

Jennifer Aaker & Andy Smith, with Carlye Adler. The Dragonfly Effect: Quick, Effective and Powerful Ways to Use Social Media to Drive Social Change. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass, 2010, 211 pages.

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Are you like me? Do you need to know more about social media and how businesses can effectively use it to positively impact their bottom line? Does your daily list include things like learn more about Twitter or Pinterest? Do you believe businesses can be profitable and purposeful—enhancing greater societal well-being? If so, put *The Dragonfly Effect: Quick, Effective and Powerful Ways to Use Social Media to Drive Social Change* on your must-read list. When I came across Aaker and Smith's book, I was intrigued. I dutifully read the accolades on the book jacket, skimmed the first chapter and thought, "this sounds interesting." Besides, I have met Jennifer Aaker and I hold great respect for her work. Admittedly, when I selected the book I may have been looking for a silver bullet along the lines of "do X things and achieve Y," which I did not find. Instead, however, I discovered a systematic approach to implementing social media tools to move people to act on or for a cause. I discovered a set of principles I can use to help others develop effective, transformative social marketing campaigns.

Aaker's current research focuses on what makes people happy. She reports, "The happiest people are those who have stopped chasing happiness and instead search for meaningfulness, a change in direction that leads to more sustainable happiness—the kind that enriches their lives, provides purpose, and creates impact" (p. xv). Together with her husband, business consultant Andy Smith, Aaker offers a blueprint to spread happiness and empower individuals and businesses to accomplish great things in an era of increasingly evolving communication tools and technology. They call this approach the Dragonfly Effect.

The book is divided into five main sections corresponding to components of a dragonfly: the body and four wings. In nature, a dragonfly has an elongated body and four transparent wings that, when working in concert, propel the insect in a specific direction at speeds of 35-45 mph. In short, dragonflies know where they are heading and how to get there quickly. Similarly, the Dragonfly Effect explains how to develop a focus that gets people inspired, motivated and acting.

The dragonfly body represents the fundamental concept you are aiming to help. Just as a dragonfly would cease to exist without a body, to achieve social change you have to have a compelling cause.

The first skill, Wing 1, involves developing your focus and identifying a single, concrete, measurable goal. The authors provide a helpful mnemonic of HATCH to describe design principles helpful in identifying a goal that will provide direction and motivation. The goal should be **humanistic**—that is, rather than jumping to solutions, focus on "who" you want to help. Is it children in Africa; the poor near your factory; a friend who has cancer? "Who" matters. Focus on and try to understand the end "user" or audience for your campaign. Next, make the goal **actionable**—understand the macro goal but identify the

micro, tactical goals that will get you there. The third design principle in designing your goal relates to making the goal **testable**. In other words, establish metrics to assess your progress. Next, express the goal with **clarity**. Aaker and Smith note a goal may be multidimensional but you do not want multiple, potentially conflicting goals. They present research that shows highly specific goals promote better performance than a general, do-your-best goal, due to brain functionality. Lastly, design your goal for **happiness**—that is, what will be personally meaningful if you achieve the goal?

Wing 2 involves getting attention. People are bombarded with literally thousands of messages a day. To accomplish social change you need to be noticed—a lot and at a deep level. Again, the authors draw on the principles of design to suggest ways of capturing and captivating attention. Create with a personal hook in mind; pique interest with unexpected information; use visuals to simplify your message; and make your campaign visceral, appealing to the audiences' senses. Another particularly useful sidebar in the chapter can be used to structure copy and messages on social media channels. The recommendations include: lead with what is important to your audience, start with a fact, begin with a question, and strategically and carefully employ humor. On a nuts and bolts level, the chapter concludes with a short "Twitter Boot Camp" illustrating how to implement the principles discussed in the chapter.

Once you gain attention from your audience, it is time to take it to the next level of engagement. Wing 3 describes how to make people really connect with your goal. The ideas presented in this chapter can be applied across many business situations. Aaker's previous work on brand personality comes into play in Wing 3. The authors argue to truly engage your audience you must think of yourself and your effort as a brand. They write, "Although brand is *conveyed* by products, advertising, visual shortcuts, and people, what matters is the experience that it offers—and the emotional attachment people form as a result. A simple and apt definition of a brand is a *reputation*, based on a collection of memories" (p. 81). They emphasize that important design principles to engage your audience include storytelling, empathizing, being authentic, and appropriately matching the media to your message. The power of a story is a well-known phenomenon that many successful brand marketing campaigns integrate. Storytelling for a cause can result in even greater impact because in this case, the story has a purpose. Like in previous chapters, the authors offer specific strategies to harness the power of various social media tools including helpful tips on creating videos to disseminate through online and social media channels.

The final wing, Wing 4, of the Dragonfly Effect involves taking action to empower and enable others. This skill begins with a call to action, or an "ask." The authors explain the psychology of asking and guide readers to determine the most appropriate ask given the social distance between you and your target audience and the emotional intensity of the cause or request. They suggest employing multiple asks and they include an encyclopedia of ask types for reference. Following the structure from previous chapters, Aaker and Smith go through four design principles important to incorporate to enable others to take action. First, you should make it **easy** for others to act. Next, incorporate **fun**. Third, tailor the ask to the person in such a way to gain "*idiosyncratic fits* between their talents, skills, or interests and what you need accomplished" (p. 134.) Finally, prepare for **openness** where your target audience can add to, take from, and alter themselves.

The book concludes with a general discussion of how to further harness the power of social media to connect you and your cause to others. They offer practical solutions to obstacles you will likely encounter such as being fearful or deterred by challenges, setting unrealistic expectations, or encountering the dark side of social technology. The path to social change will likely be bumpy but keep in mind the potential return on your marketing investment. As Aaker and Smith write, “[s]mall acts create big change, and working in concert maximizes your ability to go farther faster in any direction you choose” (p. 161.) The Dragonfly Effect offers a systematic framework to help you reach your goals.

Throughout the book the authors draw upon dozens of case studies, such as how the Obama 2008 presidential campaign organization mobilized hundreds of thousands of citizens to vote for “hope,” or how two of their friends, Sameer and Vinay were struck with cancer and used the components of The Dragonfly Effect to get more than 24,000 East Asians to become bone marrow donors in a matter of weeks. Aaker and Smith tell the story of how former nightclub promoter, Scott Harrison, founded and continues to grow the non-profit Charity: Water to bring safe, clean drinking water to people in developing countries. They talk about Kiva and microfinance ventures. They share the story of their children and thousands of others using the dragonfly model to raise millions of dollars for Alex’s Lemonade Stand Foundation (ALSF) to fund childhood cancer research projects. The stories inspire and they illustrate the power of social media to connect people and causes in our world and to make a difference.

In addition to providing numerous sidebars in the book summarizing key principles and steps, the authors offer an online community and website with additional resources (www.dragonflyeffect.com.) I appreciate how the Dragonfly model can produce substantial impact for social marketing campaigns; yet, I am troubled that too many business leaders will too quickly dismiss this approach. This book can help business leaders better understand if their brands, products, and corporate social responsibility efforts truly connect with their customers. Further, principles of the Dragonfly Effect can teach businesses how to empower their brand communities to market the organizations and its causes.