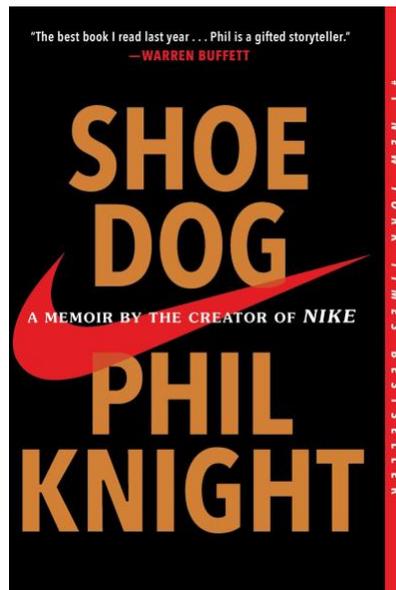




Marketing Matters

By Richard D. Czerniawski

LEARNING FROM ONE WHO'S BEEN THERE AND DONE THAT



I recently finished reading *SHOE DOG: A Memoir By The Creator of NIKE*. It's Phil Knight's memoir of founding and building a mega-business. Revenues for the business in 2020 topped more than \$35-billion.

The book chronicles the ups and downs, challenges and successes, of life as an entrepreneur and start-up. It reveals what has made Nike a successful company. Interestingly, according to Mr. Knight, who is worth more than \$10-billion, it is not, nor was it ever, about the money. Instead, he and his chief lieutenants wanted to make a difference, contribute something to society. I believe it's captured in the company's slogan, "Just do it."

Mr. Knight says, *"When you make something, when you improve something, when you deliver something, when you add some new thing or service to the lives of strangers, making them happier, or healthier, or safer, or better, and when you do it all crisply and efficiently, smartly, the way everything should be done but so seldom is—you're participating more fully in the whole human drama. More than simply alive, you're helping others to live more fully, and if that's business, all right, call me a businessman."*

Nike became more than a brand. It became a statement of an indefatigable, winning spirit.



JUST DO IT.

Marketers did not lead this path to success. Instead, accountants and lawyers made-up his leadership team and ran critical aspects of the business. He states, *“When you hired an accountant, you knew he or she could count. When you hired a lawyer, you knew he or she could talk. When you hired a marketing expert, or product developer, what did you know? Nothing. You couldn’t predict what he or she could do, or even if he or she could do anything. And the typical business school graduate? He or she didn’t want to start out with a bag selling shoes. Plus, they all had zero experience, so you were simply rolling the device based on how well they did in an interview.”*

However, these were not just accountants (of which Knight was once) and lawyers. These were people who shared the goal and vision for Nike. Moreover, each carried a chip on their shoulders and needed to prove their value.

How did he manage this, his team? Hahaha. What do you think of a leader who refers to his team members, including himself, as “Buttfaces?” One who conducts annual “Buttface Meetings,” where “no idea was too sacred to be mocked, and no person too important to be ridiculed”—including Mr. Knight? It was all about facing up to and addressing critical issues, removing barriers, and driving innovation.

As per his leadership style, Phil Knight gave his people ample rope to take a leadership role in each of the many areas he employed and challenged them. Perhaps, it was his *laissez-faire* style or inability to make decisions. While there may have been a modicum of each in him, I think it had to do with trust in his people. His maxim, repeated throughout the book, is *“Don’t tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results.”* They returned his trust with stellar results.

What does it mean to me? Here are some thoughts:

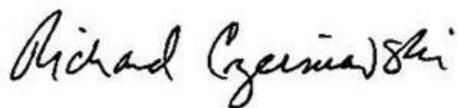
1. ***It's a reminder that business is about more than "the money."*** It comes down to our individual, brand, and company "WHY." We're fueled by something bigger than ourselves—making a contribution to society and the lives of others. It's more than bringing a drug to market. Instead, it is extending the life or the quality of life of patients. It's more than filling a belly. Instead, it is nourishing the body and planet with foods loaded with nutrients, produced from regenerative farming.

2. ***Everyone in the company needs to engage in marketing—from top to bottom.*** It's all about creating brand loyalty. Each individual, regardless of the discipline (e.g., manufacturing, logistics, sales, etc.) needs to think about the customer experience they are delivering to win and maintain customers.
3. ***The best marketers do not need to come from marketing.*** Many successful business leaders, like Mr. Knight and his lieutenants, came from other disciplines. However, they had strong qualities that everyone in marketing should possess: curiosity, imagination, desire to serve customers, relentless pursuit of improvement, a track record of success, the courage of their conviction, among others.
4. ***Create and nurture an environment for innovation and continuous improvement.*** To achieve this, we need to be open to, and create an environment for opposing views. We must provide a safe space to allow people to speak freely and not cancel them, even if we don't like what they are proposing. Otherwise, we risk shutting them down and retarding or, worse yet, arresting progress.
5. ***Coach and add-value to get the best from your team members.*** When we coach, we add-value versus evaluate. Instead of telling people what's wrong with the work, we identify what we need to see to make it more productive. Importantly, we avoid micro-managing. Specifically, we identify "what" needs to be done, not "how" one should do it. As Phil Knight exclaims, *"Don't tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results."*

There are many more learnings to be gleaned from SHOE DOG. I highly recommend it. I believe you will find it informative and inspiring.

Learn from a marketer who has "been there and done that" to make your marketing matter more. Read my most recent book, AVOIDING CRITICAL MARKETING ERRORS: How to Go from Dumb to Smart Marketing. It shares learning from my nearly 50-year successful career in marketing leading brands worldwide, from a wide variety of categories from beverages to pharmaceuticals to medical devices and beyond! It identifies those critical marketing errors of omission and commission to avoid and provides fixes. Additionally, it guides marketers on achieving marketing excellence. Learn more here: <http://bdn-intl.com/avoiding-critical-marketing-errors>

Peace and best wishes,





Richard D. Czerniawski

1812 Yates Avenue

Pensacola, Florida 32503

847-312-8822

richardcz@bdn-intl.com

richardcz@me.com

www.bdn-intl.com