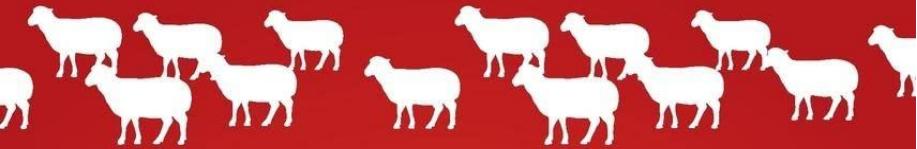


# Non-Fiction Book

Actual pages edited in Erika Napoletano's "The Power of Unpopular: A Guide to Building Your Brand for the Audience Who Will Love You (and why no one else matters)" using the Chicago Manual of Style and Microsoft Word.



# THE POWER OF UN- POPULAR



A GUIDE TO BUILDING YOUR BRAND  
FOR THE AUDIENCE WHO WILL LOVE YOU  
(AND WHY NO ONE ELSE MATTERS)

ERIKA NAPOLETANO

Being popular sucks.

Somewhere along the way, business owners got the idea they had to be popular in order to be successful, when, in fact, the opposite is true. Every successful brand in history—from corporate behemoths to your neighborhood coffee shop—is vastly unpopular with a distinct demographic, yet succeeds wildly with the right audience. Isn't it time to rethink "unpopular"? In *The Power of Unpopular*, you'll discover what the world's greatest innovators have always known: popular is the *last* thing you ever want to build a business to be.

Stop focusing your brand-building on groups who will never like you and learn how to identify the audience you want to serve. *The Power of Unpopular* simply—and bluntly—explains concepts that you can immediately graft onto your existing business strategies:

- Discover your brand personality and explore what you gain from taking a stand
- Find the people who will benefit from what you have to offer, and then tell them a story that they want to hear
- Become an approachable brand that invites conversation and a high level of customer input
- Build your community and get your brand shared
- Scale your brand in a way that ensures that it will survive its own growth
- Understand profitability—in both financial and emotional terms

Featuring real businesses from across the globe, this irreverent guide couples theory with practice, blazing pathways that businesses of any size or age can follow. Becoming unpopular shows you who you are and what you have to offer—and lets you tell all the naysayers to shove it.

Change the way you do business *and* live your life—become unpopular.



ERIKA NAPOLETANO was never the prom queen, but that's never stopped her from doing whatever the hell she set her mind to. She's the Head Redhead at RHW Media, a digital strategies consultancy based in Denver, Colorado. The voice behind RedheadWriting.com (a destination for unpopular thoughts and blunt advice), she's also a columnist for *Entrepreneur* magazine and was recognized by both the *Denver Post* and *5280* magazine as one of Colorado's top Twitter personalities.

Learn more about her and the book at [www.erikanapoletano.com](http://www.erikanapoletano.com) and [www.unpopularbook.com](http://www.unpopularbook.com).

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## Acknowledgments

There are countless people who not only contributed to my ability to be somewhat of an authority on the concept of “unpopular” but also facilitated it landing on the pages in front of you.

**My parents**, for instilling in me that *owning* things is a fringe benefit that stems from *doing* things and for encouraging me to become a doer. And for never offering blind support—you taught me to ask questions, gave me the tools to ask better ones, and helped me discover that having an opinion isn't poison.

**Jason Schippers**, for helping me own my ink and for being the first person to ever review the proposal for this book (and having done so, not telling me to burn it). You are missed.

**Shelly Kramer**, who made the initial introduction to John Wiley & Sons, for her mentorship and tireless interest in helping me kick ass as a business owner and brand.

**Stephany Evans**, my literary agent and second set of editorial eyes, for her meticulous and enthusiastic work on my behalf (and conspicuous lack of bullshit).

**Meredith Branscombe**, my friend, publicist, and oftentimes colleague, who is never afraid to tell me when I fuck up or call me on my crap. Two words for you: happy fish.

**Darren Mahuron**, my wildly talented photographer. Your mad skills with a lens combined with your friendship are a treasured asset.

**My editors, Amelia and Dave**, for catching the crap before you had to read it.

**The Tattered Cover Bookstore in Denver**, where I hammered out countless chapters and took refuge in the stacks when I had writer's block.

**All of the book's contributors**, a huge thanks for letting me inside your businesses and sharing your respective pieces of the deliciously unpopular pie.

**The businesses featured as case studies**, for not building your businesses to the lowest common denominator and creating something that made me excited to learn more. You left me inspired, and I can only hope my words did justice to what you've built and continue to refine.

your solution really doesn't mean anything.

So, watch Randy Pausch's *Last Lecture* or pick up the book. It's a beautiful read.

The work begins with your audience, and as Randy states, it doesn't matter the size. What matters is that they're listening. So let's take a page from academia and start with the problem:

You can't get your audience to listen if you don't know to whom you're talking in the first place.

We'll break this down into the following four steps:

- **Clarifying** your reason for being

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OK, I waited until I read through the entire chapter before writing this. I followed along with the Clarifying and Understanding – even the Finding, although it was tougher – but you lost me on the Building. I was looking for these four key words in the subheads to guide me, and I never saw the Building one. Other readers may experience the same issue.

November 02, 2011, 10:21 AM

Reply

- **Understanding** who will benefit from and want what you have to offer
- **Finding** those people, talking to them, and using them to help build your brand
- **Building** your brand story – how you can use what you've learned to tell a story your customers want to hear.

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Before we go into this any further, there's something we need to make perfectly clear...

Product is product is product

Both of these ideas have infinite numbers of potential iterations. The point is that you have to get people involved with your product so they can help you shape its evolution.

And what about online tools? Let's talk about Survey Monkey, Survey Gizmo, and GutCheck – three online companies dedicated to helping you understand your audience better than ever.

- **Survey Monkey** ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)) and **SurveyGizmo**

([www.surveygizmo.com](http://www.surveygizmo.com)): If you just want to ask a few questions from an existing audience, these two companies offer you the chance to build simple online surveys. What better opportunity for you to leverage an existing e-mail list of loyal customers and clients and up your business or brand's game? For prices ranging from free to roughly \$150 per month, businesses of any size and scale can, in moments, build surveys to get to the heart of whatever it is they want to know from their target demographic. Ask, and ye shall receive. Hint: For social, web-savvy businesses, both of these companies offer their services through Facebook apps. If you have an existing Fan Page, you can activate the app when you're logged into Facebook and get answers from your Facebook community.

- **GutCheck** ([www.gutcheckit.com](http://www.gutcheckit.com)): Ever wanted to have a real-time chat with a 35-year-old male in Illinois who works in the B2C software industry, sports a mullet, and is married with children? Well, GutCheck can find him for you. They're an online qualitative analysis tool that

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employees and companies of all sizes. In that sixty-some-odd-thousand, there are 2,500 who have chosen to pay in order to have access to more robust feature sets on their platform – and it's only getting better. They take on anywhere between 250 and 350 new paying customers each month along with roughly 2,000 additional free accounts.

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Customer feedback is big business as well. This 40-employee company's revenue has grown 100 percent year over year, and they currently log \$8 million in bookings on an annual basis. For 2012, their revenue target is aggressive – in the \$20 to \$25 million range. With numbers and growth like that, it's no wonder they've found a devoted set of investors in the venture capital community and have to-date raised \$20.1 million in paid-in capital to fuel the company's vision.

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And it all began with eight people (three of whom were founders) and \$500,000 in the bank.

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### **A Bit About JarGon**

When you stop by Get Satisfaction's website, you might see a little robot named JarGon in various locations. "He's our mascot," Wendy Lea, Get Satisfaction's CEO, shares. "We are in an epic battle with Jargon. We encourage our companies to be honest, open, and communicate with an authentic tone. Buzzspeak and jargon don't encourage trust and collaboration." They've come up with a pretty fun way to get that message across. Robots don't speak like people – and the brands that can learn to speak to their audience in approachable and understandable language are the ones that find themselves pulling ahead of the pack.

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### **Behind the Growth**

gotten to where they are without give and take. Wendy explains the company's "always on" philosophy.

*Given how our product is built, companies can determine who receives the suggestions their users submit. Knowing that we have an obligation to use our product to its maximum, we think the best way to do that at present is for our management and development team to be exposed to everything. There's a good reason for that, especially as a company that's developing, marketing, and continuously seeking to improve a customer and user feedback platform.*

*The social web's pretty much guaranteed that we – our company and customers alike – operate in an always-on, real-time feedback world. If you've got an Internet connection, you have a voice. We owe it to our customers to be in that same "always on" position. Brands today have a huge responsibility to pay attention and understand what their customers are saying, especially ones building the tools to make that a more manageable process like we are. At first, I'll admit that I felt like freaking out seeing all the feedback notifications in my inbox each morning. It's easy to feel continuously criticized and judged. When you step back though, it doesn't take long to shift from feeling as if you've been attacked to understanding you've just been armed with the most valuable information possible – and from the people that want what you have to offer. What more could you ask for than open, honest customers providing feedback?*

*We are the ones who can immediately take our customer's expressions and determine what we can use in varying degrees of right now to raise the level of satisfaction and loyalty to our brand. We've grown because we listen. We built this*

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I realize this is a direct quote, but the "and" was unnecessary, because the introductory phrase of "Knowing that ..." needed a conclusion, and the word "and" made it appear as if were a separate thought, not the conclusion.  
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discounting strategy. But what about the periodic discount, such as ones available through social couponing programs like LivingSocial or Groupon?

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## On Social Couponing – Is It Worth It?

Like I said, I buy the hell out of these deals when they're something that gets my attention. They're great ways for businesses to (potentially) reach new audience members and can be hugely influential in driving new foot traffic to brick-and-mortar locations.

But how do you know if you're getting a great deal or a raw one?

A report issued by the Social Science Research Network in June of 2011<sup>2</sup> revealed the following statistics about 324 businesses in twenty-three markets that had participated in daily deals:

- 55 percent of businesses reported making money, 26.6 percent lost money and 17.9 percent broke even
- 80 percent of deal users were new customers, though a rough 20 percent spent more than the actual deal value
- 48.1 percent of businesses indicated they would run another daily deal promotion, 19.8 percent said they would not, and 32.1 percent said they were uncertain

Given that daily deal sites take on average 50 percent of the deal value and deals are generally offered at up to 50 percent off of retail, you can be left with as little as 25 percent of fair market value for your product or service. If you're going to consider using

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<sup>2</sup> Utpal M. Dholakia, How Businesses Fare with Daily Deals: A Multi-Site Analysis of Groupon, LivingSocial, OpenTable, Travelzoo, and BuyWithMe Promotions (June 13, 2011). <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1863466>.

But sometimes there's a different insight. You took on a customer or project that isn't right for you. You couldn't have done the job correctly, period. Do that too frequently and you're out-of-business.

Know your service and your market. Only accept projects (and customers) that are right for you. You can't be the best by delivering mediocre (or worse).

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### Negative Sentiment Has the Power to Change the Way We Do Business

When I received the following story in my inbox after sending out a HARO query<sup>3</sup> on the subject of negative feedback, I knew it summed-up perfectly the power of negative feedback. We all think we're capable of hearing things we don't want to hear about our brands and products – our children – but in reality, it's often a bigger punch to the gut than we imagined. Richard Hayman is the CEO of Hayman Systems ([www.hayman.com](http://www.hayman.com)), what started as a family-owned business and ended up being a national powerhouse in the cash register market. He explains how his company made a crucial shift, all thanks to one brutally honest customer.

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My father started his cash register business in 1938, and I joined the company in 1970. His customers became his friends and his friends became his

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I couldn't highlight and leave a comment about the sentence in the footnote. Word wouldn't let me for some reason. Any way, that first sentence doesn't make sense. Something's missing in it.

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<sup>3</sup> HARO is Help-a-Reporter Out™ [www.helpareporter.com](http://www.helpareporter.com), a website designed to bring together people can provide it. If you're looking for a great way to share your expertise in a certain field and possibly drum-up some media exposure for your brand, you should consider subscribing to their thrice-daily e-mail updates that will let you know who's looking for information you have to offer.

## Books

### *The Alchemist* – Paulo Coelho

It's a fable for adults about following your dreams and has sold millions of copies

around the world. A personal training client of mine named Julietta originally gave it to

me because she thought I needed to read it. The writing is simple, the messages strong.

Sometimes you should be able to pick up a book and just ...get it. This, to me, is one of those books.

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### *The Entrepreneur Equation* – Carol Roth

Every now and then, the right book comes along at just the right time. Carol sent me an advance copy of this book, and after letting it sit on my kitchen table for a few days because I was (apparently) too busy to give it a read, I tore through it in two days. Her book gives you what this one can't (because my book wasn't supposed to) – a clear, no bullshit picture of the realities of entrepreneurship. It's a concise guide that covers the homework you need to do and realities that need facing if you're going to build a brand that lasts.

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### *Good to Great* – Jim Collins

Occasionally, I have a major geek moment where only statistics, pie charts, and assorted and sundry data will satisfy. While written back in 2001, Collins' profiles of multiple successful corporations and the hows behind why they surpassed similar companies in the marketplace will not only satisfy your inner geek, but give you food for



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Changed it to active voice, instead of passive.

Reply