



# The Cluetrain Manifesto

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**The Cluetrain Manifesto** Rick Levine , Doc Searls , David Weinberger , Christopher Locke

This nationally acclaimed best seller is a spirited, original, and wonderfully irreverent conversation that will challenge, provoke, and forever change your outlook on the digital economy. A rich tapestry of anecdotes, object lessons, parodies, insights, and predictions, *The Cluetrain Manifesto* illustrates how the Internet has radically reframed the seemingly immutable laws of business--and what business needs to know to weather the seismic aftershocks.

## The Cluetrain Manifesto Details

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# From Reader Review The Cluetrain Manifesto for online ebook

## Richard says

Think you understand the power of the web? Read the Cluetrain to set your compass.

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## Artem says

A few technocrat rebels & geeks got together and wrote a blog about the changing terrain of business and organizations with the advent of the web. Someone, thought it was a good idea to craft a book out of all this ... I certainly don't. A few decent thoughts here but they should have stayed in a blog because the book, in totality, is painfully boring. It's too hostile, too repetitive, poorly states the problem and offers very little toward a solution. Written in 1999, before Blogs, Facebook & Twitter, the list of communication technologies is cute: Email, Mailing List, Newsgroups & Chat. There is clearly some foresight here that predicts that we as humans will be quickly reaching new heights in finding & forming relationships, voicing our opinions and organizing to collaboratively do work as well as organizing against injustice. Businesses will have to adopt and usefully intertwine themselves in a human-to-human conversation. Businesses can no longer be tall white towers with a controlled PR message; they need to dynamically permeate through countless forming cells of interaction. Top-down, command & control methods need to be replaced by hyperlinked organizations that are decentralized, open, direct, transparent, borderless and most importantly, a little bit broken. Erring should be a safe practice. That's it. That's the message. Skip the book & go get some tea.

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## Kurt Gielen says

Oh! My! God! I have no idea what the long term impact of this book is going to be on my life as I just finished it. I do have a gut feeling it is going to be very profound. What I can say is that it has already made an impact in the short term in that I redefined my job role because of it. I used to be a Marketing Manager, now I "have and facilitate conversations. It just happens to be through different communication channels."

As a punk and anarchistic who just happened to stumble into the corporate world 15 years ago, this book clarified a lot of things for me. I now know why I always felt slightly frustrated. Because the corporate uniform never fitted me. So I also decided to trade it in for my personal uniform, which is going to be much looser, I can tell you that. More Johnny Cash than Italian designer striped shirts. All Facebook and Twitter, no PR. I still enjoy the corporate world, I'm enjoying it my way from now on. I'll let you know how the corporate world is going to enjoy me and my new ways.

Being 10 years old, some people have written similar books, but what makes this one stand out is the tone. The authors truly speak in their own, distinctive voices and that's what makes it a very personal book. A lot of the books that came later have tried to make this manifesto into Management blabla. Which if you read and understand the book is a contradiction. And probably why I never enjoyed those books so much.

If you work for a corporate organization read this and apply it to your job. If you are a consumer, read this and use it to expand your awareness and use the messages within the book to give you back control as a

consumer.

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### **Du4 says**

The problem w/ updating a book like this w/ new content by the authors 10 years later is that it almost makes reading the original book unnecessary outside of some classroom like exercise. The first half of this new edition of CLUETRAIN basically involves all the authors returning to discuss what they got or wrong on their original manifesto of 10 years ago. So by the time you finish reading that material up front, it's pointless to go back and read the original stuff: they basically tell you the important parts up front.

There are no terribly obvious flashes of brilliance here either. By 2010, everybody knows about the humanist movement of employees and customers who want to force businesses to become more human. This is almost a prehistoric version of a social business manifesto, which sounds cool until you read it and go "DUH!" The lessons are good and the tone is engaging, but I wouldn't recommend this for anyone seeking true insight about modern social business.

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### **Douglas says**

It's held up well, but so much has changed. One line continues to echo in my mind, "All marketing is word of mouth."

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### **Nabil says**

First 1/4 of the anniversary edition is very interesting. For someone to predict community centric organizations on the internet in 2000 is amazing.

Unfortunately the book itself ends up dry, as most of the examples are not relevant.

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### **KungFu Drafter says**

Probably one of the quintessential collaborative works of the Internet age. Long before Web 2.0 was a term being used by the mass media, these four men envisioned the future. What makes this 10th anniversary edition so exceptional is the return these authors make to re-examine their original work.

Having read the book I can now count myself as one of the many who say "Cluetrain verbalized a sentiment I've had for many years in a way that just made simple sense." From business to business relationships to personal relationships and how this information laden ages affects us all, Cluetrain had some pretty deep insights 10 years ago.

For people who can't imagine that a book can make so much sense allow me to quote a popular movie:

"I know *\*exactly\** what you mean. Let me tell you why you're here. You're here because you know something. What you know you can't explain, but you feel it. You've felt it your entire life, that there's something wrong with the world. You don't know what it is, but it's there, like a splinter in your mind, driving you mad." ~ The Matrix (1999)

I did know. Now I understand it also.

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## Scott says

A brilliant work. Hard to believe that it was written ten years ago since it applies so well to today. These guys must be prophets!

Tons of amazing insights that are spot on. The authors do have an arrogant tone in their writing which becomes annoying at times, but generally makes the reading more enjoyable.

My biggest problem with this book is that the authors have a flawed view of human nature that invalidates many of their conclusions/solutions. They make great insights about the problems in business and marketing, but many their solutions rely on believing that people will do good, they want to work hard, they want to perform well, they want to go above and beyond, it is only their *environment* that is holding them back. They believe that if management just got their act together and stopped oppressing and trying to control their employees that they would suddenly work harder and better, being free to do what they knew *really* needed to be done (better than management) and being free to speak authentically as themselves rather than as a corporate mouthpiece. While I agree that if people really behaved in those ways, it would be great. However, while I am sure that this is true for some individuals, most would not respond so positively. Human nature is fallen and most people, given no rules or structure, will not naturally be inclined to do their best, seeking out the good of others (i.e., the company, the customers, etc.). Rather, they will seek their own comfort and good first, doing the bare minimum to get by.

Even with this shortcoming, this is a must read book. It opened my mind and got me thinking in new ways that I won't soon forget.

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## Jake says

Even though this book was written over 10 years ago, the majority of it is still relevant today. In the 10th Anniversary Edition the authors take the time to evaluate how their work has held up.

One of the great things about this book is how it suggests that the internet is a conversation and that markets are made up of human beings. It is easy to see in today's world how the internet has leveled the playing field between business and the consumer. One example of this is the ability via Twitter for celebrities to interact with their fan base in real time.

While most of the book is still applicable, there are some things that aren't. For example it says that, "we are immune to advertising." If we were immune to advertising there wouldn't be any pop-up ads.

I felt that one of the major oversights in the book is that the premise of the 95 theses assumes that everyone

will get on board with the internet. That certainly isn't true today, and I'm not sure it will ever be true.

While the book may be a little dated, it is still a great book to read with relevant principles.

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### **Lori White says**

I should re-read this. I bought it when I was self-teaching myself digital marketing. Tara Hunt recommended. Really good look at how early internet thinkers wanted the internet to be. Good ideas but somehow a LOT of them didn't happen. But for a little bit, they were happening and it was exciting. This was a manifesto but now it's probably a history book.

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### **severyn says**

Simplistic, patronising, arrogant, snarky, dumb.

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### **David says**

I have a love/hate relationship with this book. On one hand I am a believer in the basic messages of the book. Corporations are shells, corporate speak is a joke, people need to be themselves and the web provides a platform to do so on a scale never before available.

On the other hand the writing is arrogant. It comes off as we know better than the world and people who like to use spell-check or make decisions are sheep. The following paragraph I read while on a plane. I wanted to absolutely scream after reading it but thought better as that may have put me in Guantanamo.

Sometimes we run from our fallibility by being decisive. But doubt is the natural human state, and decisiveness -- more addictive than anything you might shoot into your veins -- is often based on a superstitious belief in the magic of action.

That paragraph and this one

If you need to hear how the professional voice sounds, dig out any memo you wrote four years ago and compare it to how you'd write an e-mail about it now. A professional memo obeys implicit rules such as one page is best, no jokes, admit no weakness, spellcheck it carefully, and send it to as few people as possible.

Both of these are examples of the tone of the book. Either you are flying by the seat of your pants, going

against the corporate grain or you are sheep. I don't buy it and it made this book difficult on many levels. It has a forced coolness, an arrogant take that is very hard to like even if you believe in the message.

That being said I would recommend you read the book because it will remind you that you are human and to act like one. There are some very good messages as well. Unfortunately the voice of the messenger is pretty damn irritating.

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## **Yevgeniy Brikman says**

This book is dated. I'm guessing that when it came out in 2000 (and the website that inspired it in 1999), it might have been groundbreaking, but now, with 17+ years of Internet usage behind us, almost everything in the book seems obvious or naive, and it's not worth reading.

I read the 10th anniversary edition of the book, which has a ridiculously long foreword from each of the authors. The intro is almost as long as the rest of the book, which is a bad thing, because the intro seems to meander randomly from topic to topic: chocolate, marketing, look how amazingly prescient we were, Obama, Internet, Gore, Oprah, Maslow. Bleh.

The rest of the book is a mix of platitudes that feel hollow and over-simplified, with occasionally interesting predictions. Some of these predictions turned out to be correct, such as the desire for people to be social online and the importance of corporate intranets, and some turned out to be laughably false, such as the idea that *\*only\** authenticity works in marketing (despite countless examples of crappy companies becoming extremely successful by fooling consumers).

The biggest issue is that, despite the book's insistence on the importance of storytelling, there are very few actual stories in the book itself. It's too high level, with few concrete examples. It's also very, very repetitive: Here's the summary: "Internet is good. Top down management is bad. The web will set you free. Use your voice." Repeat that about 1,000 times, and you've got the gist of the book.

In short, you're probably just better off skipping the book and just doing a quick scan of the website: <http://www.cluetrain.com/>.

As always, I saved a few good quotes as I read:

"Markets are conversations."

"In just a few more years, the current homogenized "voice" of business—the sound of mission statements and brochures—will seem as contrived and artificial as the language of the 18th-century French court."

"The customers who once looked you in the eye while hefting your wares in the market were transformed into consumers. In the words of industry analyst Jerry Michalski, a consumer was no more than "a gullet whose only purpose in life is to gulp products and crap cash." Power swung so decisively to the supply side that "market" became a verb: something you do to customers."

"There is no demand for messages. The customer doesn't want to hear from business, thank you very much. The message that gets broadcast to you, me, and the rest of the earth's population has nothing to do with me in particular. It's worse than noise. It's an interruption. It's the Anti-Conversation."

"We learn a lot about the voices we hear through their humor. Having a sense of humor tells us that you have some distance from yourself and the dreadful seriousness of your concerns. It is, in most cases, a prerequisite for personal authenticity—if you're not laughing at yourself, are you really being honest about yourself? After all, you are—like all of us—a ridiculous creature."

"A veterinarian using TechnoLatin might say that a dog serves as a platform for sniffing, is an open environment for fleas, and that it supports barking."

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## **Manderson says**

Rate This

I have no idea who recommended *The Cluetrain Manifesto*, but it ended up on my Goodreads "want to read" list, and it arrived in my local library a few days ago. I honestly thought it was a fiction book from the title, something along the lines of *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, perhaps.

Turns out *The Cluetrain Manifesto* is a breathless paean to the Internet circa 2001, about how the internet will revolutionize business (though the version I'm reading has been updated with some sobered hedging by the authors ten years later).

The primary thesis of the authors is that markets are at heart conversations, and that businesses will either enable the freewheeling conversations empowered by the Net, or fight a losing battle for control.

I don't want to wave away the advances that the internet has engendered, as I think it's too easy to downplay, especially for you young whippersnappers who don't even recall rotary phones. It really has been transformative. But from the vantage point of 2016, we can also see that the breathless prognosticating of the original *Cluetrain* hasn't quite panned out. We're seeing the once wide open, seemingly endless forests of internet anarchy, Grateful Dead-and-Phish-tape-trading freedom turn into gated communities as glossy, ad riven, and manipulative as the corporate fiefdoms of old.

So what went wrong? Why aren't we living in an unmitigated bliss of genuine, heartfelt connection to one another across digital divides?

While markets have indeed become more about peer to peer sharing, people themselves have become more like corporations.

Ever heard the term "personal brand"? That's right – as individuals, we now carefully cultivate and craft our online personas, targeting our messaging, delivering elevator pitches to our friends, and twisting our faces and extending our arms to capture selfies at perfectly calibrated angles.



Successful businesses today support our social posturing, while gathering our data, as defined by every click, post, and geospatial movement. Successful online personas, such as Kim Kardashian, harness the hall of mirrors to their advantage.

In this manner, we market ourselves while allowing ourselves to be marketed. The damning thing about all of this is that the internet of yore – that wild, ecstatic beast – is still right here around us but we gild ourselves into gated, controlled, glossy realms like moths to bulb.

Why? Because that's where all the cool kids are.

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## **Brian says**

Expanding on their website launched in 1999 (actually, expanding on the book published that expanded on the website), the four authors add additional commentary to their original work(s) and review how the Internet has changed business.

There are some good nuggets aboard this train.

First, you have to get past the voices. Oh, the writers are very proud of their voices. They explain how humanity hid its voices for The Corporation. They explain how the Web will free voices - has freed voices - and how if you don't find A Voice and talk in A Voice, then your business will fail.

Perhaps they're making up for lost time for their many years of hiding their voices. The voices must be stretched to check for their limits - the same way a 42-year-old at his college reunion tries to tailgate the same way he did as a senior.

You must also get through the tone, which can rail against business the same way a jilted lover proclaims all the failures of his or her beloved.

At times, the authors strike a tone similar to teenagers who sneaked into the office, turned on the P.A. system, and barricaded the doors - determined to have as much fun as they can squeeze into their minutes in the Sun.

That said, I'm convinced that markets are conversations. I'm convinced that conversations sound humans, and that ignoring those conversations means missing opportunities. I'm convinced that hyperlinks mean that networks can be as powerful as hierarchies within organizations. That smart companies can connect conversations that occur inside and outside the corporate firewall. That one of the changes wrought by the Internet and the World Wide Web is the lack of scarcity. That this abundance and this connectedness offer unique possibilities and challenges for all of the "people of Earth" - business and market.

So don't misread my warning about voice and tone. Set those aside as you read it. This book offers four viewpoints (eight, now, with the new chapters and forward) of how to use the power of the Web to listen and to speak with your customers.

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