

REVIEWS

the role of information in advertising, print news media and social interaction.

He then turns to information economics. This he introduces by reviewing salient features of development since the industrial revolution, concentrating on the role information plays in technological advances of the last fifty years. Here we find, alongside the inevitable discussion of information in global equity markets, a look at information *per se* as a commodity. This is an interesting notion. If we accept that information can be treated as a commodity, then that commodity has some very peculiar properties. It can be traded in bulk in books, in data streams, etc, but it is also heterogeneous, unlike oil or wheat; It can sometimes be shared without loss of value. This then turns the discussion to valuing the information, and here Hill covers the broad electronic information market by contextualising traditional vendors such as Reuters, LEXIS-NEXIS and Dialog against the 'free' information providers. Is there such a thing as a 'free' lunch, he wonders.

Three chapters then consider the role of information on the environment (eg, in publicising global warming, improving our understanding of biodiversity and creating channels to resolve current ecological problems), education (eg, the National Grid for Learning, increased access to news media, educational attainments, etc) and government. Much of these three chapters could be covered elsewhere, but the author has made an admirable attempt at highlighting the role information plays in every area of endeavour, rather than letting it be marginalised as one would find in a textbook on economics or politics for example.

In his final chapter Hill questions the notion of an information society and seeks to identify tangible evidence that our society is inexorably heading towards a greater intensity of information. This chapter is certainly an epilogue as it draws together most of the discussions of earlier pages, summarising some of the positive and negative (as we perceive them) influences of this 'information society'. I was unable to find a single simple conclusion in Hill's book, mainly because, as Hill suggests, there is so much uncertainty, so much to consider and, ultimately, no unitary guiding force behind the continuing explosion of information.

This book has a strong UK bias, but that did not make it any the less impressive. I found the book both challenging and exciting. Some very new (to me) areas of information were discussed in a scholarly and entertaining manner. I would recommend it to any

serious information economist, ethicist or sociologist. I have no doubt that some readers will take issue with Hill's forthright statements, but even those which I found rather difficult fully to accept left me satisfied that I had read a wholly plausible, if not, perhaps, entirely realistic, assessment of information in society.

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World Wide Web Marketing: Integrating the web into your marketing strategy (2nd edition)

Jim Sterne

1998, Chichester: John Wiley, pb, 392 pp, £19.50,
ISBN: 0471-31561-1

"A Web site is not something people read, it's something people do" (Jim Sterne)

Unless you've grown up with the World Wide Web and inevitably feel it is the best place to look for information, then it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the Web. You're sure there's a lot of information 'out there' but, frankly, you're cynical or overwhelmed by the amount of often poorly indexed information on offer. Integrating the Web into your own marketing will, inevitably, be overshadowed by these doubts and fears. Will all the effort be worthwhile? Do you need yet another layer in your marketing strategy?

This book - comprehensive, well-designed and mercifully jargon-free - is for you. Jim Sterne outlines how to apply traditional marketing principles to the new opportunities offered by the Web. It demonstrates how online marketing has already become a reality. For much of the time readers are challenged to adjust their thinking, to adapt well-known and familiar marketing techniques and tools and to apply them to the new opportunities offered by a global market: mining valuable information about customers, measuring the success of online marketing, making the most of search engines and so on.

The book's fourteen chapters take the reader systematically through the issues: an introduction to Internet and the Web, how they started and the underlying culture. Regular Internet users may want to skip the first few chapters and begin with using the Web for marketing and customer service. Chapters six, seven and eight get down to the 'nitty gritty' of

graphics, layout, interactivity with your (potential customers) and feedback.

Chapter nine discusses value-added marketing and repeats, unrelentingly, its message that 'the audience is the content'. In other words, you need to make your site useful and never forget that this is all about marketing and thus (chap 10) attracting attention. 'It takes no time at all for your public to discover if your site is really running. Better make sure it is tested, tested, and tested before your announce,' Sterne warns.

Chapter eleven deals with evaluating the 'success' of your site and the warnings here are clear. Merely having an idea of how many times your home page was requested or visited, is not enough. You need to consider the significance of that activity. Throughout this book the author skilfully compares each part of the online marketing process to 'traditional marketing'. Thus, visits to your site may be compared to the number of visitors who picked up your brochure at a trade show: it doesn't tell you if they read the whole thing or used it to wrap their used chewing gum (a sobering but realistic thought).

Chapters twelve and fourteen discuss some ongoing background issues. These include the size of the global market, security, international pricing, the use of language, cross-cultural considerations and intellectual property, and looking to the future. Chapter thirteen - entitled 'Where do you Start' - is your checklist for getting started, with the sobering but vital *proviso* that this information changes quickly and it's your responsibility to keep up to date.

The author - an Internet marketing strategy consultant who has advised Fortune 5000 companies and Web-based start-ups - has produced an invaluable and very readable book. His style is direct, chatty (without being patronising) and practical, and

his text is well illustrated by examples from many companies world-wide with sample pages from individual Web sites. Careful attention has been paid to the graphics and layout of the book and it is well indexed, so some readers will be able to skip parts they do not need.

Sterne does not mince his words when being unkind about some sites discussed. So I found it useful to read his comments on Web sites and then check out the site to see for myself if any improvements had been made or if it was still as difficult to navigate as I'd been warned. Certainly, the many 'real life' examples were for me the added value to the book. There is nothing to beat learning from other people's (usually very expensive) mistakes.

Above all, this book is about marketing and the author's short reminder which reinforces his underlying message is worth quoting:

Shout it from the rooftops. Write it in the sky.

Promote until your budget pops, until they all surf by ...

... Put it on your letterhead. Put it on your cards.

A Web site will be left for dead unless it's known on Mars.

A Web site can be funny, pretty, useful crisp and clean,

But if you don't promote it, its message won't be seen.

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