

Exploring the Brand with Denise Lee Yohn

Maria Elena Duron

Published November 2, Denise Lee Yohn's latest work has already begun accumulating a growing following of supporters. *Extraordinary Experiences* is an ebook that delves into explaining and understanding how certain brick-and-mortar companies continually maintain growth throughout an age where the internet has been making such establishments virtually obsolete. In it, she delves into the minds of great business leaders and how they address both unique challenges and opportunities found only in the real world as a means of fostering progress. Yohn is very adamant in her stance that customer experiences aren't extraordinary on their own – businesses have to make them happen. As she goes on to explain, they grow from smart decisions, strong foundations and expert execution.



Studying Cases

To further drive home how restaurants and retail sell their brand, she offers up case studies covering such big names as Costco, Popeyes and PIRCH. However, even though these are relegated to just food and retail, the explanations have been tailored to discuss generalized brand building in the face of challenges, making them ideal for businesses of any size, any age and in any industry.

In addition, Yohn breaks away from the traditional view of branding as a business' sum collection of avatars and logos by pushing the employee agenda. With a heavy focus on data, her arguments are backed by those very case studies she presents. While this means cutting out a lot of fluff, such to-the-point writing means it is a tad bare bones at times. Readers that enjoy a hearty book will see the value in investing in Yohn's publication, *What Great Brands Do*, which delves into what branding is and takes the time to really break down and explore the idea of the brand.

I recently had the honor of hosting Denise Lee Yohn on a recent [#brandchat video chat](#). In addition to the chat, I had the opportunity to interview her.

What compelled you to focus on the Retail and Restaurant Industry for this book?

Denise Lee Yohn: Three reasons: First, I wanted to make the brand-building principles from my first book, *What Great Brands Do*, as tangible and accessible as possible and so I thought using retail and restaurant brand examples would do that. We all shop and eat out, so we can see first-hand how the principles affect the experiences we have every day. Second, brick-and-mortar companies are facing a lot of pressure – whether it's e-retailers or digital/mobile services like Blue Apron or GrubHub – so I wanted to show how extraordinary experiences help brands fight and win fierce competitive battles. And finally, even though I work on and have studied a full range of types of brands, I have a lot of experience in the restaurant and retail categories – brands from Dunkin' Donuts to Target. I wanted to share from these experiences.

What do you think is the biggest challenge in creating extraordinary experiences?

Denise Lee Yohn: Actually there seem to be two fundamental challenges. The first is that creating extraordinary experiences requires a mindset shift. Business leaders must understand that they don't just happen; nor do they result only from excellent operations. They stem from a deliberate and consistent use of brand-building principles that

produce a strong cultural foundation inside their organizations, savvy planning decisions, and integrity in execution. Second, extraordinary experiences requires everyone who works on the brand to understand and embrace their roles in interpreting and reinforcing it – business leaders must cultivate this shared understanding and common mission throughout their organizations.

Brand values and consumer demand – how do you balance those for a great customer experience?

Denise Lee Yohn: I always advise my clients to be consumer-informed and brand-led – meaning, you want to be as informed as possible about what your target customers want and need and how they act within the competitive landscape, but you don't want to rely on those insights to drive your business because customers don't know your capabilities, your vision, what's possible. Your business should be brand-driven – put your brand values and attributes and use them to lead your business forward.

Perfect Praise

Even so, it's safe to assume that most business persons do not have time to sit down and truly digest a treatise on the "brand" and are looking for a short, fast read that still provides a good chunk of knowledge – something this book does extremely well. Many readers even suggest gifting it to senior leaders for Christmas as others praise it for being good enough to shepherd them into the world of business books.

Beyond this, though, there is a fact that's never really brought up. The current fans of *Extraordinary Experiences* also mention that it's a great follow-up to Yohn's earlier publication, *What Great Brands Do*. What you should take away from this is there is the potential that this book does not stand as well on its own as it does if you've read her earlier work.

Either way, *Extraordinary Experiences* is truly a solid read for those seeking to better understand the brand and how it relates to customers and employees alike.

About

[Maria Elena Duron](#) is a connector, trainer and coach. Small Business Owners that work with Maria Elena develop a profitable relationship building system, appeal to their brand advocates, and increase sales. Take the uncertainty out of how your personal and business brand delivers business -[Get Your Checklist](#).

