Ritik Namdev

FREE CHEAT SHEET

MARKETING BOOKS, ONE IDEA EACH

27 Marketing Books, One Idea Each: What to Apply This Week

Every book from the book reels, cut to the one idea that matters, a task for this week, and a reading order in three tiers.

06	51	2026-11
SECTIONS	IDEAS, TOOLS & TEMPLATES	LAST CHECKED



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Tested, not guessed.

INSIDE THIS CHEAT SHEET

27 marketing, sales and business books, each cut down to the one idea worth using and a task you can do this week. Read them in tiers and use one idea before you open the next book.

> **WHO IT'S FOR**
>
> Founders, freelancers and early marketers who own a pile of unread marketing books, or who finish books and change nothing.

01 **The rule: one book, one idea applied**

02 **Pick your first book by your problem**

03 **Start here: 10 books you can use within a week**
Short, practical, hard to misread. If you are new to marketing, read from this tier before you buy any course.

04 **Next: 11 books for after one Start book has changed something**
These go deeper on one skill each: positioning, virality, habits, sales, channels, creativity.

05 **Deep: 6 books for year two and beyond**
Dense, older, or written for bigger companies. Read them once you have real customers and real numbers to...

06 **The 30-day reading plan**
One Start book, one Next book, and one idea used from each. About 30 minutes of reading a day.

HOW TO USE IT

1. Find your problem in the 'pick your first book' table. That gives you one book, not ten.
2. Read only that book's entry. Do the 'apply this week' task before you read anything else.
3. Use the 30-day plan to get through one Start-tier book and one Next-tier book, and apply one idea from each.

01

The rule: one book, one idea applied

None of these books is ranked. They sit in three tiers. Start here: easy to read, quick to use. Next: once a Start book has changed something real. Deep: dense books that pay off after a year or two of doing the work.

Ritik has worked in SEO since 2018. He runs 30 of his own sites and works as a product growth marketer at a SaaS company. The mistake he sees most often, and made himself: reading ten books in a month and using none of them. So each entry gives you one idea and one task. Do the task, then move on to the next book.

The summaries are in our own words. Buy or borrow the books. Each entry is a doorway to the book, not a stand-in for it.

02

Pick your first book by your problem

Your problem right now	Read first	Then
I don't know if anyone wants my idea	The Mom Test	Competing Against Luck
People visit my site but don't get what I do	Building a StoryBrand	Positioning
I sound like every competitor	Obviously Awesome	Positioning
People like my work but few people buy	$100M Offers	Influence
Customers try me once and don't come back	Purple Cow	Hooked
I have a good offer but nobody knows about it	$100M Leads	Traction
My posts and ads get ignored	Made to Stick	Contagious
I want a simple plan, not a theory	The 1-Page Marketing Plan	This Is Marketing
My sales calls go nowhere	SPIN Selling	Never Split the Difference
My copy is flat	Everybody Writes	Ogilvy on Advertising
I'm trying to grow too broad, too early	This Is Marketing	Crossing the Chasm
I'm competing on price in a crowded market	Blue Ocean Strategy	Alchemy

Your problem right now	Read first	Then
I want to know why people buy the way they do	Influence	Thinking, Fast and Slow

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03

Start here: 10 books you can use within a week

Short, practical, hard to misread. If you are new to marketing, read from this tier before you buy any course.

1 The Mom Test · Rob Fitzpatrick (2013)

https://www.momtestbook.com/

Start here

One idea: people lie, kindly, when you ask about your idea. Ask about their past behaviour instead: what they did last time, what it cost, what they tried. Apply this week: talk to 3 possible customers without saying your idea once. Ask only about the last time the problem happened.

Best for: Read it if you are about to build, launch or price something and your only evidence is friends saying 'great idea'.

> *Ritik's note:* Use the Mom Test question bank: the do and don't questions, ready to paste into a call doc.

2 Made to Stick · Chip Heath & Dan Heath (2007)

https://heathbrothers.com/books/made-to-stick/

Start here

One idea: ideas stick when they are Simple, Unexpected, Concrete, Credible, Emotional and told as Stories (SUCCESs). Apply this week: score your next post or headline out of 6, one point per trait, and rewrite the weakest part before you publish.

Best for: Read it if people nod at your message and forget it by the next day.

> *Ritik's note:* The sticky message kit turns the six traits into a scorecard and rewrite prompts.

3 This Is Marketing · Seth Godin (2018)

https://seths.blog/tim/

Start here

One idea: find your smallest viable audience, the fewest people who would make the work worth doing, and serve them so well they'd miss you if you left. Apply this week: rewrite your bio or homepage line for that one small group, by name.

Best for: Read it if you are trying to reach 'everyone' and reaching no one.

4 Building a StoryBrand · Donald Miller (2017)

https://storybrand.com/

Start here

One idea: the customer is the hero and your brand is the guide. Your message should show their problem, your plan and their win. Apply this week: rewrite your homepage hero so it names what the customer wants and gives one clear button.

Best for: Read it if your homepage talks about you and visitors leave without understanding what you sell.

> *Ritik's note:* The StoryBrand one-pager has the 7 boxes and a homepage wireframe to fill in.

5 The 1-Page Marketing Plan · Allan Dib (2018)

https://leanmarketing.com/books/1pmp

Start here

One idea: a whole marketing plan fits on one page in 9 boxes, split into before, during and after the sale. Apply this week: fill the 9 boxes in rough pencil. The empty boxes show you where the gaps are.

Best for: Read it if you do random marketing tasks with no plan connecting them.

6 $100M Offers · Alex Hormozi (2021)

https://www.acquisition.com/books

Start here

One idea: make an offer so good people feel stupid saying no. You raise value by raising the dream outcome and the odds of success, and by cutting the wait and the effort. Apply this week: add one guarantee or one speed promise to your main offer.

Best for: Read it if people like your work, but too few say yes to your price.

> *Ritik's note:* The offer builder walks you through the value equation one line at a time.

7 $100M Leads · Alex Hormozi (2023)

https://www.acquisition.com/books

Start here

One idea: there are four core ways to get leads: warm outreach, content, cold outreach and paid ads. Start with people who already know you. Apply this week: message 10 people a day from your contacts with a plain, useful note. No pitch.

Best for: Read it if you are about to spend on ads before you have asked the people who already know you.

8 Influence · Robert Cialdini (1984; expanded edition 2021)

https://www.influenceatwork.com/

Start here

One idea: a few principles drive most yeses: reciprocity, commitment and consistency, social proof, authority, liking and scarcity. The 2021 edition adds a seventh, unity. Apply this week: add one honest principle to your sales page, like real social proof next to the button.

Best for: Read it if you want to understand why people say yes, and you want to use it honestly.

> *Ritik's note:* The influence swipe file has examples of each principle used without tricks.

9 Purple Cow · Seth Godin (2003)

https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/292254/purple-cow-new-edition-by-seth-godin/

Start here

One idea: being 'very good' is invisible. Build something remarkable, meaning something people would make a remark about. Apply this week: list the one thing customers mention about you without being asked. If the list is empty, fix the product before the ads.

Best for: Read it if customers try you once and don't return or tell anyone.

10 Everybody Writes · Ann Handley (2014; 2nd edition 2022)

https://www.oreilly.com/library/view/-/9781119854166/

Start here

One idea: good marketing writing is a habit and a process, not a talent. Write an ugly first draft, then rewrite with the reader in mind. Apply this week: take your last email, cut it by a third, and put the reader's problem in the first line.

Best for: Read it if writing takes you forever and still comes out stiff.

04

Next: 11 books for after one Start book has changed something

These go deeper on one skill each: positioning, virality, habits, sales, channels, creativity.

1 Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind · Al Ries & Jack Trout (1981)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Positioning_(marketing)

Next

One idea: you win by owning one word or idea in the customer's mind, and it works best when you are first in a category or define a new one. Apply this week: write the one word you want to own and check whether your headline proves it.

Best for: Read it if people can't say in one line how you are different.

> *Ritik's note:* The positioning worksheet helps you pick and test that one word.

2 Obviously Awesome · April Dunford (2019)

https://www.aprildunford.com/books

Next

One idea: positioning is the context you put your product in. Start from what customers would use if you didn't exist, then build up from what makes you different. Apply this week: write the list of 'competitive alternatives' your last 3 customers really considered, including doing nothing or using a spreadsheet.

Best for: Read it if your product is good but people put it in the wrong box.

> *Ritik's note:* Pairs with the positioning worksheet.

3 Contagious · Jonah Berger (2013)

https://jonahberger.com/books/contagious/

Next

One idea: people share things for six reasons he names STEPPS: Social currency, Triggers, Emotion, Public, Practical value and Stories. Apply this week: check your next post against all six and add one that's missing, often practical value.

Best for: Read it if your content gets views but no shares.

4 Hooked · Nir Eyal (2014)

https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/317898/hooked-by-nir-eyal/

Next

One idea: habit products run a loop: trigger, action, variable reward, investment. Apply this week: map your product or newsletter on those four steps and find the missing one. It is usually investment, something the user puts in that brings them back.

Best for: Read it if people sign up and then go quiet.

> *Ritik's note:* Use it for good habits only. Eyal himself warns against products that manipulate.

5 SPIN Selling · Neil Rackham (1988)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neil_Rackham

Next

One idea: in bigger sales, the best sellers ask four kinds of questions in order: Situation, Problem, Implication, Need-payoff. Implication questions do most of the selling. Apply this week: write your four questions before your next call, with two implication questions.

Best for: Read it if your calls feel friendly but end with 'let me think about it'.

6 Never Split the Difference · Chris Voss with Tahl Raz (2016)

https://www.blackswanltd.com/never-split-the-difference

Next

One idea: negotiation is about hearing the other side first. Label their feelings and mirror their words before you argue. Apply this week: on your next price push-back, repeat their last three words as a question and wait.

Best for: Read it if you drop your price the moment a client hesitates.

7 Traction · Gabriel Weinberg & Justin Mares (2014; Portfolio edition 2015)

https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/289806/traction-by-mares-gabriel-weinberg-and-justin/9780241242537

Next

One idea: there are 19 traction channels, and most startups only test the two or three they already know. Apply this week: list all the channels, pick three you'd never tried, and run one cheap test on each.

Best for: Read it if you are stuck on one channel and growth has stalled.

8 Ogilvy on Advertising · David Ogilvy (1983)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Ogilvy_(businessman)

Next

One idea: the headline does most of the work, and specific facts sell better than clever lines. Apply this week: rewrite one banner or ad headline to promise one specific benefit, with a number or a detail.

Best for: Read it if your ads are pretty but don't say anything.

9 Alchemy · Rory Sutherland (2019)

https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/430379/alchemy-by-rory-sutherland

Next

One idea: people aren't purely logical, so small changes in how you frame a thing can beat expensive changes to the thing itself. Apply this week: before you cut a price or rebuild a feature, test a framing change: a new name, an order of options, a reassurance line.

Best for: Read it if every fix you think of costs money.

10 Competing Against Luck · Clayton Christensen, Taddy Hall, Karen Dillon & David S. Duncan (2016)

https://www.christenseninstitute.org/book/competing-against-luck/

Next

One idea: customers 'hire' a product to do a job in their life. Find the job, not the demographic. Apply this week: ask your last 3 buyers what was happening the day they decided to buy, and write the job in one sentence.

Best for: Read it if you know who your customers are but not why they buy.

> *Ritik's note:* The Mom Test questions are a good way to dig up the job.

11 The Lean Startup · Eric Ries (2011)

https://theleanstartup.com/

Next

One idea: build, measure, learn. Ship the smallest test that can prove you wrong, then decide to keep going or change course. Apply this week: turn your next big plan into one test you can run in 7 days, and write down what result would make you stop.

Best for: Read it if you spend months building before anyone sees it.

05

Deep: 6 books for year two and beyond

Dense, older, or written for bigger companies. Read them once you have real customers and real numbers to think about.

1 Breakthrough Advertising · Eugene Schwartz (1966)

https://www.awai.com/2024/04/know-what-your-prospect-is-feeling/

Deep

One idea: match your headline to how aware the reader already is, from unaware of the problem to ready to buy your product. Apply this week: label your 3 main pages by the awareness level of the person landing there, and check that each headline fits.

Best for: Read it if you write copy for a living and want the theory under the formulas.

2 Blue Ocean Strategy · W. Chan Kim & Renée Mauborgne (2005)

https://www.blueoceanstrategy.com/

Deep

One idea: instead of fighting rivals in a crowded market, make competition irrelevant. Use the four actions: eliminate, reduce, raise, create. Apply this week: list what your industry always offers, then pick one thing to eliminate and one to create.

Best for: Read it if you are stuck in a price war with lookalike competitors.

3 Crossing the Chasm · Geoffrey Moore (1991)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crossing_the_Chasm

Deep

One idea: early adopters and the mainstream buy for different reasons, and many tech products die in the gap between them. Win one narrow niche completely first. Apply this week: name the one niche you could own fully, and the proof that niche would need.

Best for: Read it if early fans love your product but bigger customers won't commit.

4 Thinking, Fast and Slow · Daniel Kahneman (2011)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thinking,_Fast_and_Slow

Deep

One idea: we have a fast, intuitive way of thinking and a slow, effortful one, and most buying decisions lean on the fast one, with biases like anchoring. Apply this week: on your pricing or proposal, show the premium option first so it sets the anchor.

Best for: Read it if you want the research behind the behavioural tricks marketers use.

5 Scientific Advertising · Claude Hopkins (1923)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claude_C._Hopkins

Deep

One idea: treat advertising as a test. Track every ad's response and keep what works. Apply this week: give your next two versions of one ad or email separate tracking links and compare.

Best for: Read it if you want to see how old 'test everything' really is. It is short and the original text is old.

6 The Challenger Sale · Matthew Dixon & Brent Adamson (2011)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Challenger_Sale

Deep

One idea: in complex B2B sales, the sellers who do best teach the buyer something new about their own business, instead of only building rapport. Apply this week: write one insight about your client's industry that they probably haven't noticed, and open your next call with it.

Best for: Read it if you sell to companies and your pitch sounds like everyone else's.

06

The 30-day reading plan

One Start book, one Next book, and one idea used from each. About 30 minutes of reading a day.

1 Day 1: Pick

Use the problem table to pick one Start book and one Next book. Write your problem in one sentence on the first page.

2 **Days 2–9: Read the Start book**

Read for 30 minutes a day. Keep one page of notes, and only note things you could do this month.

3 **Day 10: Choose the one idea**

Cross out every note but one. That's the idea you'll use. Do the 'apply this week' task from its entry above.

4 **Days 11–14: Apply it**

Use the idea on something real: your homepage, your offer, a sales call, a post. No new reading these days.

5 **Day 15: Check**

Write what changed: replies, clicks, sales or just clearer thinking. Be honest. 'Nothing yet' is a fine answer.

6 **Days 16–25: Read the Next book**

Same rules: 30 minutes a day, one page of notes, only things you could do this month.

7 **Days 26–29: Apply the second idea**

Pick one idea and use it on something real. If it fits with the first idea, combine them, like a StoryBrand homepage with Positioning's one word on it.

8 **Day 30: Decide what's next**

Look at your two checks. Choose the next book by the problem that's left, not by what's popular.

Sources

Every claim in this Cheat sheet traces back to one of these. Checked 2026-11.

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