

Thinking Faster

Ideas, tools and processes to improve personal, workgroup and enterprise productivity and innovation

Book Review: Follow the Other Hand

I've just finished reading a book that I want to highly recommend, called [Follow the Other Hand](#) by Andy Cohen. From time to time I receive requests to read and review books, usually about improving productivity or innovation. Follow the Other Hand is one of the most interesting books about changing the way you look at your business that I've read in quite a while.

Actually, I struggled a bit to "categorize" Follow the Other Hand. It has flavors of a process improvement book, a book about changing the corporate culture, and a book about generating new ideas. In the end I decided to think about this book as a way to get a new perspective on your business.

Follow the Other Hand was written by [Andy Cohen](#), who is a marketing consultant, and a magician. The magician part is important because the title refers to magic, and the book is based on a business owner who is tutored by a magician to see things differently. Rather than take the most "reasonable" or safe course or perspective, the business owner is challenged to "follow the other hand" - in magic, that's where things really happen.

What I liked about this book:

1. It was one of the most easy to read business books I've read in a while. The book has a narrative story that incorporates the points that Cohen wants to make. Often it feels more like a novel than a business book, but that just makes it easier and more interesting to read.
2. The book incorporates a lot of basic magic in the narrative, and uses magic to set up some key points that Cohen wants to make about your business. So much of what he talks about is our cultural perceptions - we "can" do this and we "can't" do that. Instead he challenges us to look beyond our cultural and philosophical barriers to "follow the other hand".
3. Cohen synthesizes his key points at the end of each chapter. Many businesses could simply adopt some of his concepts from the end of the first chapter:
Create an effect - what is the result that you want?
Follow the other hand - what should you do differently that you might not have considered?
Develop the method - how would you do that new thing if you could?
Start with a great performance - create a dramatic entrance to the new market
These concepts are what make a great magic act - Cohen argues that they are also key to implementing a great new idea.
4. Cohen follows the Seth Godin "Free Prize Inside" concept. In his book there are examples and explanations of several magic tricks - even two "magic" cards. You can learn a little magic along the way as the characters in the book learn about magic and how to apply the effects to their business.

There were a few things I felt could have been better in the book. Primarily they have to do with overcoming resistance and doubt and changing a corporate culture. This is touched on in the book, in a chapter called "Idea Heckling". The discussion provided is reasonable but makes it seem a little too easy to change a long standing culture and to get complete buy in from the team.

Overall though I'd have to say that unlike most books about business, I was disappointed when this one ended. I grew to like the characters, learned a little magic and could see how Cohen's love of magic gave him a very different way to look at changing a business. Follow the Other Hand is a quick read because it's interesting and provides a lot of insights into corporate culture and the ways we create barriers to new thinking approaches or accept conventional wisdom. I've already handed my copy off to folks in our business to read, and have recommended the book to friends. I'd recommend that you consider "Follow the Other Hand" as a great book to help you think differently about your

business.