



## Likeable Social Media

### How to Delight Your Customers, Create an Irresistible Brand, and Be Generally Amazing on Facebook (and Other Social Networks)

#### THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

The secret to successful word-of-mouth marketing on the social Web is easy: Be likeable.

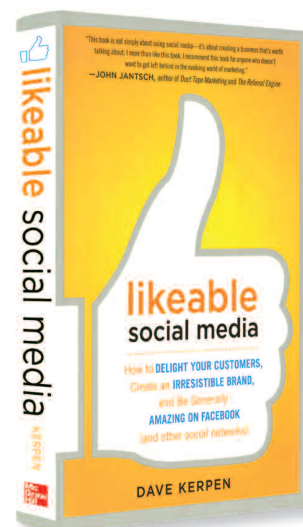
A friend's recommendation is more powerful than any advertisement. In the world of Facebook, Twitter and beyond, that recommendation can travel farther — and faster — than ever before.

*Likeable Social Media* helps you harness the power of word-of-mouth marketing to transform your business. Listen to your customers and prospects. Deliver value, excitement and surprise. And, most important, learn how to truly engage your customers and help them spread the word.

As co-founder and CEO of Likeable Media, author Dave Kerpen shares secrets from his company's work with thousands of top-level clients to give your organization the best method to be noticed and *liked* by your customers.

#### IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Why your priority with social media is to listen first and never stop listening.
- How to think and act like your consumer.
- How to develop your social media value proposition and get the *like*.
- Why you should invite your customers to be your first fans.
- How to create true dialogue with and between your customers.
- The best methods to positively respond to bad comments and criticism.
- How to make social media a part of every customer's experience with your company.



by Dave Kerpen

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# THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: LIKEABLE SOCIAL MEDIA

by Dave Kerpen

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For additional information on the author, go to [www.summary.com](http://www.summary.com).

## Introduction

The social media revolution has given consumers around the world the most powerful voice they've ever had. It's also forced companies to think about how they can be more transparent and responsive. Social media, along with a global recession, has led companies organizations and governments to figure out how to accomplish more with less money — to get their messages out there and talked about without spending as many dollars on declining media like television, radio and print.

Facebook's Like button, introduced in April 2010, has already been added by more than 2 million distinct websites. The Like button allows Facebook's more than 600 million users, with one click, to express approval of companies, organizations, articles or ideas. The Like button gets more than 1 billion clicks per day.

Yet, as astounding as these numbers are, it's the new personalization of the Web that matters most in the social media revolution, both to companies and consumers. It's Facebook's ability to show you exactly what your friends and friends of friends *like* that makes the *like* function such a powerful tool. ●

## Listen First and Never Stop Listening

You have a front seat to spontaneous chatter of interest to your business. You have the ability to check in on prospective customers discussing problems your company solves or listen to existing customers talk about unrelated issues just to get to know them better. Checking in on your vendors, partners or even your competitors' customers has never been easier. The amount of data you can gather and the number of conversations you can

tap into through social media is nothing short of mind-boggling.

## The Cost of Not Listening

At best, by not listening, you're not leveraging potential opportunities for growth, damage control or both. At worst, you're causing your customers and prospects to turn to your competitors, those who are listening and will respond to customer needs. You're also allowing your brand reputation to be significantly hurt because by the time you get around to learning what people are saying, it's too late to respond efficiently and make necessary changes to keep your company growing. Even if you're in a highly regulated industry and you're unable to fully join the conversation, it simply doesn't make sense not to leverage the resources available to find out what your customers and prospects are saying and to use that information to create better products, services and processes.

## How Well Do You Know Your Target Audience?

The last few decades have brought numerous improvements in marketing intelligence and research. But until you had the ability to target specific groups of people as you can today, you may have had no need to identify your target audience so narrowly. For example, you might know your audience loves playing sports, but perhaps they prefer one sport to another. Or maybe young women love your product, but you didn't know that 21- and 22-year-olds are far more likely to buy it than 23- and 24-year-olds until you did the appropriate Facebook or Twitter searches. Now that you can target so precisely, you can always survey and research to learn exactly who the audience for your product and service actually is.



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While some businesses have narrower and more well-defined target audiences than others, you can always refine the notion of who is part of your ideal audience. You will likely find that there is more than one group of people looking for your goods or services. Huge, global brands, for example, have certain categories of customers that are more common than others. Perhaps female lawyers spend more on your product than stay-at-home moms, for instance. If you don't know specifics, you can always ask: If you have 1,000 Facebook fans, ask what their favorite sport is. If you find out that 9 out of 10 of them prefer baseball, you might consider sponsoring a local Little League team. Social media will help you find your target audience and provide you with further insight about this group or groups. ●

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### Think — and Act — Like Your Consumer

Advertisements and marketing ploys are found just about everywhere we go. Nowhere is safe from ads! And while some ads are funny, interesting and even compelling — if you consider the consumer's viewpoint, you'll agree that most are simply disruptive and unwanted.

So what's a marketer to do? How can you possibly avoid joining the endless parade of marketing and advertising disruptions in the quest to find your consumers?

All you have to do is stop thinking like a marketer and start thinking like your consumer.

#### Rule of Thumb: What Do Your Customers Really Want?

With every Facebook message you send out, with every tweet you post, even with every e-mail or radio and television advertisement you write, ask yourself the following:

- Will the recipients of this message truly find it of value, or will they find it annoying and disruptive?
- Would I want to receive this message as a consumer?

If you respond that yes, *as a consumer*, this message is of value and you would indeed want to receive it, then it is worth communicating to your customers and the world. On the other hand, if you cannot see any *true* value to the consumer or you believe the message will only be an annoyance, then it's simply not worth sending. Why spend money, time and effort only to contribute to mass advertising, marketing and information noise that the consumer does not want or need in the first place?

#### What Do Your Consumers Like?

The important question is, what do your consumers truly like? Consider what they care about. What do they value? What content will get them to authentically click Like and increase your visibility among users? Keep in mind that you can't just keep sharing updates asking people to like the content, as that would quickly get as annoying and disruptive as many of the traditional marketing tactics you've grown to know and hate.

For the answers, look to what you already know about your consumers and if you don't know something, ask!

For instance, say you have a male-focused customer base. You suspect these consumers are big sports fans, but you're not sure what sports or teams they are most interested in. You could simply ask on Facebook, "What's your favorite major sporting event of the year? Who did you root for this past season?" If your fans overwhelmingly say the Super Bowl and provide their favorite football teams, you'll want to share content about the sport in the future, even if your product has nothing to do with football.

If *you* were your consumer, what would make *you* click Like or leave a comment? An appetizing photo? A funny video? A fact nobody knew about you? One thing users are sure *not* to respond to positively is a press release about your latest earnings statement, new hire or new product. There may be an audience who cares enough about this information to warrant sharing it elsewhere, but that audience is not the group to target on Facebook. The Facebook audience doesn't care. Facebook, Twitter and all social networks are not broadcast media. This can't be stressed enough. Engage, don't broadcast! ●

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### Invite Your Customers to Be Your First Fans

Ten years ago, if you built a website for your company, you didn't expect thousands of strangers to just visit it, did you? Instead you used other marketing initiatives and assets to direct people to your website and spread the URL or link wherever you could. Sometimes people checked it out and, if they were interested in your content and trusted you enough, maybe they even stayed awhile or purchased your products and services. Or, if other related companies found your content useful, it was possible they linked their website to yours in exchange for you linking back to them. This linking takes place in the hope of creating more "link value,"

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greater search engine optimization and more website traffic. Today, the *like* is more important than the “link.” Getting people to your website may help them learn about your company and maybe even get them to buy something, but getting them to *like* you on Facebook does two essential things that will contribute to long-term success.

First, when people use the like function, they subscribe to your updates, allowing you to have a conversation with them on Facebook forever, unless you erode their trust and they unsubscribe. Second, it introduces and endorses you to every one of the user’s friends. The average person on Facebook has 130 friends, so with every like, you’re exposing your brand to another 130 potential customers or more.

Simply put, the more *likes* content receives, the more often it will be viewed, and the number of people seeing and accessing the content will grow over time. There are long-lasting effects of the *like* in Facebook search optimization: once you acquire a *like* on your page, any of that person’s friends will see this during future searches. So if you’re an attorney and one of your clients has *liked* you on Facebook, any time one of his or her friends searches for an attorney in the future and finds you, your client’s testimonial (“Your friend John *likes* Bob the attorney”) will be right there waiting.

### How to Get the *Like*: Develop Your Value Proposition

Before you started reading this summary, you may have already understood the capabilities and importance of Facebook’s like function. The question you might have now, however, is how do you get people to actually like you on Facebook? No matter how well-known your brand is, you’ll need to provide a value proposition to your customers, staff, vendors and partners; some sort of benefit they will receive from becoming your fans. In other words, don’t just tell them to *like* you, tell them what’s in it for them and tell them in a way that’s about them, not you.

By giving people a value proposition for joining you and then surrounding your customers with that value proposition at every opportunity, you’ll convert customers into fans, and that’s where things begin to get interesting.

Why should people *like* you on Facebook or follow you on Twitter? What’s in it for them that’s of value? How can you summarize that in a short, easy-to-understand call to action? The answer is, it depends on your business or organization. Here are several real calls to action from clients to help you think about why people should *like* you:

### Where Should You Tell Customers to *Like* You?

Here are a number of places to consider integrating the call to action to your customers:

1. On your website
2. On every e-mail you send out as a company
3. On every staff person’s e-mail signature
4. On every business card handed out
5. On every brochure you print
6. On every receipt you hand out
7. On every piece of “snail mail” you send out
8. On every inbound phone call to your company
9. On every outbound phone call from your company
10. On packaging
11. On in-location signage

- Share your feedback with us at [Facebook.com/VerizonFiOS](https://www.facebook.com/VerizonFiOS)
- Win prizes and join the conversation at [Facebook.com/1800Flowers](https://www.facebook.com/1800Flowers)
- Free support quitting smoking at [Facebook.com/NYCquits](https://www.facebook.com/NYCquits)
- Connect with other moms like you at [Facebook.com/striderite](https://www.facebook.com/striderite)

It’s not about you, it’s about your customers, and just like the Web quickly became too big to tell people to visit your website without telling them why, Facebook is too big to tell people to *like* you without telling them why. It’s essential to develop that value proposition and then integrate it into your communications with customers and prospects. ●

### Engage: Create True Dialogue with and Between Your Customers

So what does “being engaged” really mean?

To be engaged means to be genuinely interested in what your customers have to say. You have to want, even crave, feedback of all kinds because you know it gives you important data to build a better organization. Each individual at your company has to provide his or her full attention, mind and energy with the customer or task at hand while maintaining the mission and core val-

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ues of the organization. Anyone can send out an e-mail or Facebook or Twitter message, but it takes commitment and focus to actually connect with people.

### Customers Solving Customer Service Issues

One example of the benefits of building an engaged community is that customers will help one another out. If you create a place on Facebook or Twitter for people to ask questions, share feedback and interact with not only you but one another, you will engender trust and loyalty and help the community grow. Customers or prospects will take notice and appreciate when you answer questions on a timely basis and in an authentic way.

If you provide a place for consumers to connect, gripe, share information, learn and grow, people will realize you are committed to them and the community you are fostering, and they will return that commitment to you. So when someone unfamiliar with your company comes to the community, a potentially huge new prospect, and posts a question, another member of the community might answer the prospect's question before you have time to. ●

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### Respond Quickly to All Bad Comments

There are still plenty of companies that refuse to accept the fact that people are talking negatively about them. But the truth is, there's no way to entirely stop people from making negative posts about your company, whether you have an official Facebook page or not. So, why not prepare yourself and, instead of avoiding it, embrace negative feedback, comments and criticism? This idea might sound like a radical and potentially damaging one — take a deep breath and brace yourself.

#### The Do-Not-Delete Rule

The do-not-delete rule states that unless a comment is obscene, profane, bigoted, or contains someone's personal and private information, never delete it from a social network.

Is it really worth taking the risk? The point is, when you delete someone's comment, it is the ultimate "Screw you." It's like collecting someone's comment card, reading it in front of them and then ripping it up in his or her face. You wouldn't do that, would you? Plus, the Internet is infinite. Anyone who feels wronged or not heard can turn elsewhere to gripe, finding more energy (and maybe more sympathizers) to vent than he or she had before.

### Not Responding at All is a Response

The second gut reaction of some executives after wanting to delete the negative comment is to ignore it. If deleting a comment is the equivalent of ripping up a comment card in someone's face, ignoring a negative comment is the equivalent of putting a caller on hold and never getting back on the line. No, it's not as bad as hanging up, but he or she will still get the impression that you don't care. You don't want to make matters worse so what's a company to do?

By responding quickly and publicly, you not only respond to someone's complaint or concern, but you also send the message to the world at large that you're the kind of company that listens to its customers and fixes problems promptly. By taking an individual matter private, you avoid a public back-and-forth between company and customer, which doesn't help anyone involved and only prolongs the negative situation. Refer to people by name, too, when you're apologizing; it goes a long way toward helping someone feel heard and understood. ●

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### Respond to the Good Comments, Too

You likely embrace your happiest customers — they remind you of what you're doing well and what your organization is all about. They're also the best unplanned part of your marketing agenda. Word-of-mouth endorsements and conversation from satisfied customers remains the most potentially powerful marketing tool you have.

Yet each day, millions of positive comments to and about brands on social networks go unnoticed or are given no response. Visit the Facebook pages of most big organizations and you'll find people sharing stories, asking questions, and praising products or services — almost always without a response. Do companies not have enough resources to address these posts? Are they too focused on maintaining a defensive posture in regard to all of the negative comments and therefore decide not to reply to any comments at all? Do companies not see value in responding to positive posts?

Whatever the reason, they are making a mistake, possibly to your company's advantage. If *your* organization begins to follow not only negative posts and comments, but positive ones and takes action in responding, you are ahead of the game. In fact, if other companies aren't doing a good job interacting with their customers or prospects through online social networking, your com-

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pany looks even better to consumers when you take the initiative. ●

### Be Honest and Transparent

Traditional marketers have worked for years at shaping people's opinions about brands and organizations using advertising and other linear marketing tactics. While marketers may be tempted to stretch the truth on social networks in order to achieve similar objectives, this point can't be stressed enough: *You must be as honest and transparent as possible when using social media. Honesty and transparency build a direct relationship between you and the customer. Any deviation from these values can erode brand trust forever.*

In an age when it's virtually impossible to hide the truth, don't bother trying. If you're not ready to face the facts about your products or organization, and share them with consumers, don't join the conversation yet. Once you're committed to creating a presence in social media outlets, there's no going back and you really have no choice but to embrace transparency. If it seems intuitive to you to be honest, that's terrific. But too many marketers have employed dishonest tactics in trying to reach the consumer, losing sight of the simple importance of telling the truth. With the advent of social media, consumers expect transparency from companies and organizations more than ever before.

#### Disclosure and the WOMMA Ethics Code

The Word of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA) is the leading trade organization for word-of-mouth marketing and social media. WOMMA has established an ethics code around what language and behavior is appropriate and inappropriate from organizations on social networks. The code is centered around honesty. From WOMMA's website:

It's all about the Honesty R.O.I. — Ethical word of mouth marketers always strive for transparency and honesty in all communications with consumers, with advocates and with those people who advocates speak to on behalf of a product.

- Honesty of Relationship — you say who you're speaking for
- Honesty of Opinion — you say what you truly believe; you never shill
- Honesty of Identity — you say who you are; you never falsify your identity.

#### The Golden Rule

This concept is simple and intuitive (as are many areas

of social media marketing): put on your consumer hat and do unto others, as a marketer, as you would want done unto you as a consumer.

Consider these four guidelines to maintain transparency and avoid potential ethical issues:

1. If you are being paid in product or other material value by a company or client, make a note of it in your Facebook messages or tweets when writing about or supporting the company.
2. It's OK to ask customers to spread the word about your company, but if you're offering them free products in exchange for their support, you must insist they disclose what they received in any reviews or other material they post about you.
3. If your company or organization is doing something you don't want people to know about, don't think you can cover it up on social networks. Instead, fix the problem.
4. When in doubt, disclose.

Remember, the world is so transparent now that you have to be honest and open from the very start of building your social media platform. ●

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### Provide Value (Yes, for Free!)

The more valuable content you can share with your fans and followers, the greater the trust and reputation you'll build with them. Share your expertise without expectation or marketing-speak and you'll create an even better name for yourself.

For example, if you represent an accounting firm, write a blog article, such as "Top 10 Tax-Saving Strategies for the Year Ahead" and share it on Facebook and Twitter. While it might be tempting to end the article by saying, "For more tax-saving help, call us," it's better to showcase your expertise without asking for anything in return. If a prospect wants more help, he or she can quickly figure out how to contact you from your website. If you're worried about not having enough to write about, you can always write shorter, more pointed articles instead. A "top 10" post could just as easily be a 10-part series in which you dive a little deeper into each of the top-10 strategies, examples or reasons.

Companies have always sought to provide value for their customers and prospects. They just wanted an immediate return in the form of sales. The challenge on the social Web is to figure out how you can provide valuable content — information, entertainment, and/or applications — without expecting anything back right

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away. When you give content away for free, there will invariably be people who don't become your customers anyway. Other prospects will appreciate what you have to offer, share it with their friends and become customers themselves. ●

### Integrate Social Media into the Entire Customer Experience

Social media leveraging is not just marketing or public relations. There is no way to successfully use social media as an organization if you simply silo it to marketing or advertising. In order to optimize the results from your social-media use, you have to integrate understanding and practice across a diverse group of functions and departments in your organization.

If you have a very small operation, you're used to handling many tasks on your own. But assuming you're part of a larger organization, let's review various departments and consider how each one might integrate and encourage social media in order to optimize the customer experience at every corner:

**Advertising:** Include social media links and value proposition(s) to all customers in all paid linear media.

**Marketing:** Determine, create, execute and measure promotions, contests, giveaways, other marketing programs and content to be run on Facebook and other social networks.

**Public Relations:** Listen to customer comments on social networks and blogs and respond in a swift manner. Determine the most influential bloggers and other key customers online and reach out to them to pitch them on participating in programs.

**Customer service:** Listen to customer complaints and requests across social networks and respond. Encourage customers who reach out via traditional channels to share their feedback publicly on social networks.

**Operations:** Create and implement social media policy. Ensure that all staff are fluent in understanding company social media links and practices, and that signage, receipts and any other customer touch points include opportunities to interact and share.

**Sales:** Listen carefully to prospects online as well as major potential partners and distributors. Leverage listening to create best-value propositions. Use LinkedIn and individual Facebook profiles to meet and engage prospects.

**Research and development:** Listen to your customer sentiment and competitors' customer sentiment in

### Action Items to Leverage Your Mistakes

1. Create a social media crisis plan. What will you do if a customer shares a negative experience on YouTube, a promotion goes awry or a planned communication doesn't go as hoped? Who will respond publicly and how? Who will be ultimately accountable for decisions?
2. Work with your legal and corporate communications teams now to establish some guidelines so that if and when a situation arises, you can quickly respond using humble, personal language.
3. Once you have a plan established, conduct a fire drill or two to see how well your organization responds.
4. Make sure you are listening closely and keeping watch on the online conversation about your company — even on weekends and holidays.

order to design new products. Leverage social networks to survey and ask key questions of your customer base.

**Senior management/CEO:** Serve as online spokespeople for the brand through Twitter, video and blog. Interact publicly with key partners, stakeholders and media.

**Information technology:** Ensure that your website is up to date with social links, content, plugins and applications. Ensure that social media data is secure. Manage Facebook applications and any other social media and mobile applications. ●

### Admit When You Screw Up, Then Leverage Your Mistakes

The best way to tell your consumers that you're sorry is to have the highest-ranking person at your organization, i.e., your CEO, say it online in a short video that addresses the problem and how it's going to be fixed. Having the CEO or a high-level executive speak tells customers that your company is taking the matter seriously.

Responding on video humanizes your company in a way that no press release or letter ever could. And keeping it short and sweet is respectful of your customers' time. Your CEO should be prepared to be as humble and natural as possible.

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### A Likeable Screw-Up: Gap

In October 2010, clothing retailer Gap Inc. unveiled a new logo. The logo was immediately and almost universally hated by vocal customers across several social media channels. Thousands of people called it ugly, protested the logo and even created fake Twitter accounts poking fun at Gap.

Despite having spent millions of dollars to create printed materials with the new logo, Gap quickly realized its mistake and, within a few days, posted a note on its Facebook page:

*OK. We've heard loud and clear that you don't like the new logo. We've learned a lot from the feedback. We only want what's best for the brand and our customers. So instead of crowdsourcing, we're bringing back the Blue Box tonight.*

The informal, humble tone of its message told customers that Gap was listening to them and cared about what they had to say. The quick decision might not have been possible from a less flexible, more traditional executive team. But in times of crisis, quick decisions are more essential than ever. The whole incident, while costly, improved Gap's overall reputation and likely saved it from an even costlier mess.

### As Long As You Plan for the Unexpected and Can Say You're Sorry ...

Humans have an amazing ability to forgive one another for mistakes and even forgive companies, too (especially when they're reminded that compassionate, understanding and reasonable people are behind the company in question). The challenge as an organization comes only when you're not prepared or are inflexible in your ability to respond when mistakes and crises do emerge. As long as you create a plan in advance, and as long as you're able to publicly, quickly and authentically say you're sorry, you can maintain a strong brand reputation in the face of any social media challenge. ●

## Don't Sell! Just Make It Easy and Compelling for Customers to Buy

Facebook and other social networks have grown immensely in a few short years and, by definition, they are primarily social channels, not sales channels. However, *that doesn't mean you can't use Facebook to directly sell, market or grow your business.* It does mean that the expectation most people have when they're on Facebook or another social network is that they are there to socialize and connect with others, not to shop. In order to effectively change a social network into a

sales channel, you have to make the buying process as effortless and satisfying as possible. You also have to tread carefully. If you push too hard to market or sell, you will erode the all-important trust and *likeability* you've worked hard to achieve.

Think about a situation like this: If you make it painless and compelling to buy whatever you're offering, then you don't really have to do any selling at all. Selling and marketing are usually disruptive, unwanted experiences, while buying is normally considered a fun, rewarding and sometimes exciting experience. So how can you create social buying opportunities instead of social sales and marketing opportunities?

At Likeable Media, there is a brief set of guidelines suggested to clients using Twitter, based around an acronym for the word "TWEET":

Trust-building: Build relationships

Wisdom: Learn from industry leaders and your customers

Ears open: Listen to the conversation

Establish your brand: Create a strong presence

Teach the world about what you do

Of course, there's nothing in this mnemonic device about selling. There's nothing even there about marketing. But if you do a great job listening, learning and building trust with the right people, if you establish your brand with the right fan base, and if you share what it is you and your organization do, you won't have to sell.

### Keep on Your Consumer Cap, Think Buying, Not Selling and the Sales Will Come

The days of push-marketing tactics are quickly coming to an end, ushering in better times for consumers everywhere. Always think like your consumer, create buying opportunities that you yourself would want to leverage, and make purchasing simple and easy. Be patient and continue to provide value for your communities. Develop simple, user-friendly opportunities for customers to buy from you wherever and whenever they choose to. The sales *will* come. ●

#### RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Likeable Social Media*, you'll also like:

1. ***Enchantment* by Guy Kawasaki.** The one-time Chief Evangelist for Apple offers a jam-packed title full of strategies to amaze your audience and provide an unforgettable experience.
2. ***Real Time Marketing & PR* by David Meerman Scott.** Find out how to act and react flexibly as events occur, position your brand in the always-on world of the Web, and avoid embarrassing mistakes and missteps.
3. ***Shopper Marketing* by Markus Ståhlberg & Ville Maila.** Practical advice from 35 experts regarding shopper needs and trends, retail environments, effective packages and much more.