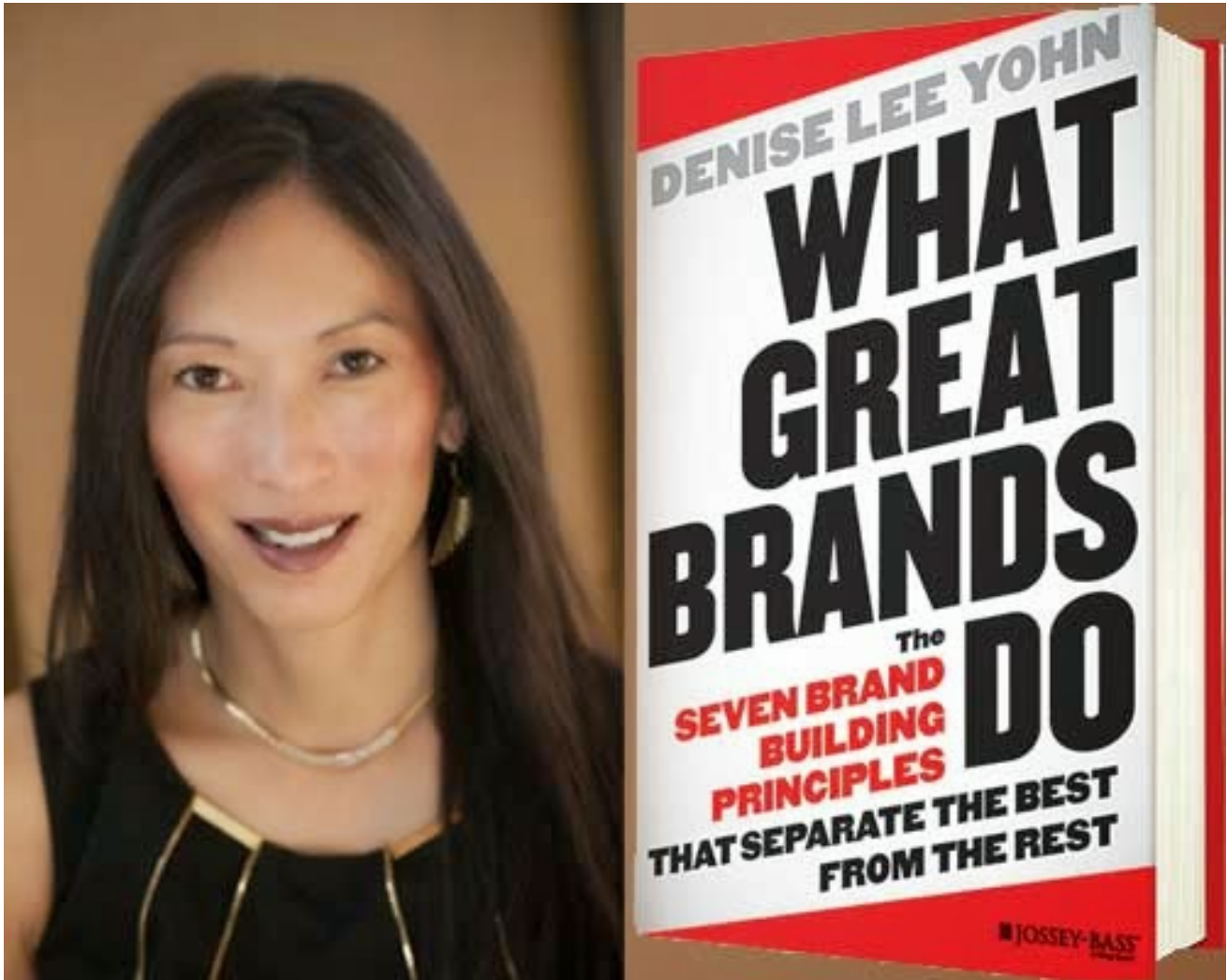


What Great Brands Do – A Book Review



I heard **Denise Lee Yohn** on Mitch Joel's [Six Pixels of Separation](#) podcast last month. She was promoting her new book, *What Great Brands Do* and it piqued my interest.

Denise's marketing book unravels seven principles that demonstrate what the great brands do...

They start inside
Avoid selling products
Ignore trends
Don't chase customers
Sweat the small stuff
Commit and stay committed
Never had to "give back"

This book provides both strategic and tactical ideas on how to build a great brand.

If it were just theory, it would weaken the concepts. **But Denise takes her idea of operationalizing marketing and provides tools to help make it core to the culture of a company.**

Operationalizing marketing is a vital and important phrase in the book. It means that a company lives the brand in every part of a company. It is an idea not embraced by many companies where they think brands are solely the function of the marketing department. Nothing could be further from the truth. Marketing may be charged with communicating brand messages, but a company has to live its brand in everything it does. That includes logistics, quality, customer service, sales, operations, finance and on and on.

What I enjoyed in this book is that it is so counter intuitive.

It takes the obvious and flips it on its head, not to be provocative but to help make clear how brands can be frameworks and guideposts for companies. Yohn cites specific and clear examples of successes and failures throughout the book to illustrate her ideas.

Goodbye Kodak Moment

I love her explanation of what really went wrong at Kodak, a company that mattered a lot to me in my formative years. They were first to get digital. They had the technology. They recognized the threat to their film business.

They just didn't fully embrace how digital needed to be operationalized as part of the new Kodak brand culture. They never snapped into it changing the mindset of the company from an analog (film) business to a company based on the new world of digital photography.

Companies like Amazon exemplify this notion of operationalizing a brand throughout the company. Their anthem is to be the most customer centric company in the world. Every decision, every day by every employee passes through this filter. If it doesn't provide this benefit to their customers, then it is off brand. This isn't coming from a marketing department but lives and breathes in every nook and cranny of the Amazon organization.

A brand isn't a logo or the colors on a package. A brand represent the real benefit derived by a company and is valued by the community they serve. Companies like Lululemon are dissected to help you understand why they behave the way they do – setting high retail prices with very fast turning inventory. They understand a core insight about their consumers that lives within the company's brand and once again, isn't a marketing function.

I read a lot of marketing and general business management books to challenge my thinking and to give me insights into why companies behave the way they do. **Yohn's book offers a clear framework for thinking about brands today** and I'd highly recommend.

Perhaps my favorite quote from the book comes toward the end. She makes the succinct point that it doesn't really matter what you say your brand is all about – ultimately it is what you do that matters.



“Your brand can’t just be a promise; it must be a promise delivered.”

– Denise Lee Yohn

This book delivers on its promise and I'd urge those interested in business and marketing management to buy and read this well-written book.

Reading is what great brand leaders do.

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