MARKETING

Tribes

by Seth Godin

People form tribes around ideas, and anyone willing to lead can gather one - here is how movements start.

BEST POINTS FROM THE BOOK

01 **A tribe is people connected to one another, to a leader, and to an idea.**

A group needs only two things to become a tribe: a shared interest and a way to communicate. Communication runs four ways - leader to tribe, tribe to leader, member to member, and member to outsider.

02 **You don't need everyone - you need about a thousand true fans.**

Borrowing Kevin Kelly's idea, Godin argues a small base of people who truly care will spread your work for you. A tight, passionate tribe beats a huge, bored crowd every time.

03 **A movement runs on a story people can tell themselves.**

Per Senator Bill Bradley's formula, a movement needs a narrative about who we are and the future we're building, connection among members, and something to do. People believe what they tell themselves, so give them a story worth retelling.

04 **Tighten the tribe before you try to grow it.**

Your first job is turning a shared interest into a passionate goal and giving members tools to talk to each other. Don't water down the message to get bigger - some tribes are stronger because they're small and not for everyone.

05 **Leaders have followers; managers have employees.**

Managing is getting a known job done with resources you control. Leading is creating change you believe in - and leaders initiate instead of merely reacting or responding to what others do.

06 **Heretics lead; sheepwalkers hide.**

Sheepwalking is what happens when people raised to be obedient get brain-dead jobs and enough fear to keep them in line. Heretics question the rules from inside and act - change is made by asking forgiveness, not permission.

07 **Fear of criticism stops more leaders than fear of failure.**

Godin calls fear of failure an overrated excuse; it's the dread of being called out that keeps people unremarkable. If nobody is annoyed by what you're doing, you're probably not leading.

08 **The only thing holding you back is lack of faith.**

Faith that you can do it, faith that it's worth doing, faith that failure won't destroy you. Godin separates faith from 'religion' - the rigid rules laid over belief that protect the status quo and punish standing out.

09 **Run a micromovement: publish a manifesto, connect everyone, track progress publicly.**

Give the manifesto away so it spreads. Make it easy for followers to reach you and each other. And remember money is not the point - it only enables the movement; the moment you try to cash out, you stunt its growth.

10 **Generosity creates charisma, not the other way around.**

Charisma doesn't make you a leader; leading does. Tribes quickly sniff out whether you're in it for them or for yourself, and leaders who set out to give outperform leaders who set out to get.

11 **Find the heretics already succeeding - and amplify them.**

Godin calls this the most important practical idea in the book, from Jerry and Monique Sternin's work: find the people already doing things differently and winning, give them a platform and followers, and things get better.

12 **Leadership is a choice, not a title.**

No budget, rank, or permission slip is required. Lean in, or deliberately back off and let the tribe run - but don't do nothing. The one path that never works is doing nothing at all.

THE BOOK, IN SHORT

A tribe, in Godin's definition, is a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea. Humans have always formed them - around religions, nations, bands like the Grateful Dead, and hometown teams. What changed is the internet: geography no longer limits who can join, so tribes now form around work, products, causes, and almost any shared passion, and a crowd becomes a tribe the moment it gains a leader and a way to communicate.

The book's central claim is that tribes are waiting to be led, and that leading one is open to anyone. You do not need fame, charisma, or a marketing budget. You need an idea people already yearn for, a story that explains who the group is and where it is going, and ways for members to connect with you and with each other. Around a thousand true fans - people who care enough to spread the word themselves - is plenty.

Godin is specific about what leaders of movements actually do. They publish a manifesto and give it away, make it easy for followers to connect with them and with one another, and track progress publicly so the tribe can see itself moving. Money helps a movement grow, but it is the fuel, not the

point. Just as often, the winning move is to find people who are already doing things differently - heretics inside the system - and amplify what works.

He is equally blunt about the blockers. Management keeps the machine running; leadership means initiating change, which is uncomfortable. Schools and factories train people to be 'sheepwalkers' - obedient, heads down, afraid. What actually stops most would-be leaders is not fear of failure but fear of criticism, and underneath that, a simple lack of faith: faith that you can do it, that it is worth doing, and that failure will not destroy you.

Short, sharp, and deliberately provocative, Tribes is less a manual than a challenge. Somewhere there is a group that shares your idea and is waiting to be connected. The only question the book leaves you is whether you will lead it.

DO THIS WEEK

Name the tribe you could lead: write its idea in one sentence and list ten people who already care about it. This week, publish one short manifesto - a post, a note, a talk - that says who this group is and where it is going, and introduce two of those people to each other.

Seth Godin, first published 2008 by Portfolio (Penguin); full title 'Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us.' A short, punchy call to lead; for marketers, organizers, and anyone with an idea and even a tiny audience.