



The Myth of Excellence: Why Great Companies Never Try to Be the Best at Everything

By Fred Crawford, Ryan Mathews

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Ex•cel•lence (n.) 1. The clearly false and destructive theory that a company ought to be great at everything it does. 2. A mistaken goal in which the predictable outcome is that the company ends up world-class at nothing—not well-differentiated and therefore not thought of by consumers at the moment of need.

Based on exhaustive research, **The Myth of Excellence** provides conclusive evidence of the futility of trying to be excellent in all aspects of a commercial transaction—price, product, access, experience, and service. Instead, the strategy for your products and services should be to dominate on one element, differentiate on a second, and be at industry par (i.e., average) on the rest. Yes, it is okay to be average as long as your customers know specifically where and how you are superior and world-class.

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The Myth of Excellence: Why Great Companies Never Try to Be the Best at Everything By Fred Crawford, Ryan Mathews **Bibliography**

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Crawford and Mathews, marketing consultants with Cap Gemini Ernst & Young (CGEY) and FirstMatter, respectively, break down marketing into five attributes: access, experience, price, product, and service. They argue that successful businesses are those that excel in one of these areas, are good in another, and are at least average in the rest. Wal-Mart, they say, is dominant on price and maintains a good selection of products, while Target excels at product selection and makes price its secondary attribute. The authors conclude that it is both uneconomical and probably impossible to be excellent in all areas. After describing the importance of the five key attributes, the authors explain how a company might evaluate itself to see how well it is doing. The authors' clear writing style and copious use of examples and case studies make their ideas understandable to a wide readership. The book is essential for all academic marketing collections, and it would also be useful in all but the smallest public libraries. Lawrence R. Maxted, Gannon Univ., Erie, PA
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From [Booklist](#)

Crawford is the managing director of the consumer products, retail, and distribution practice at the Cap Gemini Ernst & Young consultancy. Mathews is a futurist specializing in demographics and lifestyle analysis at FirstMatter, another consulting firm. To research purchasing behavior, they surveyed 5,000 consumers, but the responses they got surprised them and prompted their title's contrary proposition. Crawford and Mathews found that *values* (respect, honesty, trust, dignity) were more important to consumers than *value*. This discovery led the pair to develop a new model of "consumer relevancy." They explain in detail the importance of price, service, quality, access, and experience for the consumer. They then suggest that for companies to be successful they need to dominate on only one of these five factors. On a second of the five they should stand out or differentiate themselves from their competitors; and on the remaining three they need only to be at par with others in their industry. With dozens of examples, Crawford and Mathews demonstrate the validity of their premise. *David Rouse*

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Review

"Fred Crawford and Ryan Mathews are exceptional strategic thinkers who have given anyone concerned about customers a practical, innovative, and unique approach to competitive differentiation."—Frederick W. Smith, Chairman, President, and CEO, Federal Express

"At Procter & Gamble, we believe the consumer is boss. The Consumer Relevancy model described in **The Myth of Excellence** is the best tool I've seen for incorporating consumer wants and needs into your business."—A. G. Lafley, President and CEO, The Procter & Gamble Company

"Tired of business drivel? If you are ready to step beyond platitudinous mission statements and strategies cooked up in distant boardrooms that have no connection to the trenches where business battles are actually being fought, this is the book for you. It is grounded, readable, and honest -- just like your business should be."

-- Paco Underhill, author of **Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping**

"**The Myth of Excellence** stands apart from the deluge of business books on the market with its candor and readability. For the brand-marketing executive, the book provides some especially revealing insights into

underlying consumer values. Even more refreshing is the authors' approach to imparting business lessons through real research and first-hand case studies."

-- C. Manly Molpus, president and chief executive officer, The Grocery Manufacturers of America

"Everyone in business thinks they really know their customers and what they want. But, in **The Myth of Excellence**, Fred Crawford and Ryan Mathews have given me new and useful insights into the startling changes taking place before our very eyes. When they tell us, for example, that 'human values are the contemporary currency of commerce,' they are not just offering another new business platitude but rather a new lens through which to view the consumer -- a lens very few people understand. **The Myth of Excellence** is both a big idea and a blueprint for action. A true must-read."

-- Michael Burandt, president, North American Consumer Products, Georgia-Pacific Corporation

"Today's customers are leading a revolution against business as usual: They are demanding that companies recognize them as individuals and conduct business on their terms. **In The Myth of Excellence**, Crawford and Mathews provide proven strategies for meeting the demands of today's empowered customers, who are crying out to be treated with respect, dignity, and courtesy."

-- Thomas M. Siebel, chairman and chief executive officer, Siebel Systems, Inc.

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David Ramos:

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