

## Dick Maggione: The Magnificent Seven: Best marketing books ever

By [Dick Maggione Special](#) to The Canton Repository

Posted at 7:43 AM

If you want to get better and better at running your business, you would do well to read a few of the best marketing books of all time.

Hewlett-Packard co-founder David Packard famously said, “Marketing is far too important to leave to the marketing department.”

Marketing is central to a business. Without marketing, a product might never reach its fullest value. Without marketing, a business might not even survive.

Thousands of books about marketing have been written. There’s not enough time to read all of them and run your business. So we’ve come up with a list of the top seven marketing books.

Our list of books is in the order we recommend they be read. Topping the list is the classic that was named as the most important marketing concept of the 20th century in Advertising Age, the advertising industry’s leading publication.

### 1. “Positioning: The Battle For Your Mind” — Jack Trout and Al Ries

[Positioning](#) is the act of designing your product or service and its perception to occupy a differentiated place in the mind of the customer. That differentiated perception is the strategic brand position.

Originally published in 1981, it is even more relevant today due to the ever-increasing level of competition. The 20th anniversary edition, published in 2001, has all the original product examples with the addition of later examples. It is a battle for the mind. If you were to read only one book on marketing, this is the one.

### 2. “Obvious Adams” — Robert R. Updegraff

This is an obscure and very short novel written in 1929 about a successful businessman. The book was mentioned in another book I read. It wasn’t available on Amazon because it was long out of print, but I found a used copy on eBay for 50 cents (shipping was \$2.50!). The book is about common sense and parallels some of positioning’s concepts. I gave my copy of the book to Jack Trout during one of his visits to the agency and asked him to read it on his flight back home.

Disappointed that I didn't hear anything from Trout about the book for a couple of years, I was pleasantly surprised when I received a copy of his 15th book, "In Search of the Obvious." He dedicated the book to me and made our agency a little famous. In the book, Jack says, referring to Obvious Adams, "The best book that I have ever read on marketing."

The book shares the five insightful tests of obviousness all in a quick-read novel format. The book is now in print and available on Amazon thanks to Jack Trout reviving it after close to a century.

### **3. "Playing to Win" — A.G. Lafley and Roger Martin**

The most current book on our list, published in 2017, was written by A.G. Lafley, who was CEO of Procter & Gamble twice, and Roger Martin, the former dean of the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. The two have collaborated on strategy at P&G for years. Their book lays it all out — not hypotheticals, but real life.

Together, they doubled P&G's sales, quadrupled its profits and increased its market value by more than \$100 billion.

This book goes through the five important questions that can and should be asked at every level of the organization: What is your winning aspiration — your "why"? Where should you play? How can you win there — your positioning? What capabilities do you need? What management systems would support it all?

You will use these questions for the remainder of your career to keep you on strategy.

### **4. "Ogilvy on Advertising" — David Ogilvy**

This book explores what the truly creative folks do that's almost magical when it comes to marketing execution.

This is the bible for everyone who works in advertising. David Ogilvy is considered the father of advertising. His tenure coincided with the "Mad Men" days. You will develop an understanding and appreciation for what works and what doesn't and why.

### **5. "Kotler on Marketing" — Philip Kotler**

Northwestern University's Distinguished Professor of Marketing at the Kellogg School of Management authors a non-textbook book for the businessperson. He covers a lot of territory using examples from just about every marketplace.

An alternative, if you're so inclined, is Kotler's, "Marketing Management" (17th edition), a 700-page college textbook. You won't find a more comprehensive and up-to-date textbook. It can also serve as good reference.

### **6. "The Brand Gap" — Marty Neumeier**

This book is a breath of fresh air. Neumeier defines a brand as a person's gut feeling about your product, service or company. He says we're all emotional, intuitive beings, despite our best efforts to be rational.

We couldn't agree more. The book is a fun read and visually delightful. You won't put it down. As with David Ogilvy's book, your comfort with marketing and advertising will grow.

## 7. “Blue Ocean Strategy” — W. Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne

We end our list with a book on marketing strategy. If you don't get the strategy right, nothing else matters downstream.

The authors say companies spend too much time fighting over the same customers, the so-called red, “bloodied” oceans. Rather, they say companies should look for “blue oceans” by moving into untapped, and therefore uncontested, markets resulting in highly profitable growth. Your competition will become irrelevant.

Read the seven books above and you are sure to become smarter about marketing than most of your competition.

For people in the marketing field or who just want to go deeper, here are a few more gems: “The Art of War,” “The 22 Immutable Laws of Advertising,” “Guerrilla Marketing,” “Influence,” “Made to Stick,” “Tipping Point,” “Permission Marketing,” “Buyology,” “My Life in Advertising and Scientific Advertising,” “Good to Great,” “The Tipping Point,” “Brand Leadership,” “What Great Brands Do,” “Crossing the Chasm,” “Content Marketing” and “The Innovator’s Dilemma.”

*Dick Maggiore is president and CEO of [Innis Maggiore](#) founded in Canton in 1974, and today recognized as America's leading positioning ad agency helping brands compete and win in the marketplace here and across the country.*