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Personality Not Included

Why Companies Lose Their Authenticity — And How Great Brands Get It Back

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

In the new business era of the 21st century, a great brand or product must evoke a dynamic personality in order to attract passionate customers. Although many organizations hide their personality behind layers of packaged messaging and advertising, this summary illustrates how successful businesses have redefined themselves in the new customer universe.

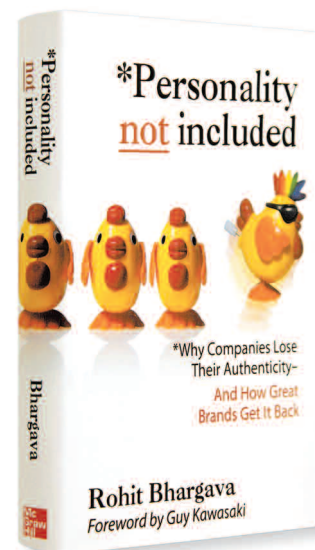
The faceless corporation doesn't work anymore. The theory of *Personality Not Included* is that personality is the answer. Personality is the key, and every element of a business is an element of that business's brand personality.

Personality is *the* macro trend. The three hottest topics in business today are doing more with social media (blogs, social networks, etc.), using word-of-mouth marketing (the No. 1 source of influence according to just about every international study) and interacting more authentically with customers. Personality is the theme that incorporates all of these topics.

Every idea presented here is one that social media guru and influencer Rohit Bhargava uses for real clients to get real results every day.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to better focus on the moments when you already have your customer's attention and use those moments to demonstrate your brand's personality.
- Why "accidental spokespeople" may be your brand's most powerful influencers.
- Ways to use the "UAT filter" to understand the personality of your organization.
- The three core personality principles that will help you put personality into action.
- How to create your company's "marketing backstory" using techniques pioneered by Hollywood screenwriters.
- The three methods of getting attention and the attention paradox.



by Rohit Bhargava

CONTENTS

Introduction

Page 2

Sign Here to Read This

Page 2

The Accidental Spokesperson

Pages 2, 3

A Signature Is Not Enough

Pages 3, 4, 5, 6

Lessons From the Storytellers

Pages 6, 7

Conquering the Fear Factor

Page 7

Add Personality and Stir

Pages 7, 8

The Fifth Phase: Indifference

Page 8

THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: PERSONALITY NOT INCLUDED

by Rohit Bhargava

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Introduction

Clearly, being faceless doesn't work anymore. The biggest challenge most organizations face today is discovering how to go from a brand that people consume to one that they are passionate about.

The theory is that personality is the answer. Personality is the key element behind your brand and what it stands for, and the story that your products tell to your customers. Every element of your business, from your interactions with your customers to the packaging of your product, is an element of your brand personality, and these are the elements that inspire delight or indifference among your customers. In short, *personality matters*.

Every company that consumers are passionate about already understands that sharing an authentic identity inspires loyalty and belief. Authenticity is part of the story, but it is only one element of something bigger. Focusing on making your business authentic is not enough. Your customers *want* to believe in an authentic brand, but they need the right incentive. *Personality is that incentive*.

Closer to the Truth

Part of the power of personality is that it can help you bring your marketing closer to the truth, because it requires you to rely on many messengers to tell your story for you.

Personality is the reason consumers love one product more than another. It is what sets great companies apart and it is about more than having a game-changing product. Personality can help you go from good to great. Personality is the missing ingredient keeping most organizations from becoming great. ●

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The moment that organizations lose their personality is when their employees become "people" rather than individuals. Most of us know this phenomenon only too well, because we have seen it happen to companies that we interact with as customers.

Nearly every situation in which a company is attacked by a vengeful customer is one that could have been avoided if the company had had more individuals, as opposed to people, working for it.

The Real Secret of Personality

If you want to start creating an authentic bond with your customers and stand out from your competitors, get your best ambassadors to do the work for you. In order to do that, you need to start thinking about your current customers and your employees as an army of individuals. The goal is to have a group of individuals who all believe the same thing, and have the right tools to tell that message to the rest of the world. ●

The Accidental Spokesperson

People tend not to see accidents as a good thing. It's no surprise, then, that many marketing teams devote significant energy to finding ways to avoid accidents by keeping tight control of their messages and communications.

The problem with this approach is that sometimes accidents have a positive effect. The Post-it note was created by accident. So were cornflakes, Teflon, the Slinky and countless other product-related discoveries. Even one of the most successful marketing campaigns of the past decade featured a spokesperson located by accident — Jared from Subway.



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Summary: PERSONALITY NOT INCLUDED

Why People Believed Jared

Jared Fogle was never supposed to be a Subway spokesperson. He was just a guy in Indiana who used to weigh over 400 pounds and had been profiled in the local paper for losing more than 100 pounds in three months on his self-described “Subway diet.”

What was the allure of Jared? He was certainly not a celebrity, but he was *real*. He was a real person who had an authentic story and people believed it. The success of Jared is one example of how a brand can find and involve its enthusiasts in marketing, but using Jared was not completely an accident. He may have been discovered by chance, but he was deliberately cast in the role of spokesperson by an agency unafraid to take advantage of the good fortune of finding him. As the Subway example shows, embracing accidents in marketing is the product of a mindset that can lead to great success.

The Deliberate Spokesperson

Spokespeople humanize brands in order to raise their profile and combat facelessness. The degree of success with which this happens, however, is variable. There are actually five key types of deliberate spokespersons who have been used for more than a century to try to humanize brands. Some have worked and some haven't, but in order to truly understand the transformative power of the accidental spokesperson, we must first start by exploring these five types of deliberate spokespersons:

- **The Founder.** At an early stage in a company's evolution, the role of the spokesperson is usually taken by the founder(s). Today it has become equally common for founders to be displaced (voluntarily or not) by other types of spokespersons as a company evolves. Founders can bring passion and credibility to a marketing message.
- **The Character.** Characters used for advertising have a long history going back to icons like Tony the Tiger for Kellogg's Frosted Flakes and the Michelin Man for Michelin tires. What almost all character spokespersons have in common is that they are chosen not for their credibility or authenticity, but for their memorability or “stickiness.”
- **The Celebrity.** Celebrities are often the most popular type of spokespersons for brands to choose. The main reason that many celebrity-spokesperson campaigns don't work is there is no rational connection between the celebrity and the brand or product. There is one interesting exception to bad celebrity-spokesperson campaigns: Celebrity spokespersons tend to have a great impact in social marketing.

When used appropriately, celebrities can harness their fame to support a singular cause.

- **The Authority.** The authority is the one type of spokesperson who more than any other can cross over and behave like other types of deliberate spokespersons. For example, a founder or celebrity can also be an authority. The best authorities are the ones whom consumers can believe would authentically use a product and are genuinely passionate about it.
- **The Enthusiast.** The enthusiast has typically been the most difficult for brands to locate and use. As the example of Subway's Jared proves, using a real enthusiast, not one that is made up, is a good strategy. However, the problem with using enthusiasts like Jared is that they can be difficult to locate and very often are discovered only by accident.

The challenge is no longer finding enthusiasts; the present reality is that an entirely new breed of spokespersons is emerging that does not fit into one of the five types outlined so far. These are your accidental spokespersons.

The Uncontrollable Rise of the Accidental Spokesperson

Accidental spokespersons are not relaying official marketing messages. The thing that unites them is that their openness and thoughts are linked closely to the brand they talk about. Your accidental spokespersons are the ones who can shape what the world sees as the truth about your brand. This is not to say that the way to deal with this is simply to sit back and let it happen.

Sharing control means finding a way to have your deliberate spokespersons coexist with your accidental ones. One way brands share control is through blogs, which can be one of the best ways to use your accidental spokespersons.

Most companies have great difficulty embracing these spokespersons. It requires a shift in thinking to welcome these new spokespersons as voices from within and encourage them to continue to have a voice.

Your accidental spokespersons are the employees or customers who are speaking for your brand already (often without your approval or knowledge), and your first challenge is to find ways to embrace these individuals. ●

A Signature Is Not Enough

Many years ago, signatures were important. Important communications were affixed with a wax seal for a signature. Documents creating governments and laws were put into effect with flowing signatures. A signature used to mean something.

Summary: PERSONALITY NOT INCLUDED

Fast-forward to today and think about all the direct mail you recently received in your mailbox. Every one of those letters has a fake signature on it, promising you that you are a sweepstakes winner or offering you the preapproved credit card that can solve all your financial woes. Signatures have lost their significance because of the prevalence of communications like these. The marketing industry killed the signature.

Why Signatures Don't Work Anymore

Here are three reasons why signatures don't work anymore:

1. They can be easily forged.
2. They carry little weight without context.
3. They are no longer unique or personal.

If signatures have lost their impact, where does that leave brands that try to focus solely on finding a signature element in their product or service to talk about? To try to answer this question, let's look at one of the largest automotive repair franchises in the United States, which built its business on two principles: its signature service and the importance of convenience.

Convenience Is No Longer King

Jiffy Lube was founded in 1979 in response to the decline of full-service gas stations. Jiffy Lube pioneered the quick oil-change business with its focus on speed and consistent service above all else.

The problem for Jiffy Lube is that convenience is not as important as it once was. Among the online reviews you can find about Jiffy Lube, there are very few glowing reports, and an increasing number of fan sites dedicated to negative experiences with the brand have appeared.

This is not to single out this one brand. The problem facing Jiffy Lube is the same one facing many other companies in the world today. It falsely believes it has found a way to stand out and expends all its effort and communications budget talking about its signature service and convenience — attributes that no longer set the company apart. Instead, it should be finding a way to address the one emotion that any customer who has ever had to visit a new automotive service shop will relate to: vulnerability.

Marketing to Vulnerable Customers

Whenever they drive into an auto repair shop, people are vulnerable to being taken for a ride (figuratively speaking, that is). You must give your trust reluctantly to someone who may or may not be trustworthy.

Oil Can Henry's, a regional franchise with branches in only seven states, may have the answer. It has several unique service features that are all centered on fostering

more trust between customers and staff. Their tagline reads "The One You Can Trust" and every interaction with the company is meant to follow through on this promise.

At Oil Can Henry's, you stay in your car and watch the mechanic work on custom TV screens that show a live video feed from underneath your car. Being able to stay in your car is nice, as is the company's commitment to explain what is happening with your car.

What Oil Can Henry's knows about personality is that it is more than having one or two signature service things that you can do for everyone. It is about offering a unique experience that fulfills a need and gets customers to talk about it to others as a result.

Isn't Personality in the Eye of the Beholder?

The personality of an organization is not a combination of character traits as it is for individuals. *Personality is the unique, authentic and talkable soul of your brand that people can get passionate about.*

Uniqueness, authenticity and talkability are the key elements of personality. Personality requires all three, and the way to look at them is that they operate together through a filter. Before you can help your organization get more personality, there needs to be a common framework for describing it. That's the goal of the "UAT filter."

The UAT Filter

In terms of defining your brand personality, the best way to think about uniqueness, authenticity and talkability is to regard them as filters that build upon one another. The reason why this filter should be the place where you start is that personality can be easily confused with other things, including marketing campaigns or product design. If you look at the three core elements of personality, all are themes in marketing that you will find lots of resources and advice devoted to. The problem is, most businesses and businesspeople are taught to focus on these elements separately.

The first element of the UAT filter is being unique.

Street Food Is Unique ... Sometimes

People travel from all around the world to Chowpatty Beach in Mumbai, India, to sample a type of street food called bhelpuri. A mix of puffed rice, potatoes, chili, mint, coriander and chutney, the spicy snack is so much a staple at this popular location in Mumbai that many even consider it the one dining experience in Mumbai not to be missed. The problem with bhelpuris is that once you get to Chowpatty Beach, there are dozens of vendors all selling the same thing.

Summary: PERSONALITY NOT INCLUDED

Contrast this with an entirely different type of street food served by a guy in a trailer at Woolloomooloo wharf in Sydney, Australia. This destination, called Harry's Café de Wheels, serves meat pies loaded with mashed peas and gravy, or hot dogs piled high with toppings. No one else does what Harry's does — and his curbside café has been doing it for more than 50 years. Harry's is unique.

How to Be Unique

There are four true methods for creating something unique:

- 1. Find the Uncontested Space.** This is the most reliable, but most difficult, method. It involves finding a business that no one else is in, and then defining it through your company. It is also the hardest to rely on, because as soon as you create a new industry there will be other challengers entering and ready to take you on.
- 2. Position Yourself.** Positioning is the art of defining how you want to be perceived without necessarily changing the product you have. Ultimately, this is closely linked to storytelling.
- 3. Create a Twist.** Many times, you will be in a business where finding that completely different position seems impossible. In these businesses, you need to find an element that is unique and ownable that sets you apart. This is the twist. Finding this twist can be tricky, because it should be about more than just finding your “signature service.” It needs to be more significant.
- 4. Think Outside Your Region.** This is not about changing your business, but about changing where you do it. If you have a regional business that is the same as that of several competitors, consider uprooting and establishing it elsewhere. This is not possible for everyone, but for those who have the option, it can offer a strong way to stand out.

How to Be Authentic

Authenticity is the second element that influences how your personality is truly shaped and how your customers' perception of your business is formed.

Authentic brands know how to keep their real voices and use them to build credibility and trust with their customers. Authenticity must be built from several key components:

- 1. Define a Credible Heritage.** Where a company comes from is a great place to start to build the authentic story behind the brand. Having a real heritage that customers can identify with brings a brand to life and demonstrates that there was a real struggle by real people to start and build the company.

Virgin Gets Mile High in America

The Virgin Group has launched a long list of new businesses that demonstrate the individuality of the Virgin brand. When it comes to the businesses Virgin is best known for outside its music business, these are most certainly within the travel industry. The brand is increasing its reach in the industry with both international and domestic airlines, including Virgin Atlantic (for trans-atlantic flights), Virgin Blue (in Australia), Virgin Nigeria (Africa) and in 2007 the launch of Virgin America.

Passengers on Virgin America flights were treated to brand-new custom-designed planes that included lots of long-awaited features, including a seatback entertainment system with on-demand movies, an outlet for a laptop in every seat, the option to order food directly from the seatback, and what is perhaps the single most viral feature on its flights, a feature that many people love, seat-to-seat chat. Perhaps most significant, the staff on a Virgin America flight is not angry, rude, hostile or overregulated. When your staff is genuine and real, it makes a difference to the experience.

The result of all this attention to detail was that Virgin America's inaugural coast-to-coast flights garnered rave reviews from people who had taken the flights. All Virgin brands challenge convention and stand apart in some way. Virgin is the perfect brand example to help you understand what your organization's personality is, because it is unique, authentic and talkable — the key elements of personality.

- 2. Demonstrate Passion and Belief.** The real passion behind a company is something that cannot be faked or manipulated, and people easily recognize when this is being done.
- 3. Foster Individuals Instead of People.** Authentic brands have individuals working for them who are the ones that demonstrate passion for and belief in the brand.
- 4. Have Motives Beyond Profit.** If a customer feels like every interaction with you is nothing more than a chance for you to sell something, trust erodes. If, on the other hand, the interactions are about something more than profit, you can build trust.

The last element of the UAT filter is all about amplifying your personality and making it visible. If you think of finding your unique element as positioning, and interacting authentically as the way to build trust and credibility, then talkability is the all-important final component of personality.

Summary: PERSONALITY NOT INCLUDED

How Talkability Relates to Word of Mouth

Word of mouth is the most influential source of trusted advice for most consumers. There is a way to foster word of mouth and help it happen for your products and brand *on purpose*. Word of mouth doesn't have to be an accidental phenomenon.

Talkability is the third part of the UAT filter for a reason. It ties the idea of personality back to the core benefits of word-of-mouth marketing. Talkability is the hook that makes someone want to share your message with her or his friends and family. Creating something talkable is all about finding the right hook and helping your customers pass it on.

The Personality Principles

The common elements that unite successful brands are an understanding of how to use personality to stand out, and the focus on something that is more than a signature. When it comes to putting personality into action, there are three core principles you need to know:

Principle 1: Talk like a real person. Using a conversational style of communication is one of the cornerstones of personality and a necessity for any brand.

Principle 2: Admit you are marketing. Ironically, the admission that you are marketing can often create a compelling reason for a customer to pay attention, as long as your message is relevant.

Principle 3: Have a sense of humor. Faceless companies never laugh. Companies that can laugh automatically win credibility for being more authentic and real.

The UAT filter is all about positioning and how you define your organization. Remembering these principles will help you as we move from talking about positioning your brand and finding the right spokespeople to actually putting personality into action. ●

Lessons From the Storytellers

A backstory is the history behind an organization and how it became what it is today. It has real characters and a believable tale of how these characters had to evolve and overcome challenges in order to make their business successful.

Using stories to bring brands or products to life is not a new idea. There are many models describing how marketing can be influenced by storytelling principles. So what's different about a backstory?

What is different about a backstory is that its only goal is to create a foundation of credibility. It is not about putting product virtues into human terms or telling a

story that may persuade someone to purchase something. The best way to think about the backstory is this: If stories about your product or service are the main dish in your marketing meal, then the backstory is the appetizer.

Thinking Like a Screenwriter

Unlike in movies and television, marketing and promoting your business is not about telling a visual message on a screen. It is important, however, to tell your story *visually*. To understand this point, consider a few of the things that good screenwriters must do:

1. **Establish characters and stories quickly.**
2. **Create scenes and moments rather than prose and descriptions.**
3. **Always write with natural human language.**
4. **Foster an emotional connection with no basis of knowledge.**
5. **Weave these elements into a compelling story with a beginning, middle and end.**

The challenges are no different than those you face in telling your backstory. The mediums are different, as your end goal is not necessarily to create something watchable on a screen, but you must establish your characters and story to foster an emotional connection. You need to think like a screenwriter.

The BArc Model

The *story arc* is a common term used to describe the changes that happen to a main character from the

Five Story Models

In researching the many types of backstories that are presented by companies, it becomes clear that several specific types are repeated over and over again:

- **The Passionate Enthusiast.** A driven individual takes a personal passion and builds it into a successful business.
- **The Inspired Inventor.** A tireless inventor creates something new and different by not giving up on his or her vision.
- **The Smart Listener.** A new company is created as a result of listening to customers, partners or others.
- **The Likeable Hero.** A dedicated individual overcomes all odds to make his or her idea work.
- **The Little Guy vs. the Big Guy.** An underdog company takes on a seemingly unbeatable established adversary.

Compare and contrast the different story models and focus on the one that makes the most sense for your business.

Summary: PERSONALITY NOT INCLUDED

beginning to the end of any story. It goes from low points to high points, while introducing conflict to raise the stakes of the story. When it comes to applying these conventions of storytelling to your backstory, the best way to approach it is to use something called the backstory arc (BArc).

The BArc is the progression that your backstory must take in order to build an emotional investment. There are five key elements in the BArc model: characters, challenge, vision, conflict and triumph. To create a successful backstory for your brand, you must always address these five elements. ●

Conquering the Fear Factor

Establishing your authority within an organization is the first step toward helping your company better demonstrate its own personality. You need to do this in order to become credible (authority precedes credibility).

Once you have started to establish a basis of credibility within your company, the next step is usually tackling the roadblocks.

When you look at the reasons why personality makes brands nervous, you will notice that underlying all of those reasons is a single emotion — fear.

Four Barriers

A culture built on fear leads to individuals and companies that are afraid of change. In most organizations, the fear originates in one of four key places:

- **Success.** What we are doing is already working.
- **Uncertainty.** We don't know what will happen.
- **Tradition.** We have always done it this way.
- **Precedent.** No one else is doing it that way.

These are the four great barriers to a company's developing its own personality. To overcome these, you need to find a position of authority within your organization (based on respect or authority). ●

Add Personality and Stir

A *personality moment* is a trigger. It is a point in time when you have the chance to build your relationship with your customer, or when you are in danger of losing it.

Personality moments are the dozens of small occurrences that happen during an interaction between you and your customer, both before and after you make a sale or provide a service. The last stage of learning to inject more personality into your brand is understanding how to effectively spot and use your personality moments.

Personality moments are all around us, and they represent pivotal moments in which you can build customer loyalty and stand apart from competitors.

Three Methods of Getting Attention

Attention is the prize that most companies are seeking from their customers or potential customers. The brands that dominate our lives and do the best are the ones that are able to capture attention the longest.

Every idea you can think of for getting the attention of your customers will fall into one of three broad categories: *shock*, *sex* or *relevance*. Every way to get attention comes from some combination of these three elements.

The best examples of using sex to capture attention are those that manage to merge it with a message of relevance. One great example of this is the now-famous series of online videos developed by Ogilvy & Mather in Toronto for Dove skin-care products. The videos were part of Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty and showed young girls being assailed by images of supermodel perfection. The ads still used sex, but merged it with a message of relevance, which was (from a tagline used in the second video, called "Onslaught") to "speak to your daughter before the beauty industry does."

Shock

When it comes to shock, one of the most riveting examples in recent memory is the series of safety-focused ads for Volkswagen developed by Crispin Porter & Bogusky, in which jarring images of people walking away from split-second accidents were used to show the safety of VW cars.

In these examples of the successful use of sex and shock, the reason for their success is that the sex or shock is coupled with a relevant message. Of the three methods for capturing attention, relevance is clearly the unifying factor that makes a message more than something that simply captures attention for a moment and squanders it after that.

The Attention Paradox

We are all getting better at filtering out information that we don't care about. *The point is not that we have less attention to give, but that we are far more selective about how we spend it.*

Now, let's apply selective attention to the buying cycle. This is a cycle of activities that typically happens between the moment when consumers are deciding what to buy and the point when they use it and start the process over again. Today's buying cycle includes four phases: *research*, *purchase*, *interact* and *share*.

How to Build Your Authority

In order to effectively fight the barriers to using personality in your organization, you first need to build your authority. *Building your authority is all about earning respect.* Respect is the currency that allows you to gain support for anything you propose and to inspire others to believe in you. Here is how you can go about building your authority:

- 1. Value other opinions.** You have to give respect to get respect. Valuing the opinions and beliefs of others, even when they differ from your own, is a central element in creating mutual respect.
- 2. Speak second (or last).** The practice of listening first and talking second allows you to hear other points of view before you begin to speak.
- 3. Offer a point of view.** This means that you should have convincing reasons for doing what you do and question the things that you believe are wrong, and should stick to your views.
- 4. Avoid condescension.** Find a way to avoid being condescending toward peers who may not always follow what you are trying to do.
- 5. Share the credit.** Nothing fosters respect more than bringing others into the successes you may enjoy within an organization.
- 6. Have a personal brand.** This final point has importance to your authority and the rest of your career.

Research

Whether you realize it or not, the bulk of your time, effort and budget in marketing is being spent on just one phase of the buying cycle: the first one, *research*.

The paradox of attention is that the moment when you have your customer's nearly undivided attention is the same moment when the relationship with the customer moves from marketing to other areas of the business. The real question you need to answer is: How can you start to better focus on those moments where you *already have your customer's attention* and use those to demonstrate your personality?

It is the forgotten moments that are ripe for using personality. The secret to being able to use personality moments effectively is having a good eye for spotting when you have captured your customer's attention and have a chance to do more with it. Your goal should be to more efficiently turn every such situation into a personality moment. The brands that do this successfully are the ones that develop personality. ●

The Fifth Phase: Indifference

The four-phase buying cycle accurately reflects what it is meant to: the phases of buying. There is a phase, however, that comes before buying, research and even before consideration — the phase of indifference.

This phase includes all the moments when people are not in the buying cycle at all. They are indifferent because they don't care about you or what you have to offer. This group of consumers who are not in the market for what you have to offer are the toughest to reach. What do you do in this fifth stage, when relevance is hardest to inject because it cannot be applied to a specific need? To answer that question, let's look at some of the most-watched viral videos on YouTube for a product from the past year, a simple series of videos asking a surprisingly compelling question: Will it blend?

Will It Blend?

The company behind these videos is Blendtec and the videos feature a guy in a white lab coat who takes all kinds of products and sticks them into a Blendtec blender to answer the question of the program — will it blend? The videos have created a need among some people to get a new blender from Blendtec, even though they may not have realized the need before. The personality moment for a Blendtec blender comes at some point while you are watching it slice through the casing of an iPhone and the smoke is rising.

As consumer evangelists become more common, brands need to find a way to create talkable hooks that inspire these evangelists to discuss the brand. When consumers demand more authenticity, the only way to respond is to find ways to share the real story behind your product or brand. This is not about getting bigger or getting smaller. This is not even about finding something to stand for. This is about understanding what the underlying personality of your brand is, and finding the right moments to use it. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Personality Not Included*, you'll also like:

- 1. *Meatball Sundae* by Seth Godin.** Find out what to do about the increasing power of stories, not facts; about shorter and shorter attention spans; and about the new math that says 5,000 people who want to hear your message are more valuable than 5 million who don't.
- 2. *Naked Conversations* by Robert Scoble and Shel Israel.** Learn how small businesses and Fortune 500 companies alike can benefit from blogging.
- 3. *Wikinomics* by Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams.** Discover how mass collaboration is happening not just at Web sites such as Wikipedia and YouTube, but also at traditional companies that have embraced technology to breathe new life into their enterprises.