

IT'S NOT HOW
GOOD YOU ARE,
IT'S HOW **GOOD**
YOU WANT TO BE.

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It's Not How Good You Are, It's How Good You Want To Be

Paul Arden , Roger Kennedy (Designed by)

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***It's Not How Good You Are, It's How Good You Want to Be* is a handbook of how to succeed in the world: a pocket bible for the talented and timid alike to help make the unthinkable thinkable and the impossible possible.**

The world's top advertising guru, Paul Arden, offers up his wisdom on issues as diverse as problem solving, responding to a brief, communicating, playing your cards right, making mistakes, and creativity – all endeavors that can be applied to aspects of modern life.

This uplifting and humorous little book provides a unique insight into the world of advertising and is a quirky compilation of quotes, facts, pictures, wit and wisdom – all packed into easy-to-digest, bite-sized spreads. If you want to succeed in life or business, this book is a must.

It's Not How Good You Are, It's How Good You Want To Be Details

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From Reader Review It's Not How Good You Are, It's How Good You Want To Be for online ebook

Palmyrah says

This, at first glance, is a rather mysterious book. From its title, you might think it was a motivational tract for athletes or performing artists, or possibly a training manual for aspirants to sainthood. It claims to be 'the world's best-selling book', yet this is an obvious lie. Most mysterious of all, it is published by Phaidon, a house specializing in pricey coffee-table picture-books, yet it is a paperback, no larger than the average newsstand bestseller, and the few pictures it contains are aesthetically unremarkable. How did the world's most pretentious publisher, which advertises itself as the 'Home of the Visual Arts', ever come to publish this strange little trifle?

The mystery is solved by looking up the author's name. You may never have heard of Paul Arden, but if you are old enough, you are probably familiar with some of his work, which appeared in the media all around the world during the 1980s. Arden was a legendarily successful advertising man, a name to conjure with in London media circles during the Thatcher era.

Readers knowledgeable about the dark arts of advertising will remember the 1980s as an unusually creative period, a time when London was the pulsing centre of the ad world, Madison Avenue took second place in the creativity stakes and the shackles of twenty-first-century consumer capitalism were forged in a mad rush of champagne, single-malt whisky and cocaine. The hottest London shop in those days was Saatchi & Saatchi, and that is where Arden made his reputation between 1977 and 1992. According to one source, he was 'the ringmaster behind the creative circus that saw British Airways become the world's favourite airline, the Independent become the new intelligentsia's favourite newspaper, Margaret Thatcher the nation's favourite leader and Silk Cut their favourite fag.' By some lights, then, Arden has a great deal to answer for; but since he died in 2008, we can leave his punishment in the hands of higher authority. What of *It's Not How Good You Are, It's How Good You Want to Be*?

Well, it certainly isn't the world's best-selling book. It's the world's best-selling book by Paul Arden, who as far as I was able to find out has written only two others. In other words, it is a typical advertiser's claim: literally true, but failing to deliver any of the quality or value you have a right to expect from it. Once you've deciphered its real meaning, you have only yourself to blame if you go on to open the book and read what's inside. You have been given fair warning that the contents are morally revolting. They are also, for the best part, of no practical use whatsoever.

Arden appears to have thought that creativity is valuable in its own right – a debatable proposition to say the least. He also treats novelty as equivalent to creativity. This was the cardinal error to which British advertising of his period was prone. Finally, he appears to have believed that creativity consists of doing the opposite of what is expected. And that, for the most part, is what his advice in this book boils down to. Chapter titles include the following: 'It's wrong to be right.' 'It's right to be wrong.' 'When it can't be done, do it.' 'Do not seek praise, seek criticism.' Reading the actual 'chapters' that appear under these attention-grabbing headlines disappoints in exactly the same way that an over-touted product or service disappoints; they bear out their titles in a literal way, but the advice they contain is the same tired, warmed-over stuff served up at industry 'creative workshops' all over the world.

Some of the suggestions – compose your ad from the weakest point, sell your ideas using rough scribbles, not finished layouts, share your ideas (and the credit for them) with others, don't be afraid of looking silly or

making mistakes – are valid. They will also be well known to most of his readers, thanks to those creative workshops, though few will be brave enough to act on them. Other suggestions appear less valuable, or even downright bizarre – ‘if you get stuck, draw with a different pen’ or ‘always schedule new business pitches for Tuesdays.’ Every creative person has his or her own set of muse-invoking rituals; Mr Arden appears to have thought that his were universally applicable. Such is the arrogance bred by great success.

I have already written more than I want to about this very bad book, but unfortunately there is one more point to be addressed before I stop. According to the introduction on the jacket flap (yes, it’s so pretentious it has a jacket flap, even though it is a jacketless paperback), ‘this book uses the creative processes of good advertising as a metaphor for business practice.’ In other words, it’s more than a how-to book for agency creative staff: it’s a management manual.

Well, hell no, it isn’t. Advertising is a very small part of entrepreneurship, and what works to sell products and services via the mass media doesn’t necessarily work so well online, in the executive suite or on the factory floor. Any manager who tried to run his business or his department along the lines proposed by Arden – constantly chopping and changing how things are done, giving people something new and unexpected to cope with every day, recklessly ignoring the possibilities of failure or error – would soon be ruined, and probably end up in gaol or a psychiatric ward into the bargain. In fact, many ad agencies, most notably the briefly celebrated American shop Chiat/Day, have gone bust doing precisely this.

Because, you see, Paul Arden was deeply, fundamentally, pathetically wrong. However much you may want it to be about how good you want to be, in the end it really is about how good you are. People don’t want to face this fact, but there it is. It just so happens that talent and capability are much rarer than ambition. And if you have no talent, what you create will always be malformed and worthless – except, of course, in cash.

Paul Arden and his ilk are responsible for much of what is cheap, vulgar, valueless and dishonest about today’s world, and in particular with media-driven consumer capitalism. They were a despicable crew, and we are not rid of them yet. His colleagues Maurice Saatchi, Tim Bell and Martin Sorrell now sit in the British House of Lords, while his former boss was for some years the most important tastemaker in the rarefied world of the fine arts. Remember the HIV-positive blood sculpture that melted in Nigella Lawson’s freezer? That is what the arts came to under the patronage of Charles Saatchi. If these people did not make the world we live in today, they are at least responsible for many of the nastier aspects of it. It is high time we were rid of them and their cynical, moneygrubbing values.

The only piece of advice in Paul Arden’s book that struck me as at all valuable and original is on p.88. Here it is, in a sentence: ‘get out of advertising.’ I took that advice ten years ago, and my life has been a great deal happier and more fulfilling ever since. If you really have any creative talent in you and wish to preserve it, do likewise.

Latifa ? says

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Abeer Saleh says

Nada Abandah says

Great little book.

If you're thinking that you will get something new, totally revolutionary, and out of the box, you will be very disappointed. The advice and ideas in the book are very widely known, things you already do, and in most cases, the author keeps repeating himself.

However, it's really a sweet, easy read, and provides a great positive reinforcement to you, and assures you that you will get your desired success.

I recommend this book to anyone from fresh grads to seasoned executives.

Mario Tomic says

Solid little book, the main 2 things that I got out of it was:

1- "Do not seek praise. Seek criticism." - I myself fall victim to this mindset often. Generally for a lot of things we do our ego and self-image is attached to it so we never really bother to seek out criticism from others. And the truth is the only way to keep improving yourself and what you do is to be open minded and actively ask those around you what you can make better.

2 - "The person who doesn't make mistakes is unlikely to make anything." - Getting ahead in your niche usually involves taking risks, we stay in our comfort zones for fear of making a big mistake. Funny thing is if you look back and reflecting on your life and the major decisions you've made, it's clear that almost all progress you made has been a direct result of mistakes you made along the way and detours you took to get back on track.

Overall great book, very fast read with some nice lessons.

Ben Weiner says

Nicely designed book with some interesting ideas. Super quick read and worth the 30 mins you'll spend with it. It's written by the late, ad guy Paul Arden, but a lot of his advice can be applied more generally to anyone doing creative work.

Eric Franklin says

A slender volume and a quick read, exactly what you need to catch up on your reading goals. The typography, layout, and artwork are exquisite, and the subject matter utilizes novel examples and metaphors to get you fired up about excelling in your work. If your work involves creativity, this book will inspire you to push your limits and communicate your ideas at the right level to your clients. It's a lot of fun.

Hend says

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same right attitude in your career, everything will go just as fine, I'm sure. Besides, it makes me scared and worried that if I do well in school, that's just that and I can't make it big in life. Totally the opposite of what inspirational book should do to its readers.

One part I think made sense though, it's not to be afraid to share the knowledge that you have to others, as it will motivate you to do more as to keep up with the others, and eventually results in you being a better person than you already are right now. That's the only inspiration in this inspirational book.
