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# Zag: The Number One Strategy Of High-Performance Brands



## Synopsis

"When everybody zigs, zag," says Marty Neumeier in this fresh view of brand strategy. ZAG follows the ultra-clear "whiteboard overview" style of the author's first book, THE BRAND GAP, but drills deeper into the question of how brands can harness the power of differentiation. The author argues that in an extremely cluttered marketplace, traditional differentiation is no longer enough "today companies need radical differentiation" to create lasting value for their shareholders and customers. In an entertaining 3-hour read you'll learn: - why me-too brands are doomed to fail- how to "read" customer feedback on new products and messages- the 17 steps for designing difference into your brand- how to turn your brand's online-ness into a true line- to drive synergy- the secrets of naming products, services, and companies- the four deadly dangers faced by brand portfolios- how to stretch your brand without breaking it- how to succeed at all three stages of the competition cycle From the back cover: In an age of me-too products and instant communications, keeping up with the competition is no longer a winning strategy. Today you have to out-position, out-maneuver, and out-design the competition. The new rule? When everybody zigs, zag. In his first book, THE BRAND GAP, Neumeier showed companies how to bridge the distance between business strategy and design. In ZAG, he illustrates the number-one strategy of high-performance brands: radical differentiation. ZAG is an AIGA Design Press book, published under Peachpit's New Riders imprint in partnership with AIGA. For a quick peek inside ZAG, go to [www.zagbook.com](http://www.zagbook.com).

## Book Information

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: New Riders; 1 edition (September 30, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0321426770

ISBN-13: 978-0321426772

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.8 x 7.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 7 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars See all reviews (65 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

In a previous book, *The Brand Gap*, Marty Neumeier explains how companies can bridge the gap between business strategy and customer experience, noting that brand-building isn't a series of isolated activities; rather, it is a complete system in which five disciplines - differentiation, collaboration, innovation, validation, and cultivation - "combine to produce a sustainable competitive advantage." His intent in *Zag* "is to zoom in on differentiation to reveal the system within the system." Initially, he observes that the human mind deals with clutter the best way it can: by blocking it out. As a result, "the newest barriers to competition are the mental walls that customers erect to keep out clutter. For the first time in history, the most powerful barriers to competition are not controlled by companies, but by customers. Those little boxes they build in their minds determine the boundaries of brands." (Thomas H. Davenport and John C. Beck also have much of value to say about these boundaries and barriers in *The Attention Economy: Understanding the New Currency of Business*.) In his latest book, Neumeier explains how to overcome these barriers with radical innovation - "the engine for a high performance brand" - that requires mastery of four disciplines: 1. Finding your zag 2. Designing your zag 3. Building your zag 4. Renewing your zag Everything begins with identifying the zag. That is, offering something that combines the qualities of both good and different. "When focus is paired with differentiation, supported by a trend, and surrounded by compelling communications, you have the basic ingredients of a zag." OK, but how to do that? Neumeier provides a design process that consists of 17 checkpoints, each formulated as a question.

A ten page white paper posing as a book; don't waste your money. I'm going to literally review this in terms of its physical presentation, as well as content. This book is 6X8, 176 pages, BUT only about 1/3 of the pages actually contain narrative content, the other 2/3 are printed with images supposedly included to drive his point. The typeface is at LEAST 18 pt (think LARGE PRINT book), expanding what is probably really just 20 pages into a "book." Between the large typeface and the tangential full page graphics, he has taken what was probably an hour of lecture notes and powerpointing and turned them into a "book" and I suppose on that count I can give him some points for "marketing," or more accurately, false promises. As to content, unless you are truly dull in the brain and haven't an ounce of creativity flowing in your blood, you will likely find his idea of "Zag" laughable. It is similar to the "Blue Ocean" theory of a few years ago. This is just one more marketer pretending to have a big idea, that is really so small it is not even worth paying attention to. Add to that, much of what he presents are re-treads

of others' work, none of whom he properly credits, and basically you are dealing with the Dr. Oz Mahmet of the business world. What he is promoting is an example of what Jean Baudrillard refers to as "simulacra" and it is part of an old paradigm. But if this doesn't resonate with you, do you really want to spend \$21 on what is essentially a 20 page white paper designed to promote the author more than offer any substantive ideas? If you do, then you've fallen for his personal "brand" that of someone who knows how to make an easy buck simply by bumping up the size of the typeface, and regurgitating other people's ideas.

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