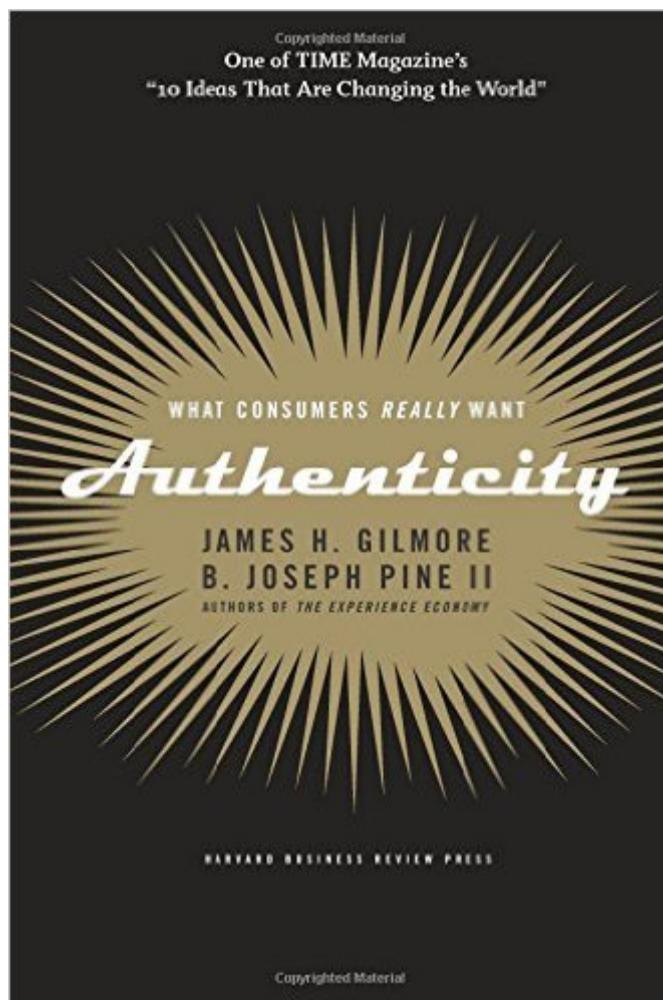


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Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want



Synopsis

Contrived. Disingenuous. Phony. Inauthentic. Do your customers use any of these words to describe what you sell or how you sell it? If so, welcome to the club. Inundated by fakes and sophisticated counterfeits, people increasingly see the world in terms of real or fake. They would rather buy something real from someone genuine rather than something fake from some phony. When deciding to buy, consumers judge an offering's (and a company's) authenticity as much as if not more than price, quality, and availability. In *Authenticity*, James H. Gilmore and B. Joseph Pine II argue that to trounce rivals companies must grasp, manage, and excel at rendering authenticity. Through examples from a wide array of industries as well as government, nonprofit, education, and religious sectors, the authors show how to manage customers' perception of authenticity by: recognizing how businesses "fake it;" appealing to the five different genres of authenticity; charting how to be "true to self" and what you say you are; and crafting and implementing business strategies for rendering authenticity. The first to explore what authenticity really means for businesses and how companies can approach it both thoughtfully and thoroughly, this book is a must-read for any organization seeking to fulfill consumers' intensifying demand for the real deal.

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Customer Reviews

This is the latest in a series of several books (notably *The Experience Economy: Work is Theater and Every Business a Stage* and *Markets of One: Creating Customer-Unique Value through Mass*

Customization) in which James H. Gilmore and B. Joseph Pine focus on what Peter Drucker once identified as one of the greatest challenges any business faces: How to get and then keep profitable customers? Their thesis in this latest volume is that marketers need to address the problem of managing "the perceptions of real or fake held by the consumer's of [an] enterprise's output - because people increasingly make purchase decisions based on how real or fake they perceive offerings. These perceptions flow directly from how well any particular offering conforms to a customer's self-image." In this volume, Gilmore and Pine examine "the authenticity of economic offerings, not the authenticity of individuals in personal relationships, something people also greatly desire but the subject of many other tomes." They cite two exemplars in particular - Disney and Starbucks - because no company "has more affected our collective view of what is real and what is not" than has Disney. As for Starbucks, no other company "more explicitly manages its perception of authenticity, making direct appeals to authenticity in every way" Gilmore and Pine define this new discipline. Here are some of the specific issues they address with rigor and eloquence: 1. The appeal of "real" 2. The drivers of the new consumer sensibility 3. Three axioms of authenticity 4. Five genres of authenticity 5. Two "time-honored standards" of authenticity 6. Ten elements of authenticity 7. How to be what you say you are 8. How to continue to be "true to self" 9.

In their 1999 best seller 'The Experience Economy' the authors, Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, described the shift in the economy from mining raw materials to the production of goods, to delivering services, to setting the scene for leisure experiences. Despite all the praise given to this book, there was nagging feeling: the American examples presented by the authors, such as Disney and Las Vegas, really did not work as authentic experiences for Europeans. This resulted in negatively equating The Experience Economy with facile, superficial and passive amusement in a fun-oriented society resembling a children's party. In their subsequent book, which recently appeared, 'Authenticity - What consumers really want' it is clear that the authors have taken this criticism to heart. In their new book they claim that consumers have had enough of the common pre-set-scene products of the experience industry. Short-term stimuli and superficial must make way for experiences promising a long term and constant change. 'Authenticity' is the new catchword. Anything we buy is increasingly adorned with adjectives like 'real', 'natural', 'original' or 'honest'. In fact, it is not only products that are measured to the degree to which they are authentic. 'Authentic leadership' is nowadays also demanded of board members and managers. The recent American primary elections were not so much about content, but were more about perceptions of the candidates' authenticity. Hillary's tears - how real were they? And Obama's promises - will he

realize them? According to Gilmore and Pine this quest for authenticity did not appear from thin air, but came about as a result of three interwoven social developments. The first one has to do with the development of the experience economy itself.

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