

“ WE WANT TO INSPIRE LEADERS ”

DEAN DEBIASE MANAGER & CONSULTANT

He is one of the authors of the famous management book *The Big Moo*. Just the right person to explain how companies can become remarkable and why do so many insist on failing.

BY RAQUEL ALMEIDA CORREIA

Dean's professional career is a true case-study. At the age of 47, this North-American has run some of the Fortune 500 subsidiaries. He has created the largest Internet automotive marketing services company and seduced AOL to buy Imagination Network, after levelling it with the largest games, community and instant messaging services companies. After stopping by FedEx, Debiase joined Startup Partners, a company that provides search engine marketing (SEM) services and technology. This wide-ranging background assured Seth Godin's invitation, a North-American marketing guru, to incorporate the *The Big Moo* project – a book that wants to go beyond the big leaders' libraries boundaries and be a key element to their business strategies.

You are one of the authors of the management book *The Big Moo*, published in the year 2000. How was this project born?

Seth Godin wanted to write a sequel to his best-selling book, *Purple Cow*, but he didn't want to write it himself. He wanted to tap a network of best-selling authors and global business leaders to write and develop a new kind of business book inspire the next generation of business leaders as-well-as people who don't generally read business books today. *The Big Moo* authors represent an unprecedented collaboration of some of the world's best business thinkers, blending their best ideas on how to remarkable-ize organizations. We are a very active and fun group. It continues to be an incredible group to work with!

In what way are the 33 thinkers helping companies become remarkable? Could you give us an example?

One of my fellow co-authors, Julie Anixter, and I

decided to start a company called Remarkabalize.com to extend the benefits of *The Big Moo* to the business world and to help business leaders to stop trying to be perfect and start being remarkable instead. And through *Big Moo* speaking events and hands on advisement services we are helping Global 2000 corporations like Disney and Microsoft to emerging organizations like Ryla Teleservices Iconoculture, LAGA and Davis United World College Scholars. We are not traditional consultants, but a network of trusted experts who work in and live with the everyday challenges of the global business marketplace. I think that's why business managers, entrepreneurs and industry leaders call on us - because we can bring the right resources to bear to help them when they need it the most. Whether it is motivating their constituents, solving their biggest challenges or helping to guide their organizations to the next-level the experience and perspectives of the Remarkabalize team can make a difference.

You've even created a custom personalized cover and personalized inside message service for the *Big Moo*. What's the buyers' benefit of personalizing?

One of our goals at Remarkabalize.com is to take business books to the next level. We want to take them from a passive media to an integral part of business. By allowing people to personalize the book with an inspiring message or just a simple thank you note they can use it as a tool to Remarkabalize their own organization or cause.

Companies usually send (or give) it to the people they care about the most - their employee's, customers or global partners. One example is Microsoft, who is using *The Big Moo* to reach out to their customers, giving them a custom copy of the book with a creative and inspiring message that they developed soon after they read the book. >>

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WHO IS

Dean DeBiase

Age

47 years old
Married, two children

Occupation

President of Startup Partners
and Fathom Online and author
of the book *The Big Moo*

Hobbies

Volunteering, travelling, skiing
and boating

Have many companies already asked for help through the Remarkabilize program?

Yes. Every week we get requests from all over the world, from managers of small businesses to Managing Directors, Presidents and CEO's of corporations. They are interested in a few of our key programs, including how they can personalize The Big Moo and have us distribute it to their customers or employee's, how they can tap into our network of public speakers and have us present at one of their events, how they can host their own Big Moo events at their organization or industry function, and finally how we can work together to Remarkabilize part of their business or company story. Since we have a broad platform of services we usually tailor a program to fit most companies or industries needs.

What's the first thing you do when companies ask for your help? And how is the rest of the process?

On Remarkabilize.com people have the ability to tell us about their company, the challenges they face and what programs they are most interested in. This allows us to determine how to develop a dialog and relationship that can support an existing program that may already be successful inside their organization or help to rebuild an area of their business that they would like to make better.

What are the main difficulties you find in companies when they are trying to become "remarkable"?

People find it hard to let go and try new things. It is not easy to stop trying to be perfect and instead just be remarkable. Just identifying what is a remarkable thing is a big debate at first, mostly because we find they are still trying to be perfect. Our readers and clients begin to realize that Remarkable really is in the eyes of their customers or partners. In the book we say..."if your customer decides something you do is worth remarking on, then, by definition, it's remarkable"! Many times a company's remarkable differentiator is a NextGen

“OUR READERS BEGIN TO REALIZE THAT REMARKABLE IS IN THE EYES OF THEIR CUSTOMERS”

product or service that you have to develop to lead the market. Other times it can be something as simple as your people always tells the truth and maybe that's why your customers love you and your business reputation.

In Purple Cow, Seth Godin states that companies must stop being brown and turn purple. Is their any secret formula to get there?

Becoming a purple company is easy if you are willing be honest

about your value in the marketplace. How you measure your remarkable score can only be done in the eyes of your customers, partners or employee's. When you pay attention to their perceptions, especially where they are dissatisfied, you have a roadmap to becoming remarkable. Listen to the dissenters, the unhappy, the frustrated and they will give you a head start on innovation.

Can you give as an example of a company that has achieved it?

One industry that seems to do a better job than most at listening is the hospitality industry. Their profits live and die on their ability to make people comfortable. The good hospitality companies pay enormous amounts of attention to customers and their needs. They do something about them. Again, it can be simple to see, but it takes courage to act. Two startling simple innovations come to mind: first, Marriott listened to business customers who wanted an environment that focused more exclusively on their needs and provided a new business model called Marriott Courtyard; second, Starwood discovered that most travellers were focused on getting a good night sleep. Heavenly Bed came from that insight. Both are remarkable enduring innovations that met unaddressed customer needs.

Why do so many of them remain brown?

It is easier not to do the hard stuff like proactively adapting to the rapidly changing market forces out there. It is easier, as you said, to remain brown, because people are comfortable not changing. But then, they realize that their complacency eventually results in a

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REMARKABLE 33

A journalist, an actress, an architect, an inventor. They all have their role in The Big Moo project, side by side with celebrities like Tom Peters and Seth Godin. The aim is to tell remarkable stories that can inspire companies. It could be a book like so many others, but it goes far beyond. It's a strategy tool and also a solidarity act - one hundred per cent of the profits are offered to institutions like Room to Read, Acuman Fund and Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. The authors intend to raise one million dollars. "Through our advisory board and network of partners, who are volunteering their company services and management support to help Remarkabilize and The Big Moo, we are increasing our awareness so we can sell more books and give more of the proceeds to the three charities", states Dean DeBiase.

REMARKABILIZE.COM

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forced change down the road. When they lose a customer or market share or get passed over by a competitor because they were way too comfortable and un-remarkable. The hardest part is telling the truth.

Is it the managers' fault?

It is too easy to focus on your "to do" list instead of you "not to do" list. Many of us get buried in running a department, division or job and forget to rise up and look to the future and determine how to out flank our competitors or better serve our customers or spend more time with our remarkable employees. Sometimes, just taking the time to determine what the wrong issues are can help managers focus in on the right issues that will make a big difference - like creating a BIG MOO!

Can you elect the most remarkable company in the world? Why is it remarkable?

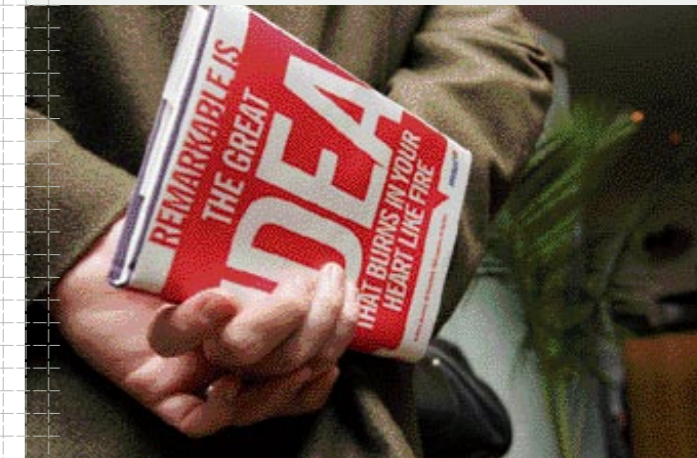
The most remarkable company I have worked for was FedEx - a remarkable blend of people, service and technology that customers love and continue to rely on. But, the most remarkable companies I know today are emerging growth companies that are developing the next generation of products and services or creating new industry categories all together. I spend a lot of time connecting these high impact companies (from Silicon Valley to developing counties) with Global 2000 corporations because they need the ideas, passion and people from these next generation start-up's in order to compete and grow again.

You are also responsible for the Reboot program for your organization, Startup Partners. How does it work?

I'm working on a new book, Reboot, which is what I do for companies when I get involved at the board or operating level. Reboots are done well before a company is in need of a full turnaround. The problem is that most organizations don't think they need a Reboot, because they don't notice their slow decline into mediocrity until they lose something - revenues, employees, key customers, even the CEO. They wake up one day, on the brink of irrelevance, and wonder why there is a new person at the top, "the turnaround expert", calling the shots in their brave and newly defined world. Whether they are in a short-term crisis, or a long-term slide into obscurity, the message is usually clear that it's too late for that team. But it doesn't have to be that way. Rather than waiting for the day when the turnaround guy shows up, most managers can do something about it now, when (they think) their organization is doing "O.K." and they're not thinking about what's next or what could happen around the bend.

You've been recently appointed for Fathom Online. What's the value of the services the company offers?

I joined because Fathomonline.com is a emerging Silicon Valley company with remarkable people, services and partners. Fathomonline.com is a leading digital media services company that provides search engine marketing products, interactive advertising tools and marketing intelligence platforms to advertisers and agencies, in partnership with Google, MSN, Yahoo! and other media & technology partners. Our Global 2000 clients enjoy doing business with us because we make the complex simple for them. We have the best experts and technology available, so our customers can outsource the rapidly changing development and management of high performance



ALTRUISTIC MANAGER

Dean is in love with management. His passion makes it hard for him to elect a favourite guru. "I have enjoyed growing up in the business world with Peter Drucker. I will miss his grounded but visionary wisdom that we seem to need more of in our rapidly moving modern business world", he says. When it comes to books, his choice falls on titles connected with business strategy. He is very selective, though. "I tend to favour small books that people can get something out of quickly". He also spends a part of his time doing something he "really enjoys": working as a volunteer for the Chicago Entrepreneurial Center and for the Northern Illinois University, helping to create structures that "promote their development". The rest of the time is spent travelling, always with his family. "I'm looking forward to brining my family here to Portugal some day".

digital advertising to us, across all search channels and media platforms.

Have companies realized the power of search engine marketing?

Yes, Internet and search engine advertising is rapidly growing and becoming a preferred direct marketing channel for B-B and consumer companies. As a partner with our customers, Fathom simplifies search marketing and helps large advertisers with cost effective programs that allow them to acquire customers and develop relationships online, while building their brands and growing their businesses. We also develop technology platforms that provide advertisers with Marketing Intelligence tools that help them monitor and plan their media strategy. From online to offline to contact centres marketing managers want to know more about their advertising spending and how they can best serve their customers and expand their business. We help them now by consolidating all of their search efforts into one dashboard and will continue to develop this platform to help them manage their expanding digital marketing efforts in the future.