



# The Fifth Annual Summer Reading List

Anybody with the persistence to write a book and get it published has my admiration. That said, there are more than a few titles out there that simply aren't worth your time and money. Featured below are some of the books I read this year that—well, let's not call them "bad." Instead, I'll just say they weren't my cup of tea, and some more than others as the number of teacups is meant to indicate.

### Moral Politics—How Liberals and Conservatives Think

by George Lakoff

Conservatives think like a strict father. Liberals think like a nurturing mother. And I think you now have the essence of this book and can save yourself the fifteen bucks Amazon is charging for the paperback.



Not My Cup of Tea

### The Experience Economy

by B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore

Coffee beans are a commodity. A cup of coffee served in a diner is a service, which costs a little more. A non-fat mocha latté purchased in a Starbucks where the barista knows your name and smooth jazz wafts through the air—now *that's* an experience, which is precisely why you pay *much* more. Makes sense to me, but what's confusing is why it takes over 200 pages to say it.



### A Consumers' Republic—The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America

by Elizabeth Cohen

We Americans shop a lot, and it does more to us than just fill our garages with cars, our closets with clothes, and our minds with useless information. Shocking.



### The Marketing Power of Emotion

by John and Nicholas O'Shaughnessy

The back cover blurb asserts that emotion plays a significant role in the consumer experience. No argument there: I hated this book.



### The New Culture of Desire

by Melinda Davis

Title for Chapter II: "Life on Terra Not So Firma." What more do you need to know?



On a dark and stormy night, the loud crack that shattered the silence in our bedroom was not thunder, but the sound of a book hitting the wall

after being hurled violently across the room. My wife looked up from her crossword. "Something wrong?" she said dryly.

"That book!" I spat back. "Three hundred pages to say what could easily have been said in five."

"And you're angry because it wasted your time?"

"If only that were true," I replied with a mirthless laugh. "No, what makes me

angry is thinking about all my brothers and sisters in the public interest community who will waste precious time and money reading overblown stuff like that."

As the weather warms and your work schedule lightens (hopefully), July & August offer time for some personal R&D. So here are some books to consider—along with some to avoid—as you pack for summer vacation.

Lightning flashed outside the bedroom window. "Dammit woman" I thundered, "Somebody's got to do something!"

Okay, perhaps our exchange was a tad less dramatic, but in thinking about this year's summer reading, it occurred to me that running down a few books that *deserve* to be run down might be a worthwhile service. So, for edition number five of the annual list, here are five to buy and five to bury. Happy reading!



a goodman  
GOOD IDEAS FOR GOOD CAUSES

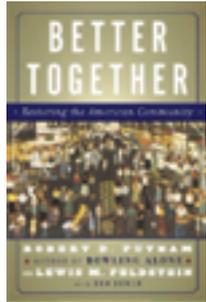
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Newsletter edited by Carolyn Ramsay.

**Better Together—Restoring the American Community**

by Robert Putnam & Lewis Feldstein  
(Simon & Schuster © 2003)



In *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam chronicled the disturbing decline in civic engagement that has characterized American life from the 1950s to today. In *Better Together*, he and co-author Lewis Feldstein look at a dozen noteworthy

attempts to rebuild some of the social capital that has disappeared in that time span. Where *Bowling Alone* was a comprehensive, data-heavy, and ultimately sobering analysis, *Better Together* is an anecdotal anthology intended as much to inspire as to inform. The success stories of nonprofits such as Experience Corps, web resources such as craigslist, and cities like Portland, Oregon may not contain transferable lessons for your organization, but the uplift you'll experience through reading about them just may carry you through the next valley.

► *In more than a dozen Experience Corps cities, seniors sit with the children they tutor, listening, talking, encouraging—reliable, patient, engaged, enjoying themselves. Rosemary Cataldi of Cook-Wissahickon [Elementary School] still marvels at their dedication. "It may be terrible weather, it may be snowing," she says, "but you look out in the morning and see them coming up the steps of the school, some with canes, one with a walker, to be with the children."*

**Before & After Page Design**

by John McWade (Peachpit Press © 2003)

As recommended in the April issue of *free-range thinking*, McWade's book is ideal for amateurs like me who must dabble in the field of graphic design. The chapter with a step-by-step illustration of how to design a multiple-panel brochure from a single, cleverly folded sheet of paper (see pp. 54-63) exemplifies McWade's belief that smart design can be economical as well. *The Non-*



*Designer's Design Book* by Robin Williams (also from Peachpit Press) covers similar territory, but if you feel sufficiently grounded in the fundamentals, *Before & After* can take you to the next level.

► *Page design, after all, is not about decoration but communication, about making your words and vision visible, giving it form and body for all the world to see.*

**The Story Handbook—Language and Storytelling for Land Conservationists**

Edited by Helen Whybrow  
(Trust for Public Land © 2002)

To protect fragile ecosystems and the wildlife they sustain, the Trust for Public Land (TPL) pursues a straightforward strategy: buy the land before developers can. It's an effective strategy, but since TPL's success stories often reduce to raising money and completing complex financial transactions that result in the purchase of so many acres, it can be dull to describe. Recognizing this drawback, TPL has assem-

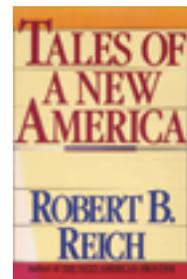


bled a collection of essays that tell the real story behind their work—namely, that human beings have a fundamental connection to the land that is deep and spiritual. Even if your work has nothing to do with conservation, the ability of TPL's storytellers to find the tale worth telling is admirable and worth studying.

► *One might even say that natural ecosystems and abstract geographical spaces become human places precisely through the accumulation of narratives that record and pass on to other people the living memory of what those places mean. Stories create places by teaching us why any given patch of earth matters to the people who care for it.* (William Cronon)

**Tales of a New America** by Robert Reich  
(Times Books © 1987)

Several sets of stories help to define your personal identity. One set contains the stories you tell over and over—about where you grew up, how you met your spouse, why you do what you do. If you live in the U.S., former Labor Secretary Reich maintains that there is another set of stories that defines life in America and directly impacts how you



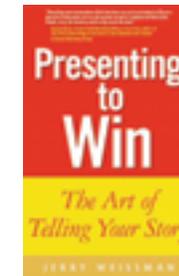
live. In *Tales of a New America*, Reich tells these four stories and offers specific examples of how they have affected government policy from our earliest colonial days to the Reagan administration (the "present" when this

book was published.) If your audience is comprised of Americans and you want to better understand how they think, consider Reich's book must reading.

► *The specific details of the stories we tell need not have any particular connection to fact, an insight that some political orators grasp instinctively. What gives them force is their capacity to make sense of, and bring coherence to, common experience. The lessons rings true even if the illustration is fanciful.*

**Presenting to Win—The Art of Telling Your Story**  
by Jerry Weissman (FT Prentice Hall © 2003)

Also recommended in the April issue of *free-range*, Weissman's book can help you raise your presentation skills and make better use of the tools of the trade, most notably PowerPoint. Having coached executives at Yahoo, Intel, Cisco, Microsoft and hundreds of other companies, Weissman is able to



offer numerous examples of what works and what bombs from his considerable experience in the field. The writing won't win any literary prizes, but *Presenting to Win* is filled with more than enough tips and guidelines to justify the investment.

► *So the true problem with presentation graphics is that, all too often, presenters take a flood of data, those dense text and highly detailed tables, charts, and graphs, and simply reproduce them with little or no modification for their presentation graphics. I call this the Presentation-as-Documents Syndrome, and it represents one of the most common underlying problems that plague presentations.* ■

