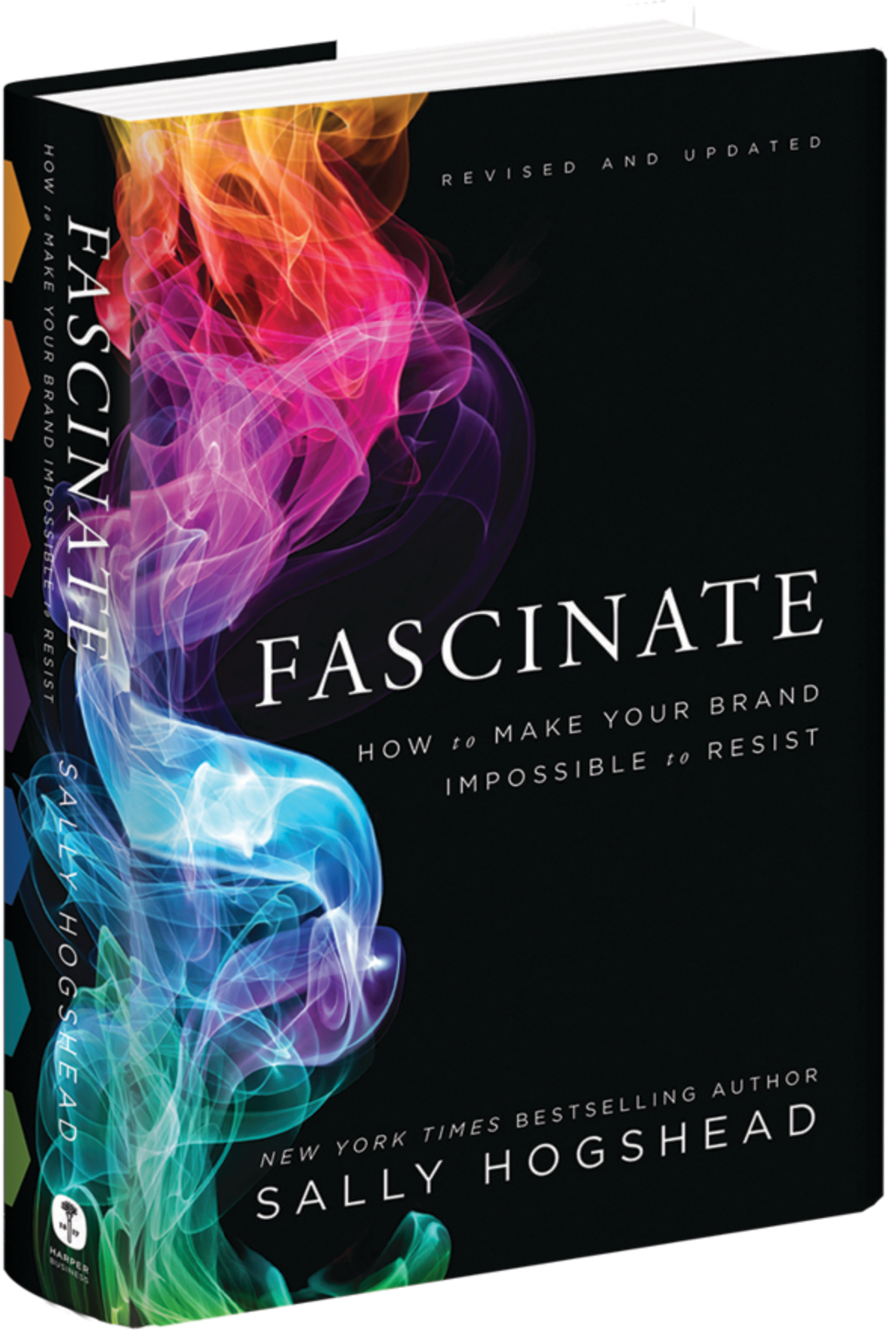
REVISED AND UPDATED
FASCINATE
HOW to MAKE YOUR BRAND IMPOSSIBLE to RESIST
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
SALLY HOGSHEAD
FASCINATE
HOW to MAKE YOUR BRAND IMPOSSIBLE to RESIST
SALLY HOGSHEAD
HARPER BUSINESS

FASCINATE
REVISED *and* UPDATED

How to Make Your Brand
Impossible to Resist

SALLY HOGSHEAD

HARPER
BUSINESS

An Imprint of HarperCollins*Publishers*

In my research, I learned that 96% of parents find their own children fascinating. I'm no exception. This book is dedicated to our eight children: Ian, Gunnar, Max, Lura, Karli, Isabelle, Quinton, and Asher. You are 110% fascinating.

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Preface to the Revised and Updated Edition

The Black Magic of Branding

I entered the lobby of TBWA advertising agency on Madison Avenue wearing my new $19.95 white vinyl pumps, my unruly hair gelled back into a bow. It was the summer of 1991, two weeks after my college graduation.

TBWA had recently debuted the iconic Absolut Vodka campaign and was now polishing its fame to blinding perfection. Entering the all-white lobby made most people feel suddenly self-conscious, acutely aware of some otherwise irrelevant detail, such as the fact that the dry cleaner's seamstress had recently resewn a button with a slightly off-color thread.

Yet on the first day of my unpaid summer internship, walking into that lobby, I felt no intimidation whatsoever. Not because I possessed that same unattainable cool, but quite the opposite. I was too clueless even to have a clue of how clueless I was.

My first week at my internship, I heard a rumor that the creative department's staff locked their file drawers at night. Why? So no one could steal their ideas. This intrigued me greatly. What kind of intellectual bullion could possibly fill those files? These same employees casually left personal valuables such as watches

and cameras on their desks at night, yet neurotically locked their file drawers? Whatever lay inside those OfficeMax treasure chests, I wanted some of it.

At that early stage of my career, the creative process seemed supernatural to me. How could anyone possibly distill the intricacies of a company, then hone them into an idea sharp enough to cut through people's natural resistance, into their hearts and their brains, ultimately connecting with the magical decision-making hot button that decides which toothpaste or hotel room or politician to choose? I had no idea how a plain, dull fact could metamorphosize into a message with the power to change behaviors and beliefs. It seemed like black magic. The alchemy of golden ideas.

Over the course of the summer, I learned (while fetching coffee) why writers and art directors kept their ideas under lock and key. Those scribbles and words could perform witchcraft. Even crumpled cocktail napkins might contain exactly the right doodle to transform struggling companies into market champions. Fascinating ideas could generate hundreds of millions of dollars for the client, realign entire product categories, and become a pop culture phenomenon—not to mention skyrocketing the careers of those behind it.

I longed to write something so valuable that it had to be locked away at night. But I didn't know how.

After my internship, I was hired as a junior copywriter at the legendary agency Wieden + Kennedy. It was a dream job, and I felt the way a young programmer might feel to be hired at the headquarters of Google. I couldn't wait to finally see for myself how to perform this witchcraft I'd witnessed in my internship. With stars in my eyes and a skip in my step, I moved to their new office in Philadelphia, ready to create ads for brands such as Nike.

My first day of this new job, still walking on air, I returned to the office after a cheese steak lunch. Entering the lobby, I saw the entire staff standing in a circle. "Wow," I trilled to myself, "agency

life is so social!" Turns out, this wasn't a social event. It was a layoff. The office was closing after the loss of a key client.

Well, it'd been a great three hours.

I moved back home, still wondering how to create million-dollar ideas.

Marshall McLuhan wrote, "Historians and archaeologists will one day discover that the ads of our time are the richest and most faithful daily reflections any society ever made of its whole range of activities." But were these ads created, exactly? While searching for my next job, at night I studied books about advertising. I pored over famous ads, trying to decode the thinking process behind them, hoping to one day wave a wand and make ideas appear.

My favorite advertising copywriter was Luke Sullivan, in Minneapolis. His saber-toothed wit and strategic elegance impressed me greatly. One day my phone rang and my jaw dropped. "Sally, this is Luke Sullivan. Come work at my agency." Off I moved, eager to learn this mysterious thing called branding.*

While it snowed outside, I thrived inside the agency, learning from some of the most award-winning professionals in the field. Each department within an agency specializes in a different type of thought process, from research and strategy to media and design. I adored them all. By the time those cryogenic pumpkins emerged from the melting ice in April, still smiling, my training was well under way.

In my mid-twenties, I became one of the most award-winning copywriters in the United States. My career accelerated from copywriter to creative director, from New York to Los Angeles, from small assignments to global campaigns.

If you watch *Mad Men*, you know that ad agencies can seem like sexy, tempestuous workplaces, filled with adrenaline and

* The move to Minneapolis was easy, because as a Florida native, I didn't even own a winter coat. Within days of my arrival, a blizzard hit, bringing -60 wind chill. This was just before Halloween, so for months, hundreds of pumpkins remained frozen in a bizarre orange-spotted Ice Age.

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Ping-Pong tables. Traditional agencies can deliver amazingly customized service and handholding, and any type of marketing you can think of. On the downside, they're extremely expensive for clients (for a single color copy, a client might be billed thirty dollars), and brutally intense for the staff. I've seen employees bring a couch into their office for all-nighters.

I wanted something different. At age twenty-seven, I opened my own ad agency in L.A. It was a dizzying time to be in advertising, right at the cusp of the dot-com bubble. Entrepreneurs who had never turned a profit had money to burn.

Instead of buying into the hype, my agency cofounder and I wanted to create a new breed of adveritisng, less traditional and more unexpected. Unlike the fabled agencies I'd worked in before, which had impressive lobbies and catered lunches, we wanted to be a true start-up. Yet what we lacked in marble washrooms, we made up for in audacity.

Apple Computers famously began as a start-up in a garage. Our building was also a garage—a converted mechanic's garage on Electric Avenue in Venice Beach, California. We opened our doors in 1997 (or should I say, "rolled up our doors"). It was a notoriously sketchy area, and occasionally during conference calls, clients might ask if that was gunfire they had heard on speakerphone. The neighborhood ice cream truck driver didn't coast merrily along; he floored it to avoid getting caught.* Every day was an adventure, and we loved every minute.

We attracted a certain breed of client, those who wanted edgy, provocative ways to get people buzzing. Many of these clients didn't have huge budgets, and that was fine by me. Layers of bureauracracy suffocate creativity.

---

* Instead of ignoring this polarizing location, we showcased it. To introduce ourselves to prospective clients, we mailed out bright yellow rear view mirror hang-tag that said, "*Please don't slash my tires. I'm visting the agency.*" Controversial? Yes. Effective? Absolutely. This simple piece of direct mail brought many of our first clients.

Don't get me wrong—who doesn't love meetings that begin with ahi tuna or a frothy cappuccino? Yet all that expense often comes at the cost of big ideas.

You can't stand out if you're trying to blend in.

Hogsworth, Hogsbreath, Hogshead

It's probably not a coincidence that I gravitated to polarizing ideas. I was born with a polarizing last name.* I learned the value of standing out. Even today, when I check into hotels, clerks sometimes think it is a stage name.

A few years after surviving the 'hood of Venice Beach, I went on to open a consultancy, which I named 62 Gallons. Soon I was working with Nikon, BMW, Rolex, Jaguar, Mike's Hard Lemonade, and Target. I often worked under an NDA (a non-disclosure agreement) so that the client wouldn't know that the idea hadn't come from within the agency's walls. It was a carousel of brainstorming and rainmaking.

On Monday morning I might be in Manhattan creating the name for a new top-secret Pepsi product. Monday afternoon I'd take a car over to the Cole Haan offices to create print ads for a new shoe line. I'd jump on a plane to Aflac headquarters in Columbus, Georgia, to update the duck's image. Before returning home, I might stop in Detroit to work with Ford on next year's campaign, or help develop ideas on a pitch for Johnson & Johnson. I was crafting a strategic brief for American Express one day, and writing taglines for Godiva the next.

Mental Cross-Training

That variety might sound confusing, but for me, it was an era of insight. Each agency has its own form of black magic. Each guards

---

* A "hogshead" is a wooden barrel that holds 62 gallons of liquid. When people refuse to believe that this is my real name, I hand them my business card. In small type, it says: *"A hogshead is a barrel that holds 62 gallons. So what's your last name, smartass?"*

its secrets jealously. And each has perfected a different type of specialty.

Imagine being a chef, and having the opportunity to tour the kitchens of five-star restaurants, studying the local ingredients and unique recipes of each. Or imagine an automotive engineer working at a different car manufacturer each week, from Toyota to Tesla, learning how each car is precisely engineered to optimize gas mileage or technology. Or was like being clothing designer with insider access to the top fashion houses, learning how one each crafts its creations, from sketching and sewing, from couture to catwalks.

By working in and among and between world-class teams, I could combine different methodologies for new combinations. I didn't have to adhere to a fixed set of rules, and handpicked the best of each. Along the way I found ways to bypass across the usual steps, jumping straight to the end game.

Speed is a terrific competitive advantage. Everyone needs better ideas, faster. By solving problems in a matter of hours, in my thirties, I was one of the most highly paid brand experts in the country.

Weirdly, I didn't really know my own creative process. It was like a party trick, an odd but convenient intuition. Some people can instantly count cards during a poker game, others can solve a Rubik's Cube puzzle in under a minute. My party trick was branding.

An Algorithm for Branding

At the start of my career, I had to fumble a lot of bad ideas to arrive at a decent one. Yet my cross-training showed me an algorithm.

An "algorithm" is a formula to solve a problem with predictable steps. Computers use algorithms to run elaborate programs. People use algorithms to decipher enigmatic military codes. Algorithms improve your odds of getting the "right" answer.

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Without a system, creating a good idea is a hit-or-miss process. Blank pieces of paper become evil things. They seem so innocent at first, a virginal white canvas. As the pressure to create an idea builds, that blank piece of paper will stare you in the face, smirking, taunting you to write something brilliant. What will you say? How will you say it? What words will you use? I'll show you what to say, and how to say it. Instead of feeling paralyzed, you will quickly get in your groove and let the ideas flow. Soon, that blank piece of paper won't be so blank anymore.

If you have a template for good ideas, then creativity becomes democracy. Anyone can have access to smart communication, even without a marketing department or years of training.

Democratic Design

Ikea's business model is as quirky as its furniture. The company believes that good design shouldn't be reserved for the elite; instead, it markets good design for the masses. Each piece of furniture is a collaboration between the company and the consumer. In exchange for assembling the furniture yourself, you get better design at a lower price. Ikea calls this "democratic design."

A replicable process for ideas makes it possible to have "democratic branding." Anyone can develop good ideas. I want to bring branding out of the ivory tower and into the trenches.

Most businesses have limited time or money, but that doesn't mean they can't create effective and engaging messages. Just as you no longer need a travel agent to book your cruise, or a trip to the doctor to learn the symptoms of a common cold, you no longer need a marketer to do marketing.

Marketing for Non-Marketers

If it was easy to create a brand message, then anyone could do it.

And if anyone could build a brand, then branding experts would be out of business.

Here's why: If a process is confusing and terribly difficult, only a few exquisitely talented minds do it. That's why many agencies cultivate an intimidating image, hotbeds of new and exciting trends. Brand development usually requires months of research, development, and testing. The process is not for the faint of heart or the low of budget.

Someone coached me that when presenting ideas to a client, it should be just one idea, so that it would be one of a kind. Like precious jewel sitting atop a black velvet cushion. By doing so, it would feel more rare and unreplicable.

I believe that's backward. Brands live inside communities, not corporations. Your brand lives inside conversations and aspirations. A brand lives in workplaces and schools. Inside homes and dinner table conversations. Brands aren't static; they are living, breathing things that organically change and evolve as new people join the conversation.

Your brand won't shatter like your grandmother's brittle china doll. Don't keep your brand high on the shelf, out of reach. Hold your brand, push it, stretch it, and see how far it can go. A brand shouldn't live under lock and key, hidden away at night. Quite the opposite. It should unite people, giving them a shared sense of ownership. Don't just give consumers a better option to purchase . . . give them a better perspective on themselves and their world.

How the World Sees You (and Your Brand)

If you're a brand, it doesn't matter how you see your consumers; it matters how your consumers see *you*.

Corporations don't create brands. People do.

The people inside your company are also the keepers of your brand. An outside party won't know the culture and spirit and nuances like your team. You might not have a dedicated marketing department, and that's okay.

But what if the branding process could be open source, accessible to anyone?

It can be. It should be. You can do this. You can build your brand. You *should* build your brand. In fact, if you want to compete in a crowded and competitive marketplace, you must.

Nobody knows your brand like *you*. You just need a template to follow. Or a hack.

Branding Hacks

You've probably heard of "life hacks"—clever shortcuts that allow you to save time, money, or hassle. Life hacks might reveal how to sneak more green vegetables into your kids' meals, or how to relax more quickly to fall asleep. A productivity hack might show you how to speed-read. And the author Tim Ferriss once described a "sport hack," in which he supposedly hacked the national Chinese kickboxing championship by winning with only a few weeks of training. Josh Linker, venture capitalist and entrepreneur, describes hacking this way: "Putting motives aside, the act of hacking requires tremendous creativity. A hack is an innovative and unorthodox way to crack big problems."

So what about marketing? Can we "hack" that process?

What if branding could be open source, accessible to anyone?

It can be. It should be. You can do this. You can build your brand. You *should* build your brand. In fact, if you want to compete in a crowded and competitive marketplace, you must.

And you don't need an ad agency.

Life Beyond the Ad Agency

I loved being in advertising. Yet ad agency life is not one that mixes well with motherhood.* I left the jet-setting world of advertising to be closer to my family, as an author.

---

* In ad agencies, you might hear one account executive say to another, "Relax, it's not brain surgery." Yet when publications list the most stressful jobs, advertising executive and brain surgeon top the list. What polar opposites! I once heard this: one surgeon says to another, "Relax, it's not advertising."

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Is This Book for You?

You might be a small business owner without an in-house marketing person. You might be a midsized business, looking for a faster, more efficient system. Or an entrepreneur, looking for a way to differentiate in the marketplace. This book is for you.

You might work inside an ad agency, PR firm, or other type of communication company. You might feel stuck on an assignment, and need a burst of inspiration. You might work within a marketing department of global corporation, and want a better way to position your products.

You might be a coach or adviser, wanting to apply the exact steps in this book for a working session with your team or clients. You might be a nonprofit looking for ways to get a message across without spending dollars. In fact, you might have no experience with branding, or even zero confidence in your creativity. No problem.

You just may be curious to find new ways to fascinate people in daily life. Great. Welcome. You're in the right place.

A sneak peek of what's coming up in the next pages:

In part I, you'll learn how and why your brain becomes *fascinated*.

Part II explores the seven most persuasive forms of communication.

Part III gives you the tools to build a "turbobrand"—a rapid brand message—in one hour.

Yes, branding *is* mysterious. It *is* fascinating. It is a form of witchcraft.

Yet there are patterns to the process. Once you have the patterns, you can bring it to life.

I'll do the black magic.

Then, I'll hand you the wand.

The Orignal *Fascinate*

My book *Fascinate* was published in 2010, and in that book I explored how our brains become captivated by certain people and ideas. I outlined the seven ways in which brands fascinate us. I gave the *why*, but not the *how*. The truth is, I didn't yet know all the steps.

Now, here we are with the second edition of *Fascinate*. Inside these pages, you might recognize a few of my favorite stories. This is not a small revision; as my editors can attest, it's a major overhaul. More major, in fact, than I think any of us realized. We ripped the entire book apart and rebuilt it to be a fascinatingly practical guide.*

While the original *Fascinate* hinted what my branding algorithm woud one day become, the actual process was fuzzy and intuitive. Now I've spelled it out.

This Book in Your Hands

- New stories and action steps: Over 60 percent of the content is completely new, with fresh case studies and examples.
- Fascination Advantage Profile for Brands: We built an algorithm (literally) so that you can measure your own product or service, to measure your advantages. Get your brand profile at BrandFascination.com.
- One Hour Brand: My favorite difference in this new edition is the step-by-step process in parts III and IV, which give you a blazingly fast way to create brand messages in about an hour. (Cleverly, I name it the One Hour Brand.) I believe it's your fastest, easiest way to create a fascinating brand message.

---

* This revised version of *Fascinate* took longer to write than the original book itself: three (very, very long) years.

ANYONE CAN MAKE ANYTHING FASCINATING.

What is fascination, exactly? It's the brain's most powerful state of intense focus. Fascinating brands can command prices 400% higher than similar products. Why are these brands so valuable, and how can your brand harness this force of attraction? The step-by-step Fascinate System reveals how to make any brand, message, or idea impossible to resist.

WHAT ARE THE PERFECT WORDS TO CAPTIVATE YOUR CUSTOMER? SALLY HOGSHEAD WILL SHOW YOU.

PRAISE FOR *FASCINATE*

"This is a transformative work, a beautifully written book that will forever change the way you see the world. I loved it. Let me be really clear: You need to buy this book, devour it, absorb it, and then buy copies for your colleagues. A lot of copies."

–SETH GODIN, author of *Linchpin*

"Can you dissect fascination? Sally Hogshead says yes. Fascination is arguably the most powerful of product attachments, and this pioneering book helps us approach the word and the concept in a thoughtful and practical manner."

–TOM PETERS, author of *In Search of Excellence*

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INNOVATION

PASSION

POWER

PRESTIGE

TRUST

MYSTIQUE

ALERT