

This Is Marketing: You Can't Be Seen Until You Learn to See by Seth Godin

Book Highlights by Coach Erin Brimmer

Chapter Eleven – Status, Dominance, and Affiliation

- Consider the penguins in the Galápagos. They spend about two hours a day fishing, and the rest of the time organizing themselves into a pecking order. There's an enormous amount of social grooming, of bumping, of social positioning. And it's not just my dog and the penguins, of course. It's us, as well.
- If you look closely at decisions that don't initially make sense, you'll likely see status roles at work.
- Status roles determine who gets to eat first in the lion pack, and who gets to drink first at the oasis. In human culture, status roles are everywhere that more than one human is present.
- Status is our position in the hierarchy. It's also our perception of that position. Status protects us. Status helps us get what we want. Status gives us the leverage to make change happen. Status is a place to hide. Status can be a gift or a burden. Status creates a narrative that changes our perceived options, alters our choices, and undermines (or supports) our future. And the desire to change our status, or to protect it, drives almost everything we do.
- In the case of the Maasai, the cultural goals are to bind the community to each other, to create feelings of empowerment and possibility, to inculcate bravery and patience, and to have a significant rite of passage. To raise the status of the boy as he becomes a man. None of these goals are directly related to killing a lion. That was simply a historical artifact.
- Instead of demonstrating bravery and patience by killing a lion, the young members of the culture now demonstrate those skills by saving one.
- Now, the Maasai find and name lions, track them, and use radio telemetry to perform a census. Protecting a lion has become as much of a rite of passage as killing one used to be.
- When the marketer shows up with her new idea, her opportunity, the offer to make change happen—every time, it's a challenge to our status. We have the choice to accept (and move up or down, depending on the story we tell ourselves) or to turn down the offer and live with the tension of walking away.
- The smart marketer begins to realize that some people are open and hungry for a shift in status (up or down), while others will fight like crazy to maintain their roles.
- In the last few decades, we've gotten lazier in our nuance of awarding status, preferring it to be related to either the dollars in a bank account or the number of followers online. But status continues to take many forms.
- Six things about status
 1. Status is always relative.
 2. Status is in the eyes of the beholder.
 3. Status attended to is the status that matters.
 4. Status has inertia.
 5. Status is learned.
 6. Shame is the status killer.
- When you bring your work to the market, nothing is considered before status roles.
- When we bring status into our marketing, we are walking on very thin ice. We don't know if the person we're engaging with appears to have high status (and doesn't believe it) or actually believes and wants to increase his standing.
- Consider, for those you seek to serve, their external status (how they are seen by their chosen community) and their internal status (who they see when they look in the mirror). Next, work through how they maintain or seek to change that status. Do they belittle others? Seek approval? Help in selfless ways? Drive themselves to achieve more? What sort of wins and losses do they track?

- In many interactions, people seek to change their relative status—either to adjust themselves up in comparison to their peers, or to seek safety by giving up and moving down.
 1. In quadrant 1, we see the philanthropist, the committed teacher, and the social justice proponent.
 2. In quadrant 2, we see similar behavior for a different reason. This is the person who not only lets other people ahead in line but doesn't even bother to try out for a role, because others are more deserving.
 3. Quadrant 3 is the antisocial character who presents a noxious, infantile narcissism to the world.
 4. Quadrant 4 is the hard-charging selfish person who desperately wants to win every engagement, and who is willing to do it with a combination of creating value and tearing down the competition.
- We each have our own narratives. The noise in our head, the worldview that is unique to us, the history and beliefs and perceptions that shape who we are and what we choose. And
- Sonder is the generous act of accepting that others don't want, believe, or know what we do—and have a similar noise in their heads. But in order to bring our change to the world, we need to make some assumptions about what others believe. We can't hear the noise in their heads, but we can watch what they do and make some guesses.
- Tom Hanks cares about affiliation. Don Corleone measured domination instead.
- Affiliation:
 - Who knows you? Who trusts you? Have you made things better? What is your circle like? Where do you stand within the tribe? Can't we all get along?
- Dominion:
 - This is mine, not yours.
 - Who has more power? I did this myself. My family needs more of what we already have. My side dominating your side means I don't have to be in charge, as long as my leader is winning.
 - The people you're seeking to serve in this moment: What are they measuring? If you want to market to someone who measures dominion or affiliation, you'll need to be aware of what's being measured and why.
- The alternative to Dominion is Affiliation
 - This is the status that comes from the community. It is the status of respect in return for contribution, for caring, for seeing and being in sync with others. Especially others with no ability to repay you.
 - Modern society, urban society, the society of the internet, the arts, and innovation are all built primarily on affiliation, not dominion. **NOTE:** *Is this true? People can show up with a veneer of affiliation, but sometimes the energy can feel like "I'm better than you" dominion.*
 - The leader provides a valuable signal, a notice to expect that everyone else will be in sync. The goal isn't winning; it's being part of the group.
- Sending Dominance Signals
 - There are some customers, partners, and employees who will respond best to a narrative of winning and losing.
- Sending Affiliation Signals
 - Affiliation isn't as focused on scarcity as dominion is, because affiliation admires the network effect. More affiliation leads to affiliation for everyone involved. Abundance is welcome.
 - The affiliated marketer seeking leverage works to prime the pump by sending the right signals to the right people, in search of a cascade.
- Dominion is a vertical experience, above or below. Affiliation is a horizontal one: Who's standing next to me?
- Affiliation or dominance is up to the customer, not you.

- Do you see the world in terms of winners and losers? Up and down? Or is it more about insiders and outsiders, being in sync, being part of a movement?

Chapter Twelve – A Better Business Plan

- Where are you going? What's holding you back?
- If I want the truth about a business and where it's going, I'd rather see a more useful document. I'd divide the modern business plan into five sections: Truth Assertions Alternatives People Money
- The truth section describes the world as it is.
- The point of this section is to be sure that you're clear about how you see the world, and that you and I agree on your assumptions. This section isn't partisan—it takes no positions; it just states how things are.
- The assertions section is your chance to describe how you're going to change things.
- You're serving a specific market. You're expecting something to happen because of your arrival. What?
- The only reason to launch a project is to make change, to make things better, and we want to know what you're going to do and what impact it's going to have.
- You will make assertions that won't pan out. You'll miss budgets and deadlines and sales. So, the alternatives section tells me what you'll do if that happens. How much flexibility does your product or team have? If your assertions don't pan out, is it over?
- The people section rightly highlights the key element: Who is on your team, and who is going to join your team. "Who" doesn't mean their resumes; it means their attitudes and abilities
- Who are the people you're serving? Who are the champions? What do they believe about status? What worldview do they have?
- Money. How much you need, how you will spend it, what cash flow looks like, profit and loss, balance sheets, margins, and exit strategies.
- The purpose of our culture isn't to enable capitalism, even capitalism that pays your bills. The purpose of capitalism is to build our culture. **NOTE: YES!!! 100%**
- Once you adopt a posture of service, of engaging with the culture to make change, the shift happens.
- A better business plan takes that universal need and makes it specific — describing who and what it's for. It outlines the tension you seek to create, the status roles you're engaging with, and the story you're bringing that will make change happen.

Chapter Thirteen – Semiotics, Symbols, and Vernacular

- We communicate with symbols.
- Busy people (you know, the kind of people you seek to change) don't care about your work as much as you do.
- We scan instead of study.
- This means that the logo you use, the stories you tell, and the appearance of your work all matter.
- We don't care about you, or how hard you worked on it. We want to know if it's for us, and if you're the real deal. This is semiotics.
- If you remind me of a scam, it will take a long time to undo that initial impression. That's precisely why so many logos of big companies look the same. It's not laziness. The designers are trying to remind you of a solid company. That's the work of "reminds me of." You can do it with intent.
- What a professional does for you is design something that other people will like. They create a look and feel that reminds people of their sort of magic.
- It's important to remember that it doesn't matter what you, the marketer who created it, is reminded of.

- And it's even more important to remember that there's no one right answer.
- Flags of status are everywhere we look.
- Once a symbol becomes well known (like the tiny details on an Hermès handbag) it's quickly copied, manipulated, and spread, until it ceases to be scarce and then becomes merely a signal of changing taste. What's your flag? Why would someone fly it?
- It's worth restating that the smallest viable market gives you the freedom to pick those you seek to serve. And those people are seeking a certain symbol.
- Send a signal that feels like a sign we already trust, then change it enough to let us know that it's new, and that it's yours.
- It took thirty years for the idea to spread from the million to everyone, thirty years to build hundreds of billions of dollars of market cap. But it happened because of the brilliant use of semiotics, not technology. At every turn, Apple sent signals, and they sent them in just edgy enough words, fonts, and design that the right people heard the message.
- We're judging everything, and people are judging us in return. Often, those judgments are biased, incorrect, and inefficient. But denying them doesn't make them disappear.
- The people you are seeking to serve are trying to figure out who you are. If you're going to show up in their world, make it easy for them to know who you are and where you stand.
- What's your brand? Hint: it's not your logo.
 - A brand is a shorthand for the customer's expectations. What promise do they think you're making? What do they expect when they buy from you or meet with you or hire you? That promise is your brand.
- If you have true fans, the only reason you do is because this group has engaged with you in a way that signals that they expect something worthwhile from you next time. That expectation isn't specific; it's emotional.
- A commodity, on the other hand, has no brand.
- If people care, you've got a brand. **NOTE:** *Love this!*
- If a brand is our mental shorthand for the promise that you make, then a logo is the Post-it reminder of that promise. Without a brand, a logo is meaningless.
- No, you shouldn't choose a logo that offends or distracts people. Yes, you should pick a logo that works in different sizes in different media. But mostly . . . pick a logo, don't spend a ton of money or have a lot of meetings about it, and keep it for as long as you keep your first name.