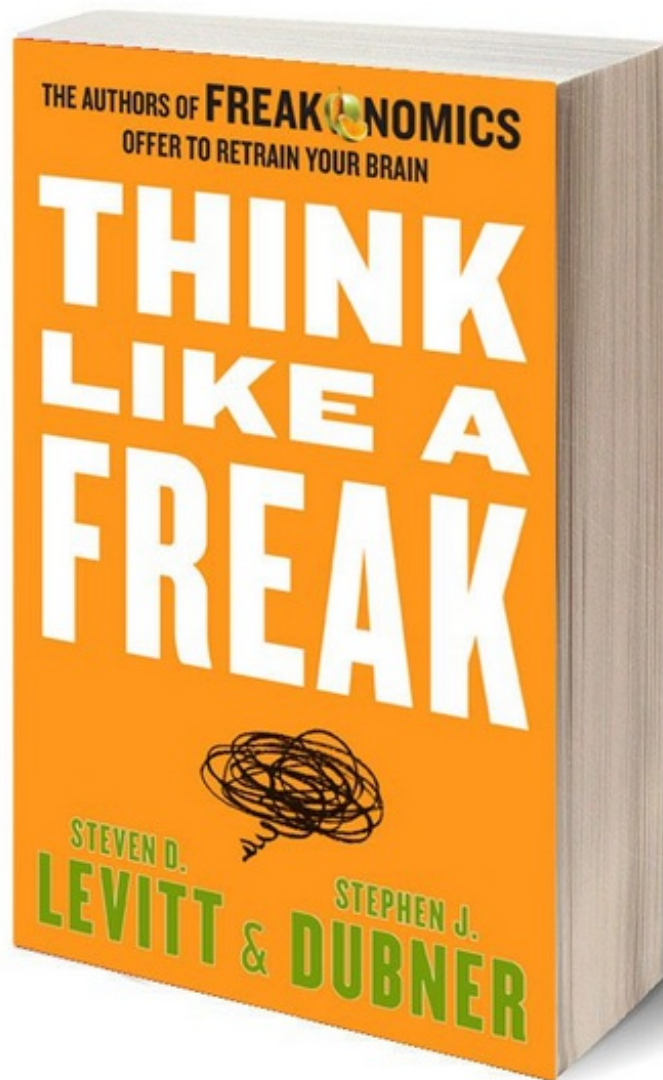


Why 'Thinking Like a Freak' Is the Best Way to Change Up Your Marketing Program



If you haven't heard of Stephen Dubner and Steven Levitt, you might need to spend some time rethinking your... well, thinking. As the co-author of *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* and its sequel *SuperFreakonomics*, co-authors Dubner and Levitt have learned their fair share of mind-changing lessons, turning the study of economics into an understanding of incentives.

But now, Dubner and Levitt have turned traditional thinking on its head once more in their newest installment of the "freak" series, *Think Like a Freak*. In this new look at conventional thinking, Dubner and Levitt offer suggestions on how to examine some of life's biggest issues -- business, philanthropy, politics and sports -- and how to solve problems in new ways. For the authors, figuring out some of life's larger dilemmas involves approaching problems with unique logic and rational, creative and dynamic thought. Thinking like a freak means putting a new spin on the way you're used to thinking, and mixing things up to keep solutions flowing.

In marketing, it's essential to think like a freak. We often get stuck in the same routine of repetitive campaigns, social media posts and branding exercises, so much so that outside ideas can start to feel unwelcome and strange. After all, [90 percent](#) of consumers are using more than one device to complete everyday tasks; that alone is enough to want to vary your strategy. Plus, now that [91 percent](#) of consumers have a mobile device within reach at all times -- and when [consumers engage](#) with over 11 pieces of content before making a purchase -- finding new ways to reach and entice consumers is more essential than ever.

Dubner and Levitt have a few essential tips on how to think like a freak, and I've pulled from these a couple of ways you can apply the same creative thinking to content marketing:

1. Put away your moral compass.

It might seem like a tough place to start, but, according to Levitt and Dubner, it's hard to see a situation clearly if you've already made up your mind on how to feel about it. This is especially important in marketing: if you've gotten stuck in a rut with your marketing program, you probably can't see things from the outside anymore. Throw convention out the window and shake things up--it worked for [Uber](#). When thinking about the traditional problem of cab shortages and high fares, original thinkers at Uber suspended what they thought was possible and tackled the problem from the outside, developing an entirely new brand and solution for the app's users. That's also exactly how they market their company as well. Between [delivering kittens around available cities](#), instituting a referral program and optimizing for mobile, Uber has tackled the age-old taxi issue and showed how thinking outside the scope of what's usually possible can solve problems.

2. Learn to say "I don't know."

While it's not something we often want to admit to, learning to own up to what you do and don't know is the only way to make progress with your marketing program. After all, as Dubner and Levitt put it, if you can't admit to what you don't know, you'll never be able to learn how to improve yourself. Take data, for instance. There comes a time in every marketer's life when the possibility of data starts to creep in. But, according to CEB, [marketers rely on data for only 11% of decisions](#) regarding their customers -- that's a huge amount of unknowns. Learning to admit what we don't know about our consumers, and about how our marketing programs are and aren't working, is the first step to closing the gap between marketing knowledge and data support.

3. Learn to persuade people who don't want to be persuaded.

In marketing, your target audience isn't often people who already know about your brand--it's new consumers. As Dubner and Levitt point out, getting the attention of those who might not be in the market to be persuaded is the key to turning your strategy around. Take Red Bull, for example. The company -- and many like it -- is taking to new channels, like [Instagram](#) and [Tumblr](#), to engage audiences that might not have been looking in the first place. Now, Red Bull has over 1.4 million followers on Instagram and hundreds of notes on Tumblr, and has successfully revamped its marketing program to reach and engage new users.

4. Learn to appreciate the upside of quitting.

While I can never condone having a quitter's attitude, sometimes things don't go as planned, and it's better to jump ship and start over. Dubner and Levitt say that "you can't solve tomorrow's problem if you aren't willing to abandon today's dud," and I wholeheartedly agree. That's where the rebrand comes in. Old Spice has rebranded their image beautifully over the last five years, and now, their content -- written, social and otherwise -- is officially viral. Before, the men's hygiene brand was mediocally known, and certainly not an internet sensation. Now, Old Spice is famous for snappy videos and creative content, and [one of Old Spice's commercials](#) received over 4 million views in just 7 days. Old Spice ditched the unsuccessful marketing ventures of their past, learning the benefits of leaving old ideas behind and starting fresh.

See Stephen Dubner outline these tips and more at [Share14](#), the industry's leading digital marketing event of the year.