

The books on my shelf as well as my extensive article database are part of my business learning. If you are building your own bookshelf this is an excellent starting point, alternately, these are the books to get through Google Books or various e-readers.

To assist in referencing, here are the categories: **General Business, Writing, Presenting, Environmental, Investing, Leadership, and Marketing.**

General Business

Orbiting the Giant Hairball

Gordon MacKenzie

This book is a delight, and it is not, as the subtitle of "A Corporate Fool's Guide to Surviving with Grace" simply a book for those in the corporate life. Some highlights: The story "About Teasing" gives a poignant look at why it is never appropriate to tease. Yes, I expect you to disagree with that statement. Read this chapter! The story "No Access" is touching, but ignores the societal cost of his situation, which irritates me.

On 191 it says simply "Orville Wright did not have a pilot's license". That sentiment should be posted on all of our walls as a reminder to not sit within the constraints of today and instead imagine the future.

For all teachers, or those who teach as a course of their everyday lives (this should be everyone now), the story "First there is grope, then there is rote" is essential.

The Republic of Tea

Ziegler, Rosenweig, Ziegler

Long before Starbucks became a force, a little company named Republic of Tea was started to celebrate tea drinking. It is a delight - a more whimsical book and company than Starbucks, and also a small businessperson's primer on what can and will go wrong with startups.

Outliers

Malcolm Gladwell

I may as well come out and say it - I'm an unabashed fan of Gladwell. He writes compellingly about interesting and relevant topics. He digs deeper than most to find the full detail surrounding his points, and then creates wonderful stories to convey his information. So that said, this is the first of 4 rave reviews for his work as general business "mandatory's".

In simple terms, he relates that Outliers aren't. What we perceive as outliers - which are what he calls those of supreme performance well above any expected level of norms - are simply lots and lots of iterations of performance. We don't see those iterations, we just see the resultant brilliance and attribute it to outside the norm behavior. Gladwell shares that current research indicates 10,000 hours of practice are required to obtain "brilliance".

Blink

Malcolm Gladwell

This book focuses on the very human trait of snap or gut level judgment. Gladwell identifies that the most important attribute of good decision-makers isn't how fast or slow or how much information is available - it is the skill of the decision-maker to identify what to include or not in the decision-making process, and the move against that information. Marvelously intriguing book with strong implications for marketing and leadership.

The Tipping Point

Malcolm Gladwell

Gladwell's first book, although far from his first writing given his extensive work on The New Yorker. This focuses on the idea that things progress, but well below the surface, until the next "step" causes the "tipping point" - when the trend or idea or bug moves rapidly from that point forward.

What the Dog Saw

Malcolm Gladwell

I do love this book, but save yourself time and money: go to Gladwell.com, and spent about a week reading his article archive from The New Yorker. All of the stories in What the Dog Saw are there, plus other articles to make you think, laugh, cry, shake your head in bewilderment...and learn.

Small Giants

Bo Burlingham

Any book that singles out my favorite deli on earth - Zingerman's - as a wonderful example of business learning wins my heart. This book is about fourteen businesses which Burlingham holds up as examples of business leadership. Since it is inherently about stories, it is both an engaging read and an important learning experience.

Delivering Happiness

Tony Hsieh

Zappos.com is an amazing company. Tony is a large part of the reason why, and this book is a candid, intriguing and honest look at what makes Zappos.com so special. I enjoyed and learned much from this read. If you are an entrepreneur or a hopeful small business person (perhaps with dreams of more) this book is a treasure, told compellingly from one who has succeeded in many ways doing just what you will need to do.

The Ornament of the World

Maria Rosa Menocal

SO Timely! It is the story of Spain during the rule of Islam. Set aside your stories and "Western" philosophy that it was the ruthless Moors or Barbs who messed up the country, and read how Islamic rule was in fact tolerant of Jews and Christians who co inhabited the country. I am not saying this interpretation is "right" but I do believe that in today's working world you will work with people of all of these faiths plus others, and it is instructive to review historical potential misperceptions and see how they color our world today.

Bit Literacy**Mark Hurst**

I took advantage of the version free for iPad, iPod, and iPhone. This book explains in very clear detail both why we're all drowning in information and how to manage the deluge better. Mark operates goodtodo, a service to assist in to do list management, and he recommends this service in the book. However, it was one of many services with recommendations, and his ownership in my eyes does not bias the book. Overall, it is one of the first I've seen that correctly identifies the current day communication stress-points and identifies concrete solutions.

FAD Surfing in the Boardroom**Eileen Shapiro**

I have a soft spot in my heart for books that don't take the world of business too seriously, and this book qualifies. Brilliantly and absurdly written, you will see yourself and the silly moments of business on every page. This is out of print - check amazon for left-over copies for an enjoyable romp.

Good to Great**Jim Collins**

Collins believes that he can research history and apply the findings to today. I believe findings gleaned from business models in which a letter took 7 days to get to someone and got turned around in a week and then mailed back to the originator - a 21 day turnaround - bordering on the ridiculous. However, I do believe that humans are pretty much the same as they were 40 years ago, it is the societal and business environment that has changed. There are some great findings here - but be careful.

Built to Last**Jim Collins**

Its another Collins book, with all the same reservations as Good to Great - do you get it, Jim that looking in the rear view mirror provides sometimes flawed views of the future? With that in mind, I find the lasting impact of this book in the more "human" aspects of the findings and recommendations.

The Goal**Eliyahu Goldratt**

Goldratt has written several books, I have them all. If you want to read just one, read this one. It's the only operations management that I've ever really understood, because he teaches through storytelling.

A Simpler Way**Margaret Wheatley**

If you have struggled with the "work of organizing" whether it be children's soccer or large business organizations, Wheatley's premise of "let it all work itself out" is compelling. It's a divergent view that seems utopian. That said, apply this thinking to your urge to compulsively over manage and you'll end up as a saner soul.

First Break All the Rules

Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman

I fantastic book which has incredible amounts of data to support the idea that managing people and yourself using strengths not improving weaknesses is compelling and important to your leadership.

In Search of Excellence

Tom Peters and Bob Watterman Jr.

The first pop culture business book is now a great read because you can see what companies where chronicled, and why, and then look up on the Web and see what became of them...and learn from that as well.

Pour Your Heart Into It

Howard Schultz

Have you wondered how all those Starbucks popped up seemingly from nowhere? This is the story from the guy who did it, and given that he has created a cultural phenomenon, changing even how we work or think of social gathering places, its worth reading the book to see how he got there.

Re-imagine

Tom Peters

Brought out in the fall of 2003, this is his best ever. I love the format and the message. Its Peters, so virtually by definition I believe only part of what he says. But he makes me think, and I love that.

Working with Emotional Intelligence

Daniel Goldman

I believe in emotional intelligence, and this book takes it to the workplace. I would presume that any of his books on the subject would suffice.

The Lexus and The Olive Tree

Thomas Friedman

Written by an award winning writer for the New York Times, this book takes the themes of globalization (the Lexus) and time-encrusted forces of culture geography tradition and community and explores how our world responds to these conflicting forces. Very relevant to read to increase your understanding of the forces effecting every day life as well as global politics.

The World is Flat

Thomas L. Friedman

No business, even the "one next door", is "local". All businesses are simultaneously more local and more global than at any point in the past. This book does a terrific job of explaining the texture of that observation.

The Day the Universe Changed

James Burke

This book challenges the reader to rethink the historical context of some of the intellectual advances man has made from the Middle Ages on. Because intellectual advances driver our economy the entire book is relevant for all business people. And because it looks at these advances not as typically taught, it forces new mental models of change and leadership.

Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy**Joseph Schumpeter**

Its just one of those books you should read and have on hand. He's just one of the best at politics, sociology, and economics. Bold and interesting. Not an easy read.

Writing**The Right to Write****Julia Cameron**

If you write, or want to write, or just curious what all the fuss is about, this is an easily digestible book on techniques and exercises to increase your comfort with the art. She's also a very insightful writer herself, and the mini-chapters that take you to the exercises are often small treasures in and of themselves.

Presenting**The Presentation Secrets of Steve Jobs****Carmine Gallo**

A lot has been written about Jobs and his skills, and this book in many ways is a duplicate of free sources and articles you can find online.

With one exception: Gallo does detailed charts of how Jobs actually presents - pauses, visuals and vocals and demos, timing, done in a very clear and easy to understand style. These detailed "tear downs" of key speeches are some of the best resources I've found to understand the nuances of Jobs' delivery.

In addition, Gallo creates a readable reference in terms of breaking apart the elements of what to do. His three "Acts" of Create the Story, Delivery the Experience, and Refine and Rehearse which are further broken into 18 "scenes" make the information easily digestible and the learnings easy to categorize.

Very much worth the read and given its clear outline, easy to reference.

resonate**Nancy Duarte**

The better of her two books, although both are excellent. This one focuses on storytelling. Good presentations are good stories, and this book does an excellent job and providing insight and direction on how to create "presentation stories". Since this art is relatively new - incorporating visuals and a standup presenter - this level of detail on how is both appropriate and important. Equally as impactful for podcasting.

Presentation Zen**Garr Reynolds**

This book contains simple, straightforward ideas on how to increase the impact of your presentation slides. The major content groupings of Preparation, design, delivery, and the next step, show the stepwise journey of Reynolds' direction. What makes his approach different from many others is both his gift as a communicator but also his multicultural approach. As an American living in Japan, he blends the simplicity of "eastern" design with the urgency and directness of an American businessperson in a compelling and effective blend.

Presentation Zen Design

Garr Reynolds

This companion book to the one directly above delves much more deeply into particular elements of good slide design and delivery. The elements of the book I found most useful are those with Type, color, image usage, and data delivery. That said, it is a colorful book with many visual examples to explain the concepts, and is a good resources for that reason.

The Visual Display of Quantitative Information

Envisioning Information

Visual Explanations

Edward Tufte

The first named was on many lists as one of the best books of the 20th century. I was blown away by the books as well as the one day course I took led by Tufte based on the techniques and ideas in these books. All should be "must reads" if you present data to anyone. If you are completely short of cash and have a desire to learn his thoughts, go to www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/posters and buy the essay "The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint". For \$7 plus shipping you'll get a full view of Tufte's power and insight. He has also just published a 2nd edition to The Visual Display. According to a current scan of amazon.com, this means that 1st edition books are going for almost as low as the 10 page essay, and the 2nd edition is on sale for \$20.99 - go for the first book as you opening step into Tufte's wonderful world. Artists should explore his essay "Seeing Around" based on his art - a fascinating area of study as well.

Environmental

Mid-Course Correction

Ray Anderson

Written by the head of Interface, a carpeting manufacturer who has taken to heart and action the push for "green" activities. The writing is uneven and the book is too long. However, it is an insiders look at one of the first companies to reflect on what it meant to be great AND green - and then went and did it.

Investing

The Intelligent Investor

Benjamin Graham

Revised Edition, Commentary by Jason Zweig

Get the revised edition noted above. This is a gem, my copy has pink highlights and notes throughout. This is the bible that taught Buffett. I resisted reading it assuming that Graham would be difficult to read. Bad assumption, he's a delight and Zweig takes a book first issued in the 40's and last revised in 1976 fully into the current day. If you want a slightly advanced primer on investing, this is it.

The Money Culture

Michael Lewis

If you've ever wondered what really happened in the financial world during the 80's, this book is the only comprehensible description I've read. It is a story as well as an education, and an engaging read.

The Big Short

Michael Lewis

Leave it to Lewis (disclosure, I've read every book of his and think he's an amazing writer) to provide an understandable, readable, engaging, and ultimately horrifying look at the financial meltdown of the 2008. This is not an easy read. It is, however, and essential read.

Your Money or Your Life

Joe Dominguez and Vicki Rubin

This is the book on thinking about your money and financials. The authors advocate getting to the point where income from your investments covers your basic needs, providing you with the freedom to then live your life free from the need to do a job to cover these expenses. The premise of the book is difficult to attain now with low interest rates, but the principles are sound.

The Millionaire Next Door

Thomas Stanley & William Danko

It is almost like the next book after Your Money or Your Life, although this would recommend staying working just being in business for yourself. The most inspiring part of the data, is that the truly rich people in your neighborhood are likely the ones who drive the old cars and don't live lavishly. The powerful "just don't spend all you earn" advice cannot be overstated as a powerful career and life management imperative.

Fooled by Randomness

The Black Swan

Nassim Nicholas Taleb

I'm going to open with...Gladwell. Malcolm Gladwell wrote a brilliant article in The New Yorker April 22 & 29, 2002, which is free online. Read that article first. Then reflect upon how much money Taleb has now post-2008. Then determine if you want to dig deeper in Taleb's significant talent. Both of his books are dense, challenging reading. They are also essential, for their message of how our brains interpret and expect "sameness" is critical for investing, leadership, and marketing, my 3 favorite topics.

Leadership

Management of the Absurd

Richard Farson

This is a good read, nothing spectacular but it keeps a place on my shelf mostly because the title is a good indication of what is inside - a fairly fearless look at some of the more absurd aspects of management. If you have a sense of humor and find learning in juxtaposition, this is a good one to have around.

Leadership Jazz

Leadership is an Art

Max DePree

DePree has it going on. Don't miss these books just because they are not on a lot of business reading lists. DePree has run Herman Miller with distinction and style - his family housed the creative geniuses of the Eames brothers! - and yet has done so from a principled, ethical, and very human space. It isn't theory, its reality, and that makes it very powerful.

Nickel and Dimed

Barbara Ehrenreich

Eight percent of all Americans work in Food Service. Read this book to see what an undercover reporter for Vanity Fair found it was like to do two stints in Food Service, and then finish up with a job at Wal-Mart. This is the reality of what a lot of people live every single day - its honesty is compelling. Do not lead until you've read this.

Flow

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

Flow - that concept that we all know and yet little is written. It's the moment when things are effortless, when time passes without effort, when things seem at once sped up and slowed down. There is happiness and contentment and fulfillment - all at once. That is Flow. The first couple of chapters are what this book really is all about, you can safely skip most of the rest and be ok. The concept is important and worth the read. This came to my shelf in the mid 1990's and is more important now.

Buffett

Roger Lowenstein

Of Permanent Value

Andrew Kilpatrick

Two books about one man, the preeminent investor in America. They are different enough that they each bring something to the party. If you like pictures, take the latter, some of the better stories are in the former. In both cases you get a portrait of arguably the best CEO on the world. It's a tossup on whether or not this is investing or leadership - it covers both well.

Leadership and Self-Deception

The Arbinger Institute

Wonderful look at how our inability to see ourselves clearly, and how this diminishes us as people, and as leaders.

The example that struck home for me: if you go on Southwest with its cattle call seating, do you take a seat and then through body language and actions accept that is likely that someone will sit next to you? Or do you set your tote/briefcase down and open a paper, doing everything in your power to encourage others to sit elsewhere? The self-deception way is the latter - you are not, factually, any more important than anyone else on that flight, but your actions show everyone that you think you are.

Marketing**Why We Buy, New Revised version dated 2009****Paco Underhill**

Brilliant. Required reading for anyone in retail, any subset of marketing, and for anyone wanting the best explanation of consumer behavior (albeit in one setting) brought to engaging fun life. His insights and work are sound, but he is the unexpectedly clever writer who creates stories and a fun reading experience while sharing his craft.

When purchasing this book, the 1999 or 2000 versions are good, the newer version takes many of the stories and updates them (a bonus) and incorporates online buying (even better). That said, the original is a fine read and primer on consumer purchasing behavior.

The Call of the Mall**Paco Underhill**

This book arrived in 2004, after Why We Buy, and explores the specific phenomenon of mall shopping. Its timing was interesting, as it did not foretell the difference in shopping currently occurring with the move to online replacing physical retail. And yet...malls remain for many of the reasons Underhill notes: their social gathering place role, their community role, and others. While dated due to changed shopping habits, in some ways elements are more important now than when written for those very same cultural changes.

What Women Want**Paco Underhill**

Underhill continues to remain an engaging writer, and this book is no exception. That said, he is relatively late to wake up to the impact and purchasing power of women. Tom Peters started on that communication over 10 years prior to this 2010 book. It is good, not great, and generally has a place on the shelf in part of my respect for Underhill's overall contribution. That said, since he's a gifted writer, his "take" on the areas of weight, shopping, and sexual expression are some of the most clear and gently written I've seen. You will learn and not be embarrassed by this one.

Pantone Guide to Communicating with Color**Leatrice Eiseman**

A “must have” for a good marketer. This is a about color meaning and color combinations. What it misses is a true international perspective, which in a world of websites that are immediately globally exposed is a miss. That said, if you're a North American person, this is visually well laid out, helpful, and well-written.

Guns, Germs and Steel

Jared Diamond

A Must Read, a Pulitzer Prize winner for a reason. The book portends to answer the question of a Native New Zealander's question to the author - why are your people smarter than mine? His answer is compelling, exhaustively researched, and humbling. He covers 10,000 years of human history in the book to provide his answer. Advice: skip Park IV, a case study, and you will remove 100 of the 425 dense and challenging pages and miss none of the impact of the message. Humility and understanding of diversity are essential to leadership and marketing; after reading this book you will have a different and far more adaptable diversity and human mental model.

Generation X

Douglas Coupland

Coupland, born the same year as I was, has a wickedly insightful look at the generation he named. As a weird aside, when he wrote this he and I would have been considered Gen X'ers. Recent data has resorted the “end of the boom” and we're technically baby boomers now. Revisionist history is alive and well.

The Experience Economy

Pine and Gilmore

This book is another must read for anyone in any role in retail or branding. The chart on page 2 is the “what” of what they are to teach. It says that people in the US will pay about a buck for a branded decent coffee but will pay up to \$6 for a coffee that includes experiences (they remember your name and order, have coffee stories on bags to bring products to life, have free WIFI). Read the rest of the book to learn what these experiences are and lots of examples of how to do them.

Riding the Waves of Culture

Trompenaars and Jampden-Turner

The book looks at different societies on key measures (such as emphasis on past, present and future) and teaches you with extensive data where cultures fall on the continuums. I used to advise this as reading for international business people. I now recommend it for us all - we're all part of a global economy.

Branding with Brains

Tjaco Walvis

I got this book to evaluate for teaching. I liked it so much it forms a part of the Branding course I've developed. This is a more advanced look at branding - not a how to but how to do it better - so it is not the first or even second book to read on the topic. That said, his 3 key areas of Relevance, Coherence, and Participation are

incredibly well suited for branding today, and the right 3 evaluators of brand performance over time.

Ogilvy on Advertising

David Ogilvy

This is becoming more and more of an artifact and less immediately relevant. What I find its use now is about communication and presentation - and less about advertising.

Emotional Branding

Marc Gobé

A book about what you would expect from the title - connecting brands and emotions. It works on some levels, not on others. My opinion on this book is divided - some things to like, others to dismiss.