



# BOOK REVIEW

## Citizen Marketers - When People Are The Message

Caplan

Ben McConnell and Jackie Huba

"Citizen Marketers – When People Are The Message" is the second title from authors McConnell and Huba dealing with the phenomenon of citizen marketers, where ordinary consumers have a disproportionate impact on the fortunes of businesses, products and services. Although published in 2007, many organisations are still unsure of how to handle the whole 'social media' angle so the message and contents of this book are still very relevant. Social media is the general term applied to any aspect of the internet where the users (read customers) can create their own content, examples include blogs, podcasts, product reviews etc. Citizen Marketers examines how a solitary consumer using free social media tools on the internet can have a massive impact, good or bad, on any organisation.

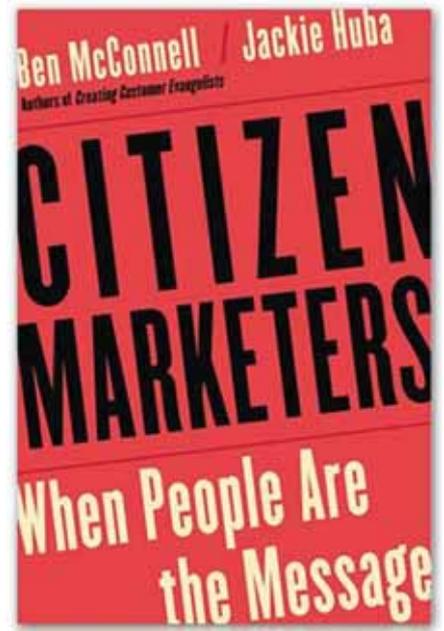
Filters, Fanatics, Facilitators and Firecrackers are the four groupings of Citizen Marketers that the authors identify. Each group is illustrated with insightful examples. In the 'facilitator' category the story of Paul Mullett is told. A UK based

Mini car enthusiast he'd built a forum of 20,000 Mini enthusiasts. BMW recognised his potential and invited him to a secret test drive of the new Mini. Mullett subsequently launched his own marketing campaign to the 20,000 forum members – some of whom said it clinched their decision to buy the car.

“EVERYONE IS A PUBLISHER, EVERYONE IS A BROADCASTER”

The authors argue that social media and citizen marketers are at the forefront of "the democratisation of everything" and that "everyone is a publisher, everyone is a broadcaster". These ideas are explored and the reasons why people are driven to become citizen marketers discussed. An interesting rule of thumb is identified as well, apparently 1% is the number of visitors to a website that tend to interact with it i.e. leave a comment or post a review. These 'one percenters' are the people who tend to become citizen marketers. What's really striking about this book are the examples that show how much impact one individual can have on even the largest of businesses such as Apple (forced to reduce the price of replacement batteries for Ipods by one blogger).

The book concludes with a chapter which examines businesses that have built



themselves around the concept of social media. The ideas won't work for every organisation, but there is food for thought. Most strikingly, in the book's conclusion, the authors examine the link between customer loyalty and social media. They argue that the very act of a consumer creating social media is a demonstration of loyalty for that product, business or brand.

Although listed in the 'marketing' section, this book is very much about customers. Reading it provides some insight into what motivates them and what causes them to take action either for or against your product or service! Social media is an increasingly important part of the marketing mix and indeed the customers' voice – a voice that organisations are well advised to listen to. **S**

