

What Color is Your Cow?

What comes to mind when you consider Hyundai, the South Korean automaker? Five to ten years ago, most auto enthusiasts would associate Kia's affiliate with concepts like cheap, second-rate, and undesirable. Simply put, cars made by Hyundai were not competitive with others makes. But everything is different now. In a year of dimly depressed auto sales, in which Hyundai's biggest competitors are falling 20% short of their sales numbers from the previous year, Hyundai reports an over 2% increase. Come again? Yes, in a year in which every other single car manufacturer is posting fewer sales, save Subaru, the South Korean Hyundai is growing. And there's more: globally, Hyundai is now the fourth largest automaker, behind only Toyota, General Motors, and Volkswagen. Hyundai? Yes. Growing in this economy? Yes. But, how?

Purple Cow. Hyundai has, through a series of incredibly risky, fabulously distinctive business moves, become remarkable. It created and marketed its *Purple Cow*, as Seth Godin defines it in his bestselling book of the same name. It has something that makes it startlingly different, like a purple cow in a sea of bovine brown.

So what is Hyundai's *Purple Cow*? Seth Godin, a master marketer in his own right, argues that the Ps of marketing are no longer enough to sell a product. *Product, pricing, promotion, positioning, publicity, packaging, pass-along, and permission* are simply not going to persuade you to buy a Hyundai. But a *Purple Cow*? Something you've never seen before that makes your car purchase and value extraordinary? Yes, that might just make the difference. And for Hyundai, its first *Purple Cow* strategy was to offer a 10-year, 100,000 mile warranty with the purchase of any car. It was huge departure from the industry-standard 3-year, 30,000 mile warranty. In so doing, Hyundai had to improve its automobiles. And consumers bought. Early this year, in a first-of-its-kind offer, Hyundai (in another *Purple Cow* move) offered to buy back new cars if consumers found themselves without work. And more recently, it offered a three-month payment relief plan. In a large field of brown cow competitors, Hyundai made itself a stand out.

By definition, no two *Purple Cows* can be the same. Consider Southwest Airlines' *Purple Cow*: some 35 years ago, it did something unheard of in air travel. It refused to assign seats, thereby making boarding passes unnecessary. Because of this, tickets cost less. The distinctive choice yielded tremendous growth. Southwest simply set itself apart from the rest of the field.

Seth Godin encourages business decisions to be risky, to be unsafe, to be frightening. Simply doing a good job is not enough. In a market where consumers are seldom emotionally moved to purchase, sometimes that means doing something radical, something unimaginable, something new.

The important question, then, is this: what makes your company extraordinary? What is it about your service that forces a consumer to share your name with friends? What aspect of your product sets it so far apart from the competition that it almost stands alone? What makes your business *remarkable*? If you are not sure how to answer these questions, then you need *Purple Cow*. You can purchase copies of the much-celebrated book at

<http://www.sethgodin.com/purple/>. Good luck. We look forward to spotting your colorful hue in the brown sea of cattle.

