

Author Douglas Atkin: Culting of Brands

DATE: Thursday, June 24, 2004

LOCATION: The Merchandise Mart Conference Center

ADMISSION: FREE: Must RSVP

ENTERTAINMENT: 7:30 AM Doors open

7:30-8:15 AM Noshing, Networking

8:15-9:30 AM Presentation

In his work as a marketer, Douglas Atkin became fascinated by the way some people become fiercely loyal to certain brands. Picture a convention of Harley riders, or an intense conversation between iPod owners, or an avid eBay user raving about her newest find. Their devotion is almost cultlike. So to understand these consumers better, Atkin thought, why not study real cults?

Seven years later, Atkin's research into cults has yielded some surprising conclusions. For example, people usually join cults for good reasons, not because they're psychologically flawed, gullible, or desperate. Quite the contrary-cult members are likely to be intelligent, educated, and socially adept. Cults provide community and meaning for their members, a place where they can be themselves and yet also play an important part of a group. Every great religion and social movement started with bands of devoted followers chastised for being different.

Atkin argues that people become addicted to "cult brands" like jetBlue, Apple, eBay, or Mary Kay for more or less the same reasons that people become committed to cults like Hare Krishna. In *THE CULTING OF BRANDS* (Portfolio, June 7, 2004), he explains how these and other companies have fueled such unshakable allegiance through basically the same techniques as those used by the Moonies. This doesn't make these companies unethical. They have simply figured out how to spread the message that to be a part of their brand is to be a part of something special.

[Click here for more information on Douglas Atkin and the Culting of Brands](#)

NOTE LOCATION! The Merchandise Mart Conference Center (2nd floor of the Mart Apparel Center building) Enter at Apparel Center on Orleans Ave. or take Merchandise Mart elevator to the second floor and proceed across pedway to Apparel Center)

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