



## Meatball Sundae

### Is Your Marketing Out of Sync?

#### THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Any Internet marketing consultant will pitch you about blogs, viral e-mails, YouTube videos, MySpace pages, Google AdWords and “the Web 2.0 social media infrastructure.” She’ll imply that if your company tries these new tools, all its problems will vanish.

These various “New Marketing” options are like the toppings at an ice cream parlor. If you start with ice cream, adding sprinkles, cherries, hot fudge and whipped cream will make it taste great. But if you start with a bowl of meatballs, it becomes messy, disgusting and ineffective — the inevitable result of combining two perfectly good items that don’t go well together.

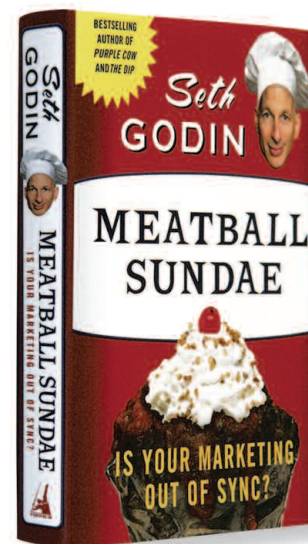
The “meatballs” are the basic staples, like Cheerios, Budweiser, Ford trucks and Barbie dolls: all the brands that used to be marketed effectively with TV commercials, newspaper ads and direct mail. There’s nothing wrong with selling meatballs, and they can still deliver hefty profits. But they no longer generate much growth.

Pure “ice cream” companies, such as PayPal, Kiva and CafePress.com, build their entire organizations around innovative, low-cost, high-impact marketing. It’s not an accident that almost all the brands, products and careers that have succeeded with New Marketing are brand-new and fresh. New Marketing demands more than a meatball. It insists on a reinvention of the entire organization and the products it creates. Marketing is now about a lot more than just the yodeling. It’s about the entire package, what you say as much as how you say it. New Marketing is our future. Unfortunately, it doesn’t work so well with meatballs.

But older companies shouldn’t despair. This summary explains how “meatball factories” can get back into alignment and make the most of New Marketing.

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

- What works these days, what doesn’t and what to do about it.
- How to use the foundations of New Marketing to support your offering.
- How to reinvent your entire organization, products and marketing approach.
- How to become an organization that thrives because of New Marketing.



by Seth Godin

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# THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: MEATBALL SUNDAE

by Seth Godin

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## A Meatball Sundae

Today, growth comes from an integrated approach, one that combines New Marketing tactics with fundamentally different products and services.

A meatball is a commodity, a branded item of little differentiation and decent quality.

Everyone knows how to make and market a meatball. That approach appears safe and straightforward, but it doesn't lead to growth anymore. You can't grow with meatballs because they're ubiquitous. New Marketing is whipped cream and a cherry, a collection of techniques that offer huge payoffs — but New Marketing works only for organizations that can get in alignment, stop making meatballs and start making something that goes very well indeed with hot fudge and marshmallow sauce.

There are 14 trends that are completely remaking what it means to be a marketer. And while these trends are transforming organizations that have the right products and the right approaches, they are crippling the organizations that are stuck with nothing but meatballs. Once again, marketing is transforming what we make and how we make it. ●

## Part 1: Thinking About the Meatball Sundae

### Before, During and After

*Before advertising* (BA), there were hundreds of thousands of companies. And all of them looked the same. They were small and local, and they built things by hand. Most of these companies failed to make the transition to the next era. They underinvested in marketing and weren't willing to shift gears from bespoke (custom) to mass.

*During advertising* (DA), companies looked the way most of them look today. They made average products for average people, advertised heavily and created in bulk. Imagine Safeway or Midas Muffler. All are large organizations designed to work well with the masses.

*After advertising* (AA), organizations will look as much like the DA companies as the DA companies resembled those from the BA era. In other words, not very much.

### The Foundations of New Marketing

New Marketing isn't a single event, Web site or technology. It's based on a combination of more than a dozen trends, each of which is changing the way ideas are perceived and spread.

*Old Marketing* is the act of interrupting masses of people with ads about average products. Masses of people could be reached quickly and cheaply, and some would respond to your message and become customers. The key drivers of this approach were a scarcity of choice and a large resource of cheap attention.

*New Marketing* leverages scarce attention and creates interactions among communities with similar interests. New marketing treats every interaction, product, service and side effect as a form of media. Marketers do this by telling stories, creating remarkable products and gaining permission to deliver messages directly to interested people.

### Same Wants and Needs, New Environment

Human nature hasn't changed a bit. What has changed is the environment we live in. The combination of technology and competition has led to a world where many people can get what they want, when they want it. It's a world where people have control over the attention they give to marketers; a world where we have so much



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income, so many assets, that we can demand just about anything we can imagine.

The most important thing that has changed is the ability of consumers to finally have what they've wanted all along: to be treated with respect and to be connected to other people. ●

### Part 2: The 14 Trends of Marketing

#### Trend 1: Direct Communication and Commerce Between Producers and Consumers

Organizations hear more, and more often, directly from consumers. Organizations can also sell directly to customers, eliminating the middlemen. And they can build a permission asset, which allows them to market directly to prospects. Even better, organizations can create products for their customers instead of searching for customers for their products. Your people (customers, employees, prospects, readers, etc.) want to be heard. They demand to be heard.

##### Permission Is Not Up to You

Here are some critical ideas about permission marketing from the consumer's point of view:

**1. Permission doesn't exist to help you (the marketer).** It exists to help me (the consumer). The moment the messages you send me cease to be anticipated, personal and relevant, then you cease to exist in my world.

**2. My permission can't be bought or sold.** It's nontransferable.

**3. I don't care about you.** I care about me. If your message has something to do with my life, then perhaps I'll notice, but in general, don't expect much.

**4. Privacy policies and fine print are meaningless to me.** When I give you my permission to follow up, we're making a deal and you're making a promise. If you break that promise, whether or not you are legally in the right, we're finished.

**5. I demand your respect.** I can get respect from plenty of organizations, so if you disrespect me, then you're history. ●

#### Trend 2: Amplification of the Voice of the Consumer and Independent Authorities

In a market where everyone is a critic, the need to create products that appeal to and satisfy critics becomes urgent. The same is true for after-purchase issues of service and quality.

##### Understanding Blogs

With more than 80 million blogs tracked by technorati.com, you'd think that people would have figured out what a blog is. Because it's a tool, not a thing, it's easy to get confused.

For most bloggers, a blog is just one thing: a personal publishing platform. A place where one person gets to talk.

What makes blogs a lot more interesting than the many other personal publishing platforms that came before is that blogs are connected, tracked, indexed and spread around. One article in one blog might be surfaced by another blog, which leads to exposure to a dozen or more readerships. Suddenly, and forever, that article is singled out, digested and influential.

A post on a blog anywhere in the world could very

### Old Versus New

#### Old Marketing

- Limited number of media outlets
- Limited physical retail outlets
- Emphasis on horizontal success (hits)
- Marketer-to-consumer communication
- Barrier between consumers and makers
- Spam
- Product line limited by factory
- Long product cycles
- Market share
- Features
- Advertising a major expense
- Large overhead=stability
- Customer support
- Focus groups

#### New Marketing

- Countless media outlets
- Countless online retail outlets
- Emphasis on vertical success (niches)
- Consumer-to-consumer communication
- Permeability between consumers and makers
- Permission
- Product line limited by imagination
- Fads
- Fashion
- Stories
- Innovation a major expense
- Small overhead=low risk
- Community support
- Launch and learn

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well rank higher in a Google search than information on that same topic on your company's Web site. This means your point of view disappears, and the point of view of some blogger comes across instead.

The easiest way to understand blogs (text, audio or video) is to understand that they (finally) connect three real desires: to hear our own voices, to be heard by others and to hear what the crowd thinks.

For the first time in history, the graffiti on the wall has more power than the official version coming from an organization. ●

### Trend 3: The Need for an Authentic Story as the Number of Sources Increases

Consumers hear about organizations from many sources, not just one. As a result, you have to get your story straight. Saying one thing and doing another fails because you'll get caught.

#### Stories Spread, Not Facts

People just aren't that good at remembering facts. When people do remember facts, it's almost always in context.

Patagonia makes warm coats and so do many other companies, almost all of which sell their coats for less money, do less volume and turn a lower profit. Is it because Patagonia coats are more beautiful or warmer? Not at all.

It's because the company has created (and lives) a story that has absolutely nothing to do with clothing and everything to do with the environment. The company has gone all the way to the edge, further than just about any other major brand, in building an organization that reduces, reuses and recycles. It's a company that gives back (in terms of attention and cash) to the environment at the same time that it challenges it. The catalog is filled with beautifully illustrated stories of some of their climbers.

As their clothes have become less flashy and more organic, Patagonia has grown. An organic cotton shirt from Patagonia costs 10 times more than a similar nonorganic, nonbranded shirt from someone else. And that's fine. Because the shirt isn't just a shirt — it's a story and a symbol. It's a way for a wealthy consumer to tell herself a story about her priorities, at the same time she tells that story to her friends.

No one talks about The North Face. Plenty of people talk about Patagonia. That's because the company, from the top down, lives and believes their story (a unique story that resonates with their consumers) and makes it easy for the story to spread. ●

### Trend 4: Extremely Short Attention Spans Due to Clutter

The death of mass marketing is partly due to the plethora of choices and the deluge of interruptions. As a result, complex messages rarely get through.

Commercials used to be a minute long, sometimes two. Then someone came up with the brilliant idea of running two per minute, then four. Now there are radio ads that are less than three seconds long.

It's not an accident that things are moving faster and getting smaller. There's just too much to choose from.

It's possible to buy carefully targeted TV advertising for a few hundred dollars. It's easy to buy extremely targeted online advertising for 10 cents a click. Translation: You can buy tiny slices of attention for a fraction of what it cost just a decade ago. ●

### Trend 5: The Long Tail

Chris Anderson's work demonstrates that domination by hit products is fading, consumers reward providers that offer the most choices, and the economics of creating and selling a product have fundamentally changed.

It turns out that over time, the market doesn't settle on one or two leaders. Given the freedom, market leadership spreads out, just like an oozing cube of melting caramel. While there may still be a No. 1 in a market, the market itself is a lot smaller. Any market of people with sufficient resources will get very picky on you.

The Long Tail, a brilliant term coined by Anderson in his book and blog of the same name, is a simple idea that starts with this: Given the choice, people want the choice. In any normal marketplace, if you give people more choices, revenue goes up.

#### Trends of the Long Tail

The Long Tail really matters because of several trends working together:

1. Online shopping gives retailers the ability to carry a hundred times the inventory of a typical retail store.
2. Google means that users can find something if it's out there.
3. Permission marketing gives sellers the freedom to find products for their customers, instead of the other way around.
4. Digital products are easy to store and easy to customize.
5. Digital technology makes it easy to customize nondigital goods.

### More Variety, More Sales

Starbucks offers 19,000 varieties of beverages. Why? It's not because Starbucks likes the extra work or because management likes all those varieties. It's because their customers do. You can choose from 3.5 million songs on iTunes, more than you could listen to in several lifetimes. The reason is simple: In the long run, more variety always leads to more sales.

### Finding Silos

As media continue to fragment, the giant obsessions don't always dwarf the little ones. The Web allows other, minor obsessions to coalesce. New markets emerge, markets that are terrifically profitable but were previously unknown.

The three challenges are straightforward:

1. **Find a market that hasn't been found yet.**
2. **Create something so remarkable that people in that market are compelled to find you.**
3. **String together enough of these markets so you can make them into a business.** ●

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## Trend 6: Outsourcing

It's not just *possible* to find someone to make/code/do something for you quickly and cheaply; it is now *easy*. The means of producing physical goods and intellectual property is no longer based on geography but on talent and efficiency instead.

When you buy an article of clothing, an appliance, tax preparation services or a computer, chances are you're not buying from the person you think.

Comparative advantage means that a company organized to do nothing but produce from plans — and to do it in a low-wage, high-skills location — will always outperform a vertically integrated marketer.

Just as important, though, is the idea that a marketer without a factory is usually more innovative, faster moving and more fashion-focused. Why? Instead of trying to keep the factory busy, the marketer can focus on keeping the market busy instead.

### The Real Challenge of Outsourcing

There are only two paths. One path is to take every repetitive, by-the-book task in your organization and outsource it or mechanize it. The other path is to take every repetitive, by-the-book task in your organization and give the people who do that task the freedom, the

incentive and, yes, the imperative to do something that cannot be outsourced.

Either what you're doing is repetitive, in which case you ought to outsource it, or it's homemade, insightful and filled with initiative and judgment, in which case you can charge for it.

It's not fair. Your competitors are busy cutting costs by outsourcing the work that you struggled to make cheap in the first place. But if a job **can** be codified, it **will** be outsourced, usually for less money. ●

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## Trend 7: Google and the Dicing of Everything

Google and the other search engines have broken the world into little tiny bits. No one visits a Web site's home page anymore — they walk in the back door, to the page Google sent them to. By atomizing the world, Google destroys the end-to-end solution offered by most organizations, replacing it with a pick-and-choose, component-based solution.

Bundling was the glue that held together almost every business and organization. The Yellow Pages is a multibillion-dollar business that consists of nothing but bundled ads for local businesses. No one wants to keep a flier for every business in town, but everyone has a copy of the Yellow Pages. Book publishers bundle authors and share the expertise of their staff, their sales force and their capital in order to bring books to readers.

### Atoms, Not Molecules

And then came the online search. Not gross searches for big ideas (like "industrial supplies") but specific, directed searches for particular needs or specific items.

Specific searches mean that bundling is not necessary. Not only do we not need the bundles, but in most cases we don't want them, either. The bundles slow us down in our search for precisely what we need.

Even though many people (even most people) don't find everything via Google, the group that does is big enough to have already changed the world for everyone else. Once a marketer, a manufacturer or a group realizes that they must present their atoms for inspection, the philosophy behind bundling starts to fall apart. The trade-offs we used to be able to make in order to sustain a bundled approach to the world cease to be viable in the face of all these disparate atoms, each on its own, each available to anyone who wants to grab it.

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### Taking It Apart

The idea that one product line can subsidize another is built into the way many businesses work. The fact that middlemen profit by bundling information, product lines or shelf space opportunities is at the heart of what makes so many businesses successful. And now, quite suddenly, a different sort of business is being rewarded. One where bundling and middleman services are deliberately undervalued. ●

### Trend 8: Infinite Channels of Communication

Even with the near-total chaos most media confront, the chaos is certain to get even worse. New forms of publication, communication and interaction will arrive in an already cluttered world. Some organizations will thrive on this increased chaos, some will be unprepared and some will merely fight it and lose.

In order for a consumer to make a decision, two things need to happen. The second is that she needs to determine that it's worth the time, money or risk to take action. But first, she needs to know about the opportunity. A great cruise bargain might be available, with seven nights in Rio for \$99, but if you don't know about it, you can't decide to go.

You can be incredibly selective about your messaging today. You can advertise only on a blog about antique cameras, or post a podcast that only rabid fans of the local high school football team will listen to. Instead of reaching everyone (because you have no other choice) and creating generic products for large audiences, you can now reach a tiny slice of the market — just the people who are passionately interested in your products and services. No, you won't reach everyone who might be interested in what you have to sell, but you do have the opportunity to reach the people in that zone of overlap. And you can reach them more cheaply than ever. ●

For information on how AdWords influenced communication channels on the Internet, go to: <http://my.summary.com>

### Trend 9: Direct Communication and Commerce Between Consumers and Consumers

eBay is the beginning of a significant consumer-to-consumer connection in the marketplace. As social networks become more powerful, consumers will gravitate to each other, not just informing each other about their experiences but banding together into unions that will

pressure organizations for more of what consumers want.

While eBay has revolutionized the way individuals sell leftover Christmas presents, it has also enabled hundreds of thousands of individuals to become entrepreneurs and jobbers, selling items around the world.

Terry Gibbs is one of those people. He started collecting trains in the 1970s, and he eventually put himself through college selling trains. eBay enabled him to quit his job and sell trains full time. He would probably never have set up a retail establishment, but he now runs a successful multifaceted business out of Mesa, Ariz. Besides selling to thousands of people around the world, he's trained 7,000 individuals in the science of creating their own focused businesses. ●

### Trend 10: The Shifts in Scarcity and Abundance

Your organization is based on exploiting scarcity. Create and sell something scarce and you can earn a profit. But when scarce things become common, and common things become scarce, you need to alter what you do all day.

#### iTunes

iTunes is a creature of our times — it takes advantage of the new scarcity at the same time as it embraces the atomization of the world. It rewards individuals who want a single track, not an entire album. iTunes replaces Tower Records because it increases the speed of finding what you want, eliminates the need to get into your car and saves you precious time.

As soon as Apple put an iPod in your pocket, they had the leverage they needed to sell you music and replace an entire industry. The key assets of iTunes are Google-like selection, detailed knowledge of who you are and what you like, and the ability to save you hours of time while keeping you informed of what's new and what's now.

Tower Records served an important function when people were looking for a way to spend an evening flipping through records and had no place else to go. iTunes defeated Tower because the list of what was scarce changed so radically. ●

### Trend 11: The Triumph of Big Ideas

In a factory-based organization, little ideas are the key to success. Small improvements in efficiency or design can improve productivity and make a product just a bit more appealing. New Marketing in the noisy marketplace demands something bigger. It demands ideas that force people to sit up and take notice.

### The End of the 'Big Idea' in Advertising

There's a difference between a big idea that comes from a product or service and a big idea that comes from the world of advertising.

The secret of big-time advertising during the '60s and '70s was the "big idea." A big idea could build a brand, a career or an entire agency. Charlie the Tuna was a big idea. So was "Plop, plop, fizz, fizz."

Big ideas in advertising worked great when advertising was in charge. With a limited spectrum and a lot of hungry consumers, the stage was set to put on a show.

Today, the advertiser's big idea doesn't travel very well. Instead, the idea must be embedded into the experience of the product itself. Once again, what we used to think of as advertising or marketing is pushed deeper into the organization. Yes, there are big ideas. They're just not advertising-based. ●

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### Trend 12: The Shift From 'How Many' to 'Who'

Marketing is often like a funnel. Attention is shoveled in at the top and, over time, sales come out the bottom. The funneling process sorts the wheat from the chaff, separating those who can buy from those who either aren't interested or can't afford to participate.

This focus on mass is understandable if you assume that all consumers are pretty much the same or if you can't tell them apart. The thing is, they aren't and you can. Now, for the first time, marketers can focus on who is hearing (and talking about) their message, and they no longer use mass as a placeholder.

#### Be More Selective

One of the realities of New Marketing is that mass is no longer achievable. Even more important: Mass is no longer desirable. Now that we can know who is coming to our Web site, store or advertisement, and which ad reached them and how, we can be far more selective about what we say and why.

What New Marketing enables is a process in which marketers can activate the interested and turn them into campaigners for their remarkable products. So you're going to need to give up pushing and start working harder on cajoling. ●

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### Trend 13: The Wealthy Like Us

Rich people used to be all the same, just different from the rest of us. Now they're not just different from the

rest of us but different from each other.

Rich people used to do similar jobs, wear similar clothes, live in similar neighborhoods and read similar magazines. As a result, marketing to rich people was pretty easy. No longer. As the gulf between rich and poor continues to widen, the number of people considered rich increases daily and the diversity of the rich increases as well.

#### Trading Up

It turns out that not only are the wealthy like us, they *are* us. Despite the widening gulf, there are more wealthy people than ever before. In fact, you're probably one of them. Michael Silverstein and Neil Fiske of the Boston Consulting Group talked about this in their book *Trading Up*, and the trend has only become more pervasive.

Wal-Mart and Trader Joe's have figured out how to sell food cheaply. Whole Foods Market and Dean & DeLuca have figured out how to make it expensive (and worth it). The folks in the middle, the Safeways and the A&Ps, are in trouble. ●

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### Trend 14: New Gatekeepers, No Gatekeepers

One way big organizations got bigger was by working with the other big guys. It used to be critically important if you got your product into a major retailer or on an end cap at the A&P. It mattered that you were featured on a network TV show or chosen by a magazine to be highlighted. Big companies wanted to work with other big companies, and so the big got bigger.

#### How to Work With the New Gatekeepers

Traditional media outlets are dependent on the PR community. Reporters may have whined about press releases and flacks (press agents), but the fact is that without them, the editors wouldn't have known what to print.

The Web is a very different place for two reasons. First, there's plenty of stuff to write about. Because everything is connected, RSS feeds send an endless stream of filtered story ideas to every blogger.

Second, most bloggers aren't paid for what they do. They're passionate, not punching the clock. As a result, few of them will pick up a mediocre press release or vapid idea just to fill space. You are appealing to their passion, not taking advantage of their ennui. That means that the approaches you're used to are probably not going to work.

The advantage of this medium is that almost everyone is approachable, far more than someone at *The New York*

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*Times*. But approachable doesn't mean you can gain by spamming folks, no matter how generous your offer might be. ●

### Part 3: Putting It Together

## Case Studies

The 14 trends can seem contradictory, or too diverse to do anything with. You don't have to embrace all 14, but it appears that you must leverage at least a few of them. In the following case studies, you can see how it works in practice.

### Thinking About WordPerfect

Years ago, Microsoft was dominant in operating systems (DOS was on almost every business desktop), but spreadsheets belonged to Lotus and word processing was in the domain of WordPerfect.

When Microsoft introduced Windows, WordPerfect Corp. hesitated. They saw no reason to support Microsoft's effort to sell an entirely new operating system. This is a classic example of willing the world to match your offerings, as opposed to the other way around. WordPerfect didn't want Microsoft to succeed and didn't want to support Windows for a variety of corporate reasons. And they felt that withholding their support would make it more likely that the world would stay as it was.

Microsoft took advantage of this mistake and pushed its word processor, Word for Windows. It didn't sell well for more than a year, but as Windows OS gained traction, WordPerfect never had a chance.

The "operating system" for marketers is now fundamentally changing. It doesn't matter how big your market share is today. If your product and your marketing are optimized for the older model, you will be defeated by New Marketing and the products and services that are designed for it.

### Bud TV

Bud TV, as in Budweiser TV online, sounds like a brilliant scheme: Use the nearly free bandwidth of the Net to host an entire collection of videos, sponsor it yourself, put it online and advertise like crazy. Very Web 2.0 of them.

The problem is it didn't work. So far, Anheuser-Busch has reportedly spent more than \$40 million building and promoting the network. Yet traffic is falling as much as 40 percent month after month. According to Quantcast, in March 2007, Bud TV had traffic equal to a site that

serves as a comprehensive source for sheet rubber. It goes to show that just because you want people to come to your site and watch doesn't mean they will. ●

## Conclusion: It's Not an Organization, It's a Movement

If New Marketing can be characterized by just one idea, it's this: Ideas that spread through groups of people are far more powerful than ideas delivered to an individual.

Social change, education, new-product launches, religious movements ... it doesn't matter, the story is the same. Movements are at the heart of change and growth. A movement — an idea that spreads with passion through a community and leads to change — is far more powerful than any advertisement ever could be.

### Meatball Strategy

The opportunities for optimizing your current meatball strategy have never been better. It's easier than ever to track attention and to monetize interactions. A focused, measured effort on your part will doubtless help you sell a few more widgets or get some more service contracts.

The alternative, to some, is even more enticing. And that's to create a movement: a movement around your product or the service you sell to businesses. The Internet has nothing to do with what the movement is; the Net merely makes it easier than ever for a movement to take place.

More often than not, movements come out of nowhere, from small companies or impassioned individuals. The reason big organizations stumble is that they can't make the commitment. They want both strategies — they insist they can have a meatball sundae. They're wrong.

The opportunity is to note the distinction between an old-style organization and a powerful movement. Either choice can work, as long as you in fact make the choice — and commit. ●

### RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Meatball Sundae*, you'll also like:

1. ***Wikinomics* by Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams.** Using the collaborative-software "wiki" concept as their theme, the authors address how the Internet's social network offers new, decentralized ways to produce content, goods, services and profit.
2. ***Citizen Marketers* by Ben McConnell and Jackie Huba.** "Citizen marketers" are forming growing communities of enthusiasts and evangelists, getting the word out about what products they love or hate.
3. ***Treasure Hunt* by Michael J. Silverstein with John Butman.** Through detailed, individual spending portraits of middle-class consumers, Silverstein explores the story of how people around the world are reshaping the consumer-goods market by trading down to low-price products and services, trading up to premium ones, and avoiding the boredom and low value that increasingly characterize the middle.

For information on how Scott Heiferman abandoned traditional strategies for Fotolog.com, go to: <http://my.summary.com>