

MBA · MARKETING STRATEGY

The Purple Cow Effect

Be remarkable or be invisible — Seth Godin's marketing idea

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What is the Purple Cow Effect?

- ◆ Seth Godin's idea: a purple cow in a field of brown cows is impossible to ignore.
- ◆ In a crowded market, being good is invisible — being remarkable is the only way to be seen.
- ◆ “Remarkable” literally means worth making a remark about.



Why traditional marketing no longer works

- ◆ Ad clutter: people see thousands of messages a day and tune them out.
- ◆ Ad blockers and skip buttons have broken interruption marketing.
- ◆ Shouting louder no longer works — the TV-industrial complex is over.



The new marketing paradigm

- ◆ Build the marketing INTO the product — not bolted on afterwards.
- ◆ Target the “sneezers” — the early adopters who spread the idea.
- ◆ Win the edges (a passionate niche), not the bland middle.



Key principles of the Purple Cow

- ◆ Be remarkable — safe is risky.
- ◆ Target a specific niche, not everyone.
- ◆ Find and delight the sneezers.
- ◆ Embrace criticism — if no one objects, you're boring.
- ◆ Keep innovating — today's purple cow becomes tomorrow's brown cow.



Real-world purple cows

- ◆ Apple, Amazon, Starbucks, JetBlue — remarkability built into the model.
- ◆ Krispy Kreme, Innocent Drinks, Tony's Chocolonely, Paper Boat — small brands that stood out.
- ◆ Each broke a category norm worth talking about.



How to build your own Purple Cow

- ◆ 1. Pick a niche edge you can own.
- ◆ 2. Make the product itself remarkable.
- ◆ 3. Seed it with the sneezers who spread it.
- ◆ 4. Embrace the critics — polarise, don't please everyone.
- ◆ 5. Then scale toward the mainstream.



The risk of playing it safe

- ◆ “Safe” is invisible — the brown cow no one notices.
- ◆ Sameness leads to price wars and shrinking margins.
- ◆ Copying competitors guarantees you stay a brown cow.



Summary — be remarkable or be invisible

- ◆ In 2026's attention economy, remarkable beats merely good.
- ◆ Marketing is built into the product and spread by passionate fans.
- ◆ Always ask: is this worth making a remark about?



THANK YOU

*Name one brand that is a purple cow today —
and one that has become a brown cow. What
made the difference?*

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