



Growth Hacker Marketing: A Primer on the Future of PR, Marketing, and Advertising

By Ryan Holiday

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A Primer on the Future of PR, Marketing and Advertising

A new generation of megabrand like Facebook, Dropbox, Airbnb, and Twitter haven't spent a dime on traditional marketing. No press releases, no TV commercials, no billboards. Instead, they rely on a new strategy—growth hacking—to reach many more people despite modest marketing budgets. Growth hackers have thrown out the old playbook and replaced it with tools that are testable, trackable, and scalable. They believe that products and businesses should be modified repeatedly until they're primed to generate explosive reactions.

Bestselling author Ryan Holiday, the acclaimed marketing guru for American Apparel and many bestselling authors and multiplatinum musicians, explains the new rules and provides valuable examples and case studies for aspiring growth hackers. Whether you work for a tiny start-up or a Fortune 500 giant, if you're responsible for building awareness and buzz for a product or service, this is your road map.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Pragmatic and actionable...if you're tasked with growing a company, you can't afford not to read this book."

—**Ryan Delk**, Director of Growth, Gumroad

"Finally, a crystallization and explanation of growth hacking in easy-to-understand terms—and better, real strategies and tactics for application."

—**Alex Korchinski**, growth hacker at Scribd

"Growth hackers are the new VPs of marketing, and this book tells you how to make the transformation."

—**Andrew Chen**, Silicon Valley entrepreneur, essayist and advisor

"Ryan's strategies and tactics will help every lean entrepreneur trying to grow their business and master the art of marketing and growth."

—**Patrick Vlaskovits**, coauthor of *The Lean Entrepreneur*

"This book is a wake up call for every marketing exec in the business. And a tutorial for engineers, IT, founders and designers. Read it."

—**Porter Gale**, Former VP of Marketing at Virgin America and author of *Your Network is Your Net Worth*

"Ryan captures the power of the growth hacker mindset and makes it accessible to marketers at companies of all types and sizes. If you don't see a boost in results after reading this book, something is wrong with your product."

—**Sean Ellis**, former growth hacker at Dropbox, and founder of Qualaroo

"Finally, a crystallization and explanation of growth hacking in easy to understand terms—and better yet, real strategies and tactics for application."

—**Alex Korchinski**, Director of Growth, Soma

"A must-read."

—**Derek Halpern**, SocialTriggers.com

About the Author

Ryan Holiday is the bestselling author of multiple books, including *Trust Me I'm Lying: Confessions of a Media Manipulator*. After dropping out of college at 19 to apprentice under Robert Greene, author of *The 48 Laws of Power*, he went on to advise many bestselling authors and multiplatinum musicians, and served as director of marketing at American Apparel. He currently lives in Austin and writes for *Thought Catalog* and the *New York Observer*. Visit www.RyanHoliday.net.

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I prefer the discipline of knowledge to the anarchy of ignorance. We pursue knowledge the way a pig pursues truffles.

—DAVID OGILVY

AN INTRODUCTION TO GROWTH HACKING

Nearly two years ago now, on what seemed like a normal day, I got in my car to leave my house, assuming it would be no different from any other workday. I had read the morning news, dealt with a few important employee issues over the phone, and confirmed lunch and drinks meetings for later in the day. I headed to the athletic club—a swanky, century-old private gym favored by downtown executives—and swam and ran and then sat in the steam room to think.

As I entered the office around ten, I nodded to my assistant and sat down at a big desk and reviewed all the papers that required my signature. There were ad designs to approve, invoices to process, events to sponsor, proposals to review. A new product was launching, and I had a press release to write. A stack of magazines had arrived—I handed them to an employee to catalog and organize for the press library.

My job: director of marketing at American Apparel. I had a half dozen employees working under me in my office. Right across the hall from us, thousands of sewing machines were humming away, manned by the world's most efficient garment workers. A few doors down was a photo studio where the very ads I would be placing were made.

Excepting the help of a few pieces of technology, like my computer and smartphone, my day had begun and would proceed exactly as it had for every other marketing executive for the last seventy-five years. Buy advertisements, plan events, pitch reporters, design “creatives,” approve promotions, and throw around terms like “brand,” “CPM,” “awareness,” “earned media,” “top of mind,” “added value,” and “share of voice.” That was the job; that’s always been the job.

I’m not saying I’m Don Draper or Edward Bernays or anything, but the three of us could probably have swapped offices and routines with only a few adjustments. And I, along with everyone else in the business, found that to be pretty damn cool.

But that seemingly ordinary day was disrupted by an article. The headline stood out clearly amid the online noise, as though it had been lobbed directly at me: “Growth Hacker Is the New VP [of] Marketing.”

What?

I was a VP of marketing. I quite liked my job. I was good at it, too. Self-taught, self-made, I was, at twenty-five, helping to lead the efforts of a publicly traded company with 250 stores in twenty countries and more than \$600 million in revenue.

But the writer, Andrew Chen, an influential technologist and entrepreneur, didn’t care about any of that. According to him, my colleagues and I would soon be out of a job—someone was waiting in the wings to replace us.

The new job title of “Growth Hacker” is integrating itself into Silicon Valley’s culture, emphasizing that coding and technical chops are now an essential part of being a great marketer. Growth hackers are a hybrid of marketer and coder, one who looks at the traditional question of “How do I get customers for my

product?” and answers with A/B tests, landing pages, viral factor, email deliverability, and Open Graph. . . .

The entire marketing team is being disrupted. Rather than a VP of Marketing with a bunch of non-technical marketers reporting to them, instead growth hackers are engineers leading teams of engineers.¹

What the hell is a growth hacker? I thought. How could an engineer ever do my job?

But then I added up the combined valuation of the few companies Chen mentioned as case studies—companies that had barely existed a few years ago.

- **Dropbox**
- **Zynga**
- **Groupon**
- **Instagram**
- **Pinterest**

Now worth *billions and billions* of dollars.

As Micah Baldwin, founder of Graphicly and a start-up mentor at Techstars and 500 Startups, explains, “In the absence of big budgets, start-ups learned how to hack the system to build their companies.”² Their hacking—which occurred right on my watch—had rethought marketing from the ground up, with none of the baggage or old assumptions. And now, their shortcuts, innovations, and backdoor solutions fly in the face of everything we’ve been taught.

We all want to do more with less. For marketers and entrepreneurs, that paradox is practically our job description. Well, in this book, we’re going to look at how growth hackers have helped companies like Dropbox, Mailbox, Twitter, Pinterest, Facebook, Snapchat, Evernote, Instagram, Mint.com, AppSumo, and StumbleUpon do so much with essentially nothing.

What stunned me most about those companies was that none of them were built with any of the skills that traditional marketers like myself had always considered special, and most were built without the resources I’d long considered essential. I couldn’t name the “marketer”—and definitely not the agency—responsible for their success because there wasn’t one. Growth hacking had made “marketing” irrelevant, or at the very least it had completely rewritten its best practices.

Whether you’re currently a marketing executive or a college grad about to enter the field—the first growth hackers have pioneered a new way. Some of their strategies are incredibly technical and complex. The strategies also change constantly; in fact, occasionally it might work only one time. This book is short because it sticks with the timeless parts. I also won’t weigh you down with heavy concepts like “cohort analysis” and “viral coefficients.”* Instead, we will focus on the mindset—it’s far and away the most important part.

I start and end with my own experiences in this book, not because I am anyone special but because I think they illustrate a microcosm of the industry itself. The old way—where product development and marketing were two distinct and separate processes—has been replaced. We all find ourselves in the same position: needing to do more with less and finding, increasingly, that the old strategies no longer generate results.

So in this book, I am going to take you through a new cycle, a much more fluid and iterative process. A growth hacker doesn’t see marketing as something one does but rather as something one builds into the product itself. The product is then kick-started, shared, and optimized (with these steps repeated multiple

times) on its way to massive and rapid growth. The chapters of this book follow that structure.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sarah Tomczak:

The particular book Growth Hacker Marketing: A Primer on the Future of PR, Marketing, and Advertising will bring someone to the new experience of reading the book. The author style to elucidate the idea is very unique. Should you try to find new book to read, this book very acceptable to you. The book Growth Hacker Marketing: A Primer on the Future of PR, Marketing, and Advertising is much recommended to you to see. You can also get the e-book through the official web site, so you can quickly to read the book.

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