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Book Review: Wizard of Ads

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Abstract

The Wizard of Ads, by Roy H. Williams. (Austin, Tex: Bard Press, 1998), 221 pages, ISBN 1-885167.29.6
Trade Paperback 1-885167-32-+6, \$16.95 paperback / \$26.95 hardcover.

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Book Review: *Wizard of Ads*

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The Wizard of Ads, by Roy H. Williams. (Austin, Tex.: Bard Press, 1998), 221 pages, ISBN1-885167-29-6 Trade Paperback 1-885167-32-6, \$16.95 paperback/\$26.95 hardcover.

The Wizard of Ads is a book of 100 and one chapters and 221 pages. What is most interesting is that each chapter does not extend more than two pages, and many chapters are only one page in length. Each and every chapter is full of interesting information that is easy reading, and well worth the time to review.

Not interested in a complete read from cover to cover? No problem. One can pick up this supplemental text and start any where at any time and still receive the benefit of Williams' experience in advertising: his pearls of wisdom and insight into life's lessons.

The text is separated into three sections. Section One, "Turn-

ing Words into Magic," focuses on the world of advertising, looking at such areas as trendcasting, why good ads stick in the mind, the qualitative trap, believability, the quick set-up, fantasy, pitfalls of price-driven ads, predictability, real messages, your reticular activators, substantiation, intellect vs. emotion, and other relevant subjects. The author's folksy approach is peppered with quotes worth thinking about and analogies that many can relate to easily. Not having direct applications or examples may cause readers problems, feeling that it was a nice vignette, but wondering if there is a relevant application. Expanding the text with additional examples would make it easier for the individual reader. It would also detract from the thought-provoking aspect of very usable information.

Section Two, "Turning Strangers into Customers," covers the people, sales, intangibility, and inseparability factors¹ of marketing

communications. The author provides provoking thoughts on delight, passion, the power of preconception, unique selling proposition, initiative, personality, living in reality, the benefits of failure, the planning problem, the power of presentation, and listening to idiots. He focuses on customer expectations, employees and attitudes, inspiration to be the best that one can be, and employee empowerment. Williams gives the reader basic business concepts and practical applications as a follow up to the advertising insights covered in Section One and discusses giving customers that little something extra with their purchase, the importance of employees and attitudes, and employee empowerment issues.

In Section Three, "Turning Dreams into Realities," the author takes a more philosophical bent and presents the benefits of his life lessons. He provides insights into luck, the sad predominance of pessimism, living a win-win life, the power of dreams, the importance of now, the necessity of focus, measuring success, recognizing destiny, and knowing one's own vision. The reader is given the drawbacks of attitudes or a life focus that is common, but tends to hold the individual back from any truly great achievement or accomplishment, and is given an alternative perspective to contemplate.

The Wizard of Ads is an excellent supplementary text for use in marketing, sales, and advertising classes, especially Sections One and Two. Section Three may be

applied in some specialized human relations courses, especially considering its highly philosophical bent. It is excellent for class or small group discussion and it can be used to expand on standard course text materials currently offered. While it appears at first glance to be an easy-read, it is, in fact, very thought provoking and requires the reader to analyze concepts in depth and beyond the superficial. It makes the student consider various ideas and philosophies and then determine their own practical, real-world applications.

Letters written to Williams' clients and friends make up the essays included in *The Wizard of Ads*. It is worth a quick read and then a more thoughtful and reflective consideration of the materials. Many readers will find their curiosity piqued and will keep returning for more detailed consideration of the material. It is very useful in making students think, rather than just absorb and repeat materials presented in lecture format. The fact that the reader may select appropriate chapters at random also makes the text desirable as a basis for class discussion and case study.

References

- ¹ Philip Kotler, John Bowen, and James Makens, *Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Prentice Hall, 1999): 42 - 43. Intangibility of services requires the customer to find tangible evidence to provide information and confidence about a service. The consumer identifies characteristics found in the

service provider as representing the company. The customer "humanizes" the company through contact with the person providing the service. Inseparability indicates that customer-contact employees are part of the product. A company's success or failure has a strong dependence on customer-employee interaction and the quality of service provided. The food in a restaurant may be outstanding, but if the service person has a poor attitude, or provides inattentive service, customers will downrate the overall restaurant experience.

Joan S. Remington is an assistant professor of Travel, Tourism and Marketing in the School of Hospitality Management at Florida International University and has a law degree from Willamette University College of Law.