



CAN'T BUY ME LIKE

HOW AUTHENTIC CUSTOMER CONNECTIONS DRIVE SUPERIOR RESULTS

Today's brands face an apparent choice between two evils: continue betting on their increasingly ineffective advertising or put blind faith in the supposedly mystical power of social media, where "likes" stand in for transactions and a mass audience is maddeningly elusive. There has to be a better way.

As Lennon and McCartney wrote a half century ago, money can't buy you love. But in today's world, where people have become desensitized—even disillusioned—by ad campaigns and marketing slogans, that maxim needs an update: Money can't even buy you like.

That's because we've entered the "Relationship Era," where the only path for businesses seeking long-term success is to create authentic customer relationships. Not through hip social media promotions, viral videos or blizzards of micro-targeted online ads. Those tactics, which simply disguise old ways of thinking with new technology, just don't work in the long run.

So what does work in this bewildering new era? Where do "authentic customer relationships" come from? The answers will make some leaders sigh with relief while others rip their hair out: Honesty. Transparency. Shared values. A purpose beyond profit. Sure you still need a high-quality product or service to offer, but that's not enough. Now that people can easily discover everything that's ever been said about your brand, you can't manipulate, seduce, persuade, flatter or entertain them into loyalty. You have to treat them like flesh-and-blood human beings, not abstract consumers or data points on a spreadsheet.

It may sound like the woo-woo language of self-help books and inspirational wall posters. But as Garfield and Levy show in this book, it's the deadly serious reality of business in the 2010s. It's why General Motors abandoned its \$10 million annual budget for Facebook ads, and why some brands have hurt themselves badly on social media by nagging, interrupting, abusing and generally ticking off their customers.

The good news is that some companies have already embraced the Relationship Era and are enjoying consistent growth and profits while spending substantially less on marketing than their competitors. The authors show what we can learn from case studies such as:

- **Patagonia, a clothing company with a passion for environmentalism, which solidified its customer relationships by urging people NOT to buy one of its jackets.**
- **Panera Bread, which doubled per-store sales by focusing on ways to create a welcoming environment while spending just one percent of sales on advertising.**
- **Secret, the women's antiperspirant brand, which gained significant share by focusing on its commitment to strong women.**
- **Krispy Kreme, which has built a near cult of loyal Facebook and Twitter fans, all but obliterating the need for paid advertising.**

Blending powerful new research, fascinating examples and practical advice, Garfield and Levy show how any company can thrive in the Relationship Era.



Bob Garfield is the cohost of NPR's *On The Media* and a columnist for MediaPost. Previously at *Advertising Age*, he has been a prominent commentator on and analyst of advertising and marketing for 30 years. His previous books include *The Chaos Scenario*. He lives outside Washington, D.C.



Doug Levy is the founder and CEO of MEplusYOU, a leading strategic and creative agency that believes authentic relationships fuel astonishing brands. This is his first book. He lives in Dallas.

“ At Zappos, relationships have always been a top priority. *Can't Buy Me Like* explores why this is so important for all companies. Garfield and Levy smartly describe how to build relationships with customers, vendors and employees to create an extraordinary business. ”

Tony Hsieh,
Author of *Delivering Happiness* and CEO, Zappos.com, Inc.

“ This is a fabulous book that describes a revolutionary new vision for marketing, the Relationship Era, based on purpose, authenticity, trust and care. Written in an easy-to-read style and full of interesting stories, this book is both inspiring and fun. I give it my highest recommendation. ”

John Mackey,
Founder and co-CEO, Whole Foods

“ This book is funny, a bit profane and utterly profound. At Patagonia, we cherish our relationships, but these guys have located and explained dimensions of the Relationship Era that opened my eyes—and mind. What an enjoyable and enlightening journey. ”

Casey Sheahan,
CEO, Patagonia

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