. As such, the book is interesting in that Balter talks about how to shape first-generation opinions about products and how to track the way those get transmitted to second-generation receivers and how they then pass the word along. By asking these agents to provide written reports about how they engage in word-of-mouth marketing, Balter has gained some genuine insights about consumer behavior and how and when people are motivated to talk about brands with which they connect. There is some real value in this book. It is actually a pleasant, interesting and engaging read. But there is a fine line between genuine organic word-of-mouth marketing, fertilized word-of-mouth, marketing and just plain shilling. The author chooses to see his methods as fully transparent and ethical (although he admits it did not start out that way) but many others will see it differently. If agents are given free products to try before they are widely available and if their opinions are "shaped" by such an agency then one must wonder if there is an expectation that they talk favorably about these brands and how transparent the process actually is in reality as they go about talking about client brands in their day-to-day lives. While the author stresses the need for his agents to be completely open about their involvement it doesn't quite seem reasonable to accept that they start each conversation by stating, "I'm a BzzAgent and I've volunteered to talk about this brand in exchange for some free stuff and I'd like to tell you...". I just don't see it unfolding that way in real life despite what the author chooses to believe. Buying an army of people to generally speak positively about client brands is not exactly what I consider to be good marketing or solid, long-term brand building. If you are into creating manufactured or fertilized buzz that is anything but objective then you might take a deep interest in this book. If you are a marketer seeking ways to create strong brands that generate organic, positive word-of-mouth in their own right then you will feel a little dirty after reading this book. -Review by the author of the e-book, "How to Build and Manage Your Brand (in sickness and in health)."

Word of mouth is an amazingly powerful force —; but how does it really work?. Businesses have become obsessed with stimulating word-of-mouth to counteract the declining effectiveness of advertising. But it's easier said than done. As the founder of BzzAgent, a community of more than 400,000 people who volunteer to talk to friends and acquaintances about products they genuinely love, Dave Balter is a successful practitioner, not a theorist. And he's figured out how to measure and harness word-of-mouth without corrupting it. In Grapevine, Balter shows why honest feedback —; about books, restaurants, gadgets, or anything else —; is more believable than any paid endorser. And he answers some of the most elusive questions in marketing, such as what makes word-of-mouth very different from —; buzz —; and —; viral marketing. —;

From Publishers Weekly Like most other marketing books, this intriguing but unconvincing volume dwells on botched ad campaigns, implying that those campaigns would have triumphed if only the advertiser had sought the authors' advice. In this case, all the reviled efforts overlooked "the most powerful marketing force in the world": word-of-mouth. "Everybody talks to everybody else about products every day," writes Balter, founder of three-year-old BzzAgent Inc., which enlists earnest volunteers to spread the gospel about products that the firm is hired to promote. Balter argues that the fact that BzzAgents actually tell people, "I'm a BzzAgent, and I'm pushing this product" aids the credibility of both the products and their advocates, with the result that Bzz campaigns succeed where shill campaigns (which employ paid actors) backfire. That may be true, but this volume doesn't adequately make the case that sincerity and product samples constitute a marketing revolution: the book's slapdash, "admittedly nonscientific" analysis is backed by little more than enthusiasm, quotes from *The Tipping Point* and three years of BzzAgent anecdotes. Balter's gee-whizz, narcissistic writing voice won't help win converts, either. (Though Butman is a coauthor, Balter narrates the book in the first person.) While it aspires to reorient current thinking on consumerism and social interaction, it's clear that this book's true purpose is to serve as a 210-page BzzAgent ad. (Nov.) Copyright copy; Reed Business

Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Why is it that normally talented, even cutting-edge innovators feel compelled to exhibit logorrhea when pen is poised over paper? Such is the case with Balter, who, with the aid of writer Butman, crystallizes his practice of word-of-mouth marketing. The concept is unique and differentiated from buzz by its credibility, its emphasis on genuine storytelling, and its theme: "not 100% goodness 100% of the time." There's research (and bottom-line sales results) that proves his points about the benefits of "one big cocktail party." But he spoils the effect by, in Seth Godin-esque fashion, choosing to insert a fictional account of Bardo, the perfect target customer; SparklyPerfect, a new product; and Annie, the designated marketer. First, a straight-out-of-fantasyland narrative goes against the honesty-is-our-policy foundation of word-of-mouth marketing. Second, real-life case histories--as with Apple iPod and its battery and the Coke C2 debacle--drive home the premise far better than any novel; real experiences and real perceptions make the product sing. Barbara Jacobs Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved. "The rapidly growing field of word-of-mouth marketing has been desperately missing one thing: hands-on experience. This book fills that gap." Emanuel Rosen, author of *The Anatomy of Buzz* "Hooray for Dave Balter's Grapevine. Dave knows exactly of what he speaks, and has the numbers to prove it. This is indeed a must read." Tom Peters "Every once in a while, a book comes along that changes everything. Dave Balter clearly and persuasively makes his case for a whole new way to think about how your ideas spread." Seth Godin, author of *Purple Cow*