

FOREWORD BY **DAVID AAKER**

WINNING THROUGH PLATFORMS

24 WAYS TO WIN



How to Succeed
When Every
Competitor Has One

**TED MOSER, CHARLOTTE BLOOM
AND OMAR AKHTAR**



AMERICAN MARKETING
ASSOCIATION

WINNING THROUGH PLATFORMS

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How to Succeed When Every
Competitor Has One

BY

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*To our families, for their infinite inspiration,
encouragement, and love*

CONTENTS

<i>AMA Introduction to Book Series</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Book Series Overview</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Foreword - David Aaker</i>	<i>xvii</i>

THE SEARCH FOR PLATFORM ADVANTAGE

Competing in the Platform Era	2
Introduction: Light the Dark	3
Learn The Playbook, Find Your Plays	17
New Mindsets for New Rules	23
Your Journey Begins	36

THE PLATFORM PLAYBOOK

Part 1 Portfolio Plays

1.1 Optimal Platform Role(s)	43
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Part 2 Design Plays

2.1 Customer Coalition Edge	61
2.2 Pivotal Persona Value	71
2.3 Platform-Wide Differentiators	79
2.4 Magnetic Offer Architecture	89

Part 3 Demand Plays

3.1	Brand-Demand Lead Engine	103
3.2	Lead-to-Sale Smoothing	111
3.3	Success to Momentum	119
3.4	In-Use Enrichment	127
3.5	Catalytic Community	135
3.6	Customer Renewal and Expansion	143

Part 4 Innovation Plays

4.1	Reimagined Flows	157
4.2	Extended Ecosystems	167
4.3	Better Data Deal	175
4.4	Brands Get Brains	183
4.5	Reality Shifts	193
4.6	Visibility for Good	203

Part 5 Interaction Plays

5.1	FullJourney Engagement	215
5.2	Dynamic Segmentation	229
5.3	Agile Content	237
5.4	Adaptive Innovation	245

Part 6 Transformation Plays

6.1	Enterprise Body, Mind, and Soul	255
6.2	Collaborative Go to Market	265
6.3	Growth Operations	275

LEADING A PLATFORM BUSINESS**Part 7 Culture Shifts**

Strategic Advantage and the Value Kaleidoscope 287

In-market Advantage and the Mutualistic Bee 293

Alignment Advantage and the Synchronized Swimmer 297

Part 8 Transformative Leadership

Company-wide Leadership 303

Key Business Function Leadership 306

Your Personal Transformation 309

References 311

Index 337

Personal Thanks 347

Contributors 349

About the Authors 353

AMA INTRODUCTION TO BOOK SERIES

Welcome to marketing in the 21st century – the age of data, social, mobile, automation, and globalization. The field is changing so quickly; it's difficult to keep up. There is increasing uncertainty about the profession's mission and responsibilities. Meantime, the demands marketers face are ever more complex and critical.

This is why the American Marketing Association (AMA) has engaged some of the world's most innovative professionals, academics, and thought leaders to create *The Seven Problems of Marketing* – a seven-book series that introduces and explores a new set of organizing and actionable principles for the 21st-century marketer.

Each book in the series takes a deep dive into one problem, offering expertise, direction, and case studies while striking a balance between theory and application. The goal is to provide a contemporary framework for marketers as they navigate the unique challenges and vast opportunities of today's dynamic global marketplace.

Here are the seven problems addressed in the series:

- Problem 1: Effectively targeting high-value sources of growth.
- Problem 2: Defining the role of marketing in the firm and C-suite.
- Problem 3: Managing the digital transformation of the modern corporation.
- Problem 4: Generating and using insight to shape marketing practice.
- Problem 5: Dealing with an omni-channel world.
- Problem 6: Competing in dynamic, global markets.
- Problem 7: Balancing incremental and radical innovation.

Importantly, the books in this series are written by and for marketers and marketing scholars. All of the conceptual and analytical frameworks offered are born from practice. The authors have applied their tools and methods in client settings, allowing them to test and refine their ideas in the face of real-world challenges. You'll read true stories about how marketers have used innovative thinking and practices to overcome seemingly impossible dilemmas and bring about game-changing success. Theories are explored in a way that busy marketers can understand viscerally. Client stories have been incorporated to illustrate how to apply the analysis frames as well as deal with application and practice-based issues.

Our fundamental aim with this series is to hone the practice of marketing for the 21st century. The AMA has asserted that there is a critical tension within every enterprise between “best” and “next” practices. Marketers often choose best practices because they are safe and proven. Next practices, which push boundaries and challenge conventions, can be riskier. Few enterprises, however, transform themselves and achieve breakout performance with best practices alone. The next practices discussed in this series are often responsible for driving outperformance. The books in this series are designed to engage you on two levels: individually, by increasing your knowledge and “bench strength,” and organizationally, by improving the application of marketing concepts within your firm. When you finish each book, we are confident you will feel energized and think differently about the field of marketing and its organizing principles. Through the explanation of theory and compelling examples of its application, you will be empowered to help your organization quickly identify and maximize opportunities. After all, the opportunity to innovate and make an impact is what attracted most of us to the field of marketing in the first place.

Bennie F. Johnson, CEO
American Marketing Association

BOOK SERIES OVERVIEW

In 2016, the AMA established its first-ever intellectual agenda. This intellectual agenda focused on complex, challenging, and difficult-to-solve problems that would be of interest to both academics and practitioners. A working team of scholars and practitioners, selected by AMA leadership, identified seven big problems of marketing as the foundation of the agenda. These problems were ranked from a much longer list of challenges. These seven big problems shared three attributes: they were pressing issues that confronted every organization, they were C-suite level in scope, and they could not be solved by one article or book. Indeed, the team felt that each problem could trigger a decade-long research agenda. A key purpose of the AMA intellectual agenda was thus to stimulate research, dialogue, and debate among the entire AMA membership.

The purpose of the AMA book series is to shed a deeper light on each of the seven problems. In particular, the aim of the series is to enable readers to think differently and take action with regard to these big problems. Thus, the book series operates at two levels: individually, increasing your knowledge and bench strength, and at the organization level, improving the application of marketing concepts within your firm.

Given the nature of these problems, no single book or article can fully address the problem. By their very nature, these problems are significant, nuanced, and approachable from multiple vantage points. As such, each of the books provides a single perspective on the issue. This single perspective is intended to both advance knowledge and spark debate. While the books may emerge from academic literature and/or managerial application, their fundamental aim is to improve the practice of marketing. Books selected for the series are evaluated on six criteria.

1. *Seven Big Problems Focus*

Each book is focused on one of the seven big problems of marketing. These problems identify key conceptual issues in the field of marketing that are the focus of emerging academic research and that practitioners are actively confronting today.

2. *Audience*

The book is written primarily for an audience of thoughtful practitioners. Thoughtful in this context means that the practitioner is an active reader of both professional articles and books, is dedicated to enhancing his/her marketing knowledge and skills, and is committed to upgrading the organization's marketing culture, capabilities, and results. A secondary audience is academics (and students) and consultants.

3. *Integrative Framework*

The book provides an integrated framework that frames the problem and offers a detailed approach for addressing it.

4. *Field-based Approach*

The authors have applied their frameworks in client settings. These client settings enable authors to test and refine their frameworks. Conceptual and analysis frameworks are enlivened via practice and case examples that demonstrate application in the field. Named and/or disguised client stories illustrate how to apply the analysis frames, how to deal with application issues, and other practice-based issues.

5. *Academic Literature*

The integrative frameworks should be new to the marketplace. The conceptual frameworks should extend existing thinking and the analysis frameworks should provide new ways to conduct marketing-related analysis.

6. *Readability*

The book should be intelligible to the average reader. The concepts should be clearly defined and explained, and cases written

so that a reader can understand the content on a first read. On behalf of the AMA, I am excited to bring these books to market. I am anxious to hear your feedback – both positive and challenging – as we move the field forward.

Bernie Jaworski
AMA Book Series Editor

FOREWORD

David Aaker

David Aaker is the author of 18 books and over 100 articles on business strategy, marketing strategy, and branding. A member of the NY AMA Marketing Hall of Fame, he is often called the father of modern branding. He is Professor Emeritus at UC Berkeley and Vice Chair of Prophet, a global growth consultancy.

Dear reader,

This book is a tour de force, providing a comprehensive roadmap for platform-based digital strategies. It is astonishingly broad in scope, organized with a rich conceptual model, and full of deep insights that lead to actionable strategic options. This book is also incredibly timely in the way it addresses topics like Artificial Intelligence and Extended Reality. Every executive, manager, and rising professional who needs to cut through confusion around intelligent platforms and then identify business risks and opportunities will benefit greatly by reading and applying *Winning Through Platforms*.

Let me highlight four specific reasons why I am impressed.

First, the central concept of this book – the digital platform – provides readers an expansive look at recent trends in digital strategy. It reveals many different ways that platform data sensing, software code, and computing power enable you to observe, interact with, and provide value to customers as they use what it is they have accessed from your company. The authors show how the customer’s use journey — formerly inaccessible but now visible through platforms — holds the most value.

This book explains how a wide range of companies have creatively used their platforms to beat competitors and create new avenues for growth. It explains the strategic evolution of companies you might naturally think of as platform owners – Uber, Zillow,

Airbnb, Salesforce, and Netflix for example. It also explains strategic innovations by companies you might not think of as platform owners – Nike, Haier, Autodesk, Disney, and SleepNumber to name a few. Each company has innovated through platforms to shift what their customers buy and use, opening huge growth opportunities. In all, this book distills winning moves of over 50 companies into principles you can use.

Second, the methods and tools of the platform age are explained in action, from Internet of Things to different branches of Artificial Intelligence (machine learning, natural language processing, computer vision, and generative intelligence). The book demonstrates how they can be applied in a competitive context to win the customer.

In the same vein, this book helps me better understand why Artificial Intelligence and Extended Reality have been on such a sharp rise when their underlying technologies have been advancing for at least two decades. The authors' depiction of recent widespread platform adoption makes clear that there is much more customer "use journey" data now to access, analyze, and act on than before. Because this book also shows how innovative user journey experiences can drive customer relationship, loyalty, and expansion, the case for company investment is made, including strategic value at a level not seen in the past.

Third, I value how this book organizes winning moves into an amazingly comprehensive playbook. The playbook covers – with equal intensity – platform plays for strategic advantage (business portfolio and platform design), in-market advantage (demand acceleration and ongoing innovation), and organizational execution (operations and transformation). Each of 24 "plays" falls into a way of winning that can drive growth.

To give you a taste:

- A play called "Optimal Platform Roles" provides a thought-provoking set of options for platform business strategy. Including a strategy used by Netflix to build a competitive advantage by creating synergies between its platform (streaming media distribution) and physical business (A-list actor movie production).

- A play called “Success to Momentum” illustrates why and how Amazon Prime and Salesforce Trailhead take different approaches to achieve the same customer momentum goal.
- A play called “Full Journey Engagement” shows how Nike engages customers through a full journey of platform touch-points to achieve a 4X higher customer lifetime value.
- Other plays explain how Haier and the World Expo differentiate globally through high-impact innovation using platform-enhanced experiences.

By addressing topics from strategy through execution, this book ensures that every reader will find insights that helps them advance today. Additional insights they don't use immediately will serve them tomorrow as their needs change.

Finally, I like the writing style that the authors use. The 24 plays are not introduced in the abstract but are illustrated by one, two, or more case studies. I also enjoy the diverting historical metaphors that explain needed culture shifts. You'll enjoy the read as you learn; so will your teams.

To summarize, this book is a guide to transforming in a way that every business needs. By providing critical stepping stones for winning in a platform world, this book can be a real difference maker for every reader, at a key moment of risk and opportunity.

David Aaker