

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

From INFUSEmedia

Summer 2021 Edition



Wondering what to read next?
Our team presents their favorite books for fun and work.

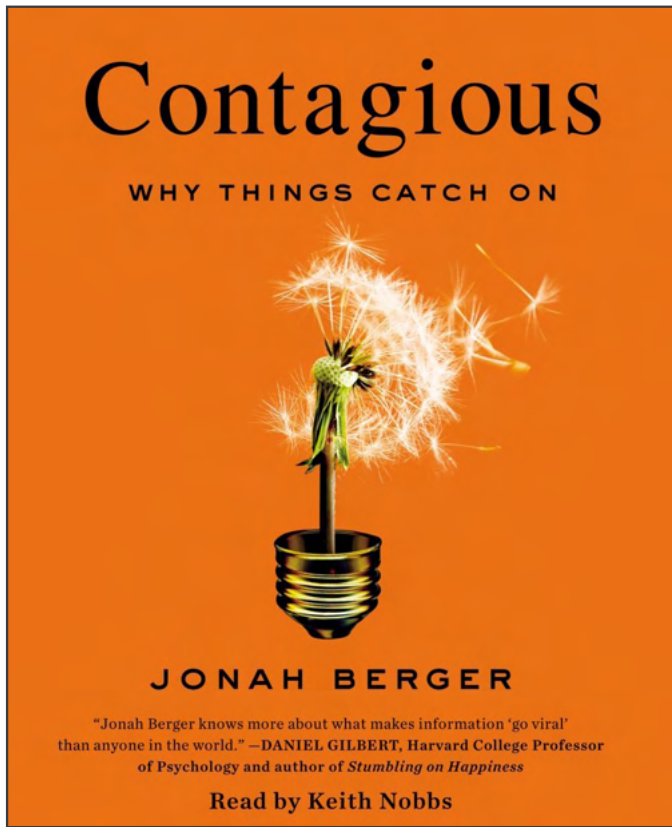
So, take a scroll down literary lane with INFUSEmedia's best picks:



Business books

Broaden your professional horizons with these office-grade gems:

- Contagious → Page, 3
- Fad-Free Strategy → Page, 4
- How to Win Friends and Influence People → Page, 5
- Negotiation Genius → Page, 6
- On Writing → Page, 7
- Radical Candor → Page, 8
- Scientific Advertising → Page, 9
- The Greatest Salesman in the World → Page, 10
- The Phoenix Project → Page, 11
- The Power of Habit → Page, 12
- The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck → Page, 13
- Uncopyable → Page, 14



Contagious: Why Things Catch On by Johan Berger



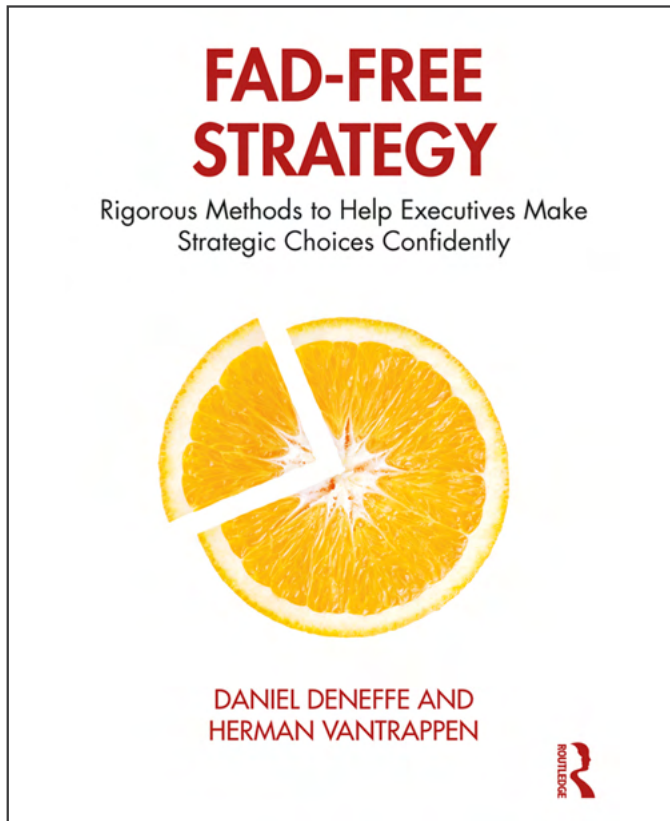
*Recommended by Victoria Albert,
VP Marketing*

This New York Times bestseller explains why certain things catch on and others fail. With almost four thousand 4.5-star reviews, it's an easy and engaging read.

Johan Berger employs an easy-to-remember recipe for virality: STEPPS (Social Currency, Triggers, Emotion, Public, Practical Value, and Stories). The idea is that viral content will include these six principles—and Berger uses real-world examples to demonstrate it.

This book goes beyond common sense on what makes a trend, focusing more on how trends become part of a conversation among peers, rather than the technology and tactics used by marketers.

A must-have for anyone whose strategic goals include innovation—whether product or people.



Fad-Free Strategy: Rigorous Methods to Help Executives Make Strategic Choices Confidently by Daniel Deneffe and Herman Vantrappen



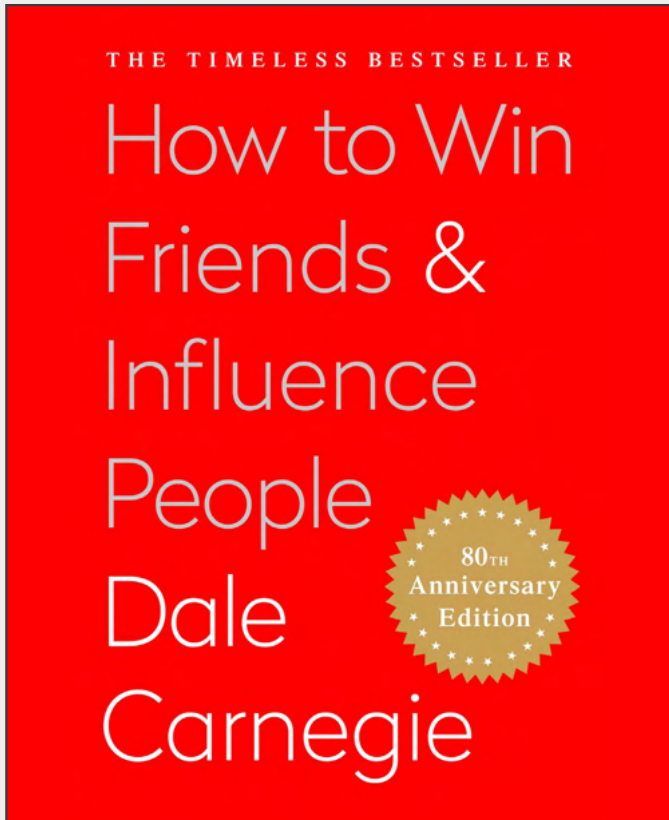
*Recommended by Aziz Razikov,
Director Client Strategy and Sales*

This book is for anyone into strategy (not just marketing) and those who wish to learn how companies approach the modern business world.

Deneffe and Vantrappen provide an operational strategy for managers to make career-defining decisions, such as how to price your products, gauge competition, and determine client preferences.

Overall, it is a customer-centric book, recommending business decisions based on client behavior rather than emulating success stories or following anecdotal evidence.

I took a course with Daniel Deneffe at the Harvard Extension School. He is a management consultant and mentions in this book real-world cases in which he helped companies make revenue-making decisions.



How to Win Friends and Influence People by Dale Carnegie



*Recommended by Mario Zisiadis,
SDR Manager*

An all-time classic, Carnegie writes about how you can increase your popularity, persuade people, make friends, enable you to win new clients and customers, become a better speaker, and boost enthusiasm among your colleagues.

Despite being an 85-year-old book (first published in 1936), Carnegie's lessons still work today, since most are principles you should follow to make yourself persuasive, likable, confident, and a better person for society as a whole.

And for any salesperson, those are traits that'll make your pitches stick rather than flop. The book is dotted with memorable quotes, such as "a drop of honey can catch more flies than a gallon of gall," which you'll carry on in your professional and personal life.

By applying a bit of behavioral psychology and the knowledge from his public speeches, Carnegie provides a guide with actionable advice you'll be following while flicking its pages.

Negotiation Genius: How to Overcome Obstacles and Achieve Brilliant Results at the Bargaining Table and Beyond

by Deepak Malhotra and Max Bazerman

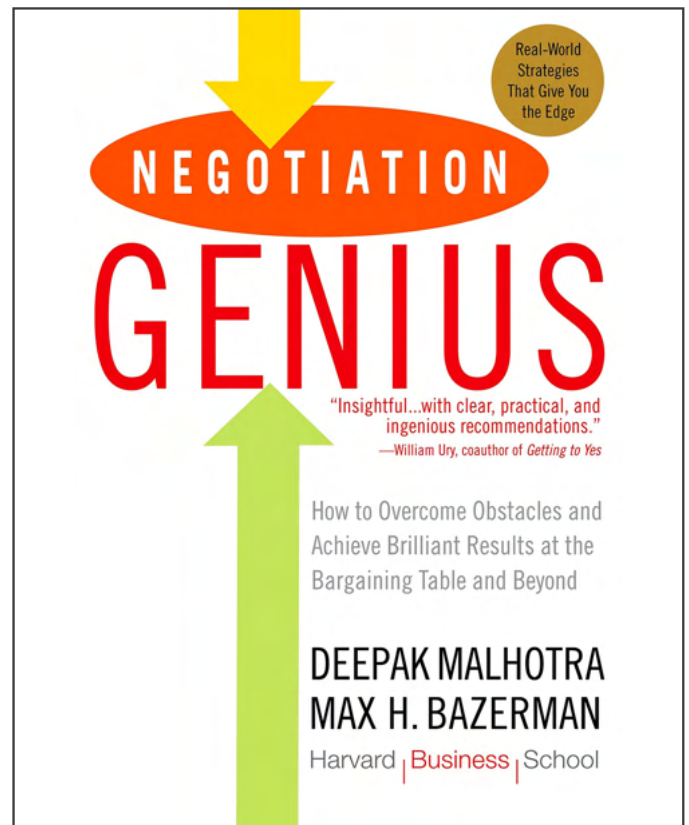


*Recommended by Vlad Bychkov,
Director of Technology*

First of all, I love this book! It discusses almost every social interaction in our lives, even if you might not realize it at first. This is a book about negotiation, but the strategy it provides helps out in any social situation—business and personal.

The authors provide an actionable framework you can put into practice for any business deal, such as assessing your BATNA (Best Alternative to Negotiated Agreement) and how to calculate your “walk-away point.” There’s also advice on justifying your offer and how far you can push without blowing the whole deal.

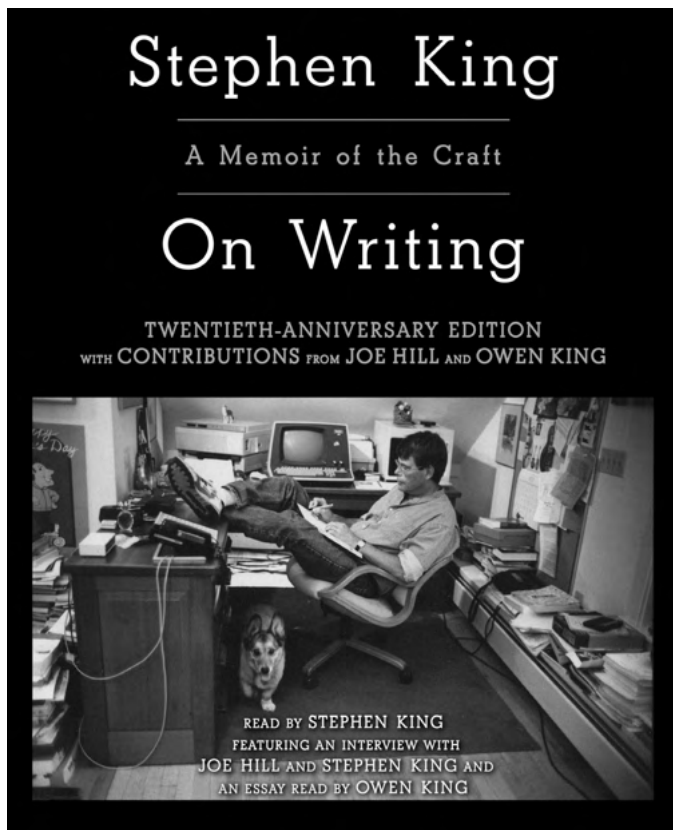
For me, this is one of the best books—fun to read, easy to understand and put into practice.



On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft by Stephen King



*Recommended by Vinicius Scott,
B2B Copywriter*



This book is a guide and autobiography on how Stephen King became a writer and the lessons he learned along the way. By tying his life story with his growth as a writer, King brings background to his advice and clear reasons on what works (or not) when writing a compelling story.

The book teaches you to address your ideal reader, how to let intuition take control and not “over plot”, as well as how to convey a theme the reader will ponder after putting the book down.

Key lessons I take to heart from this book are to cut adjectives, kill your darlings, and rewrite your first draft.

I recommend this memoir for anyone who wants to brush up on their writing, yet not gulp down a boring manual to get it done.

Radical Candor: Be a Kick-Ass Boss without Losing Your Humanity

by Kim Scott



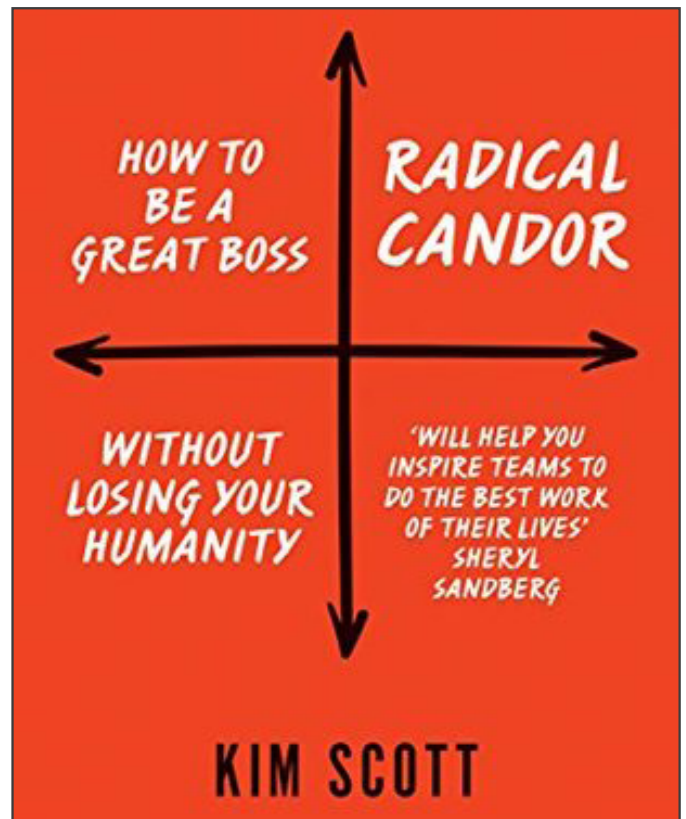
*Recommended by Victoria Albert,
VP Marketing*

A thought-provoking account, with tangible examples of how to learn to be a better leader.

While this book isn't for everyone or, let's face it, not all circumstances in life, it's honest, truthful, and candid in its guidance—hence radical.

Kim Scott creates a quadrant on how to apply Radical Candor as a manager, by striking a balance between empathy and honesty. The idea is to offer honest criticism, yet be empathetic with transparent leadership that identifies problems and provides room for growth.

If you're through with your five steps, seven steps, or ten steps of whatever leadership methodology you've touched, give this book a try.



Scientific Advertising by Claude Hopkins

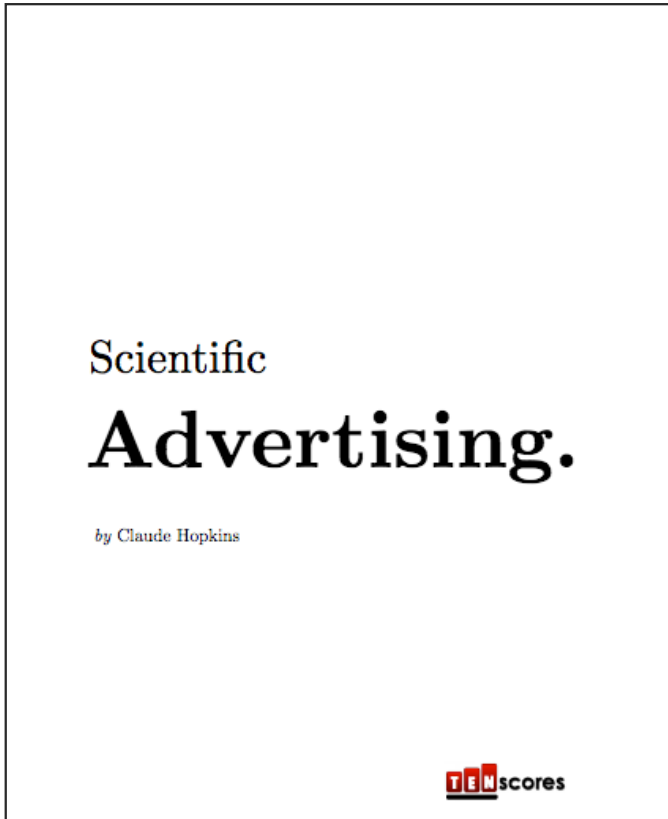


*Recommended by Vinicius Scott,
B2B Copywriter*

Hopkins pins down many lessons in this classic I read as a junior copywriter back in college. In this book, Hopkins asserts that advertising must be scientific, measured, and adjusted according to test results for best performance.

Curiously, Hopkins developed the precursor of the A/B test, using coupons to track sales from different samples of copy published in direct mail. He used this method to optimize headlines and unique value propositions, much like marketers do today.

And the book is packed with memorable quotes. For me, the best is picturing yourself as a salesman when writing. As Hopkins says, "Advertising is multiplied salesmanship. It may appeal to thousands while the salesman talks to one."





The Greatest Salesman in the World by Og Mandino



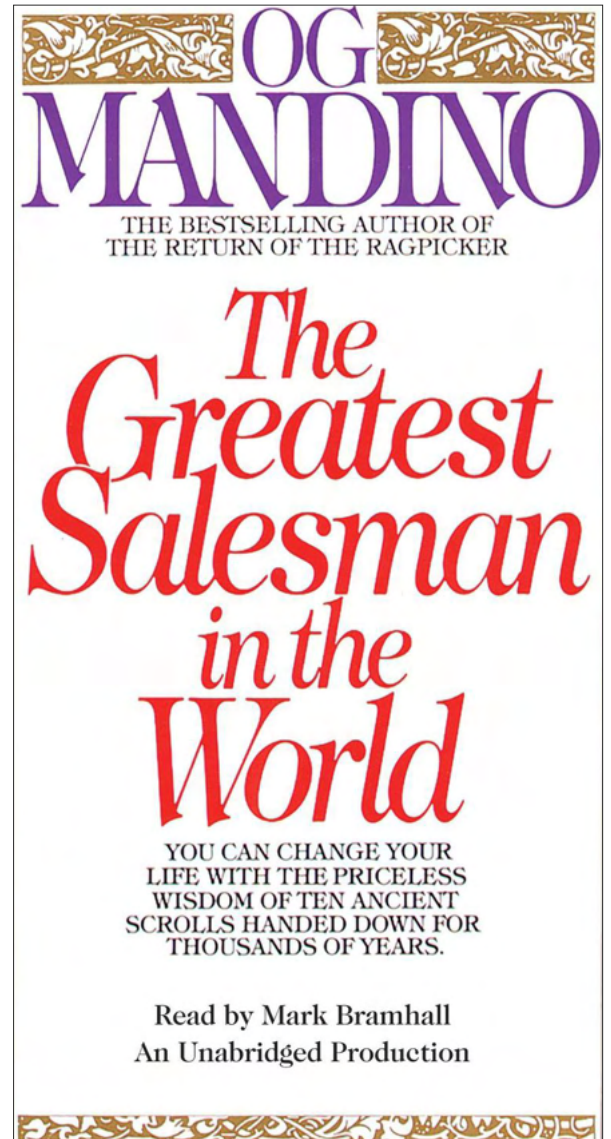
*Recommended by Mario Zisiadis,
SDR Manager*

The Greatest Salesman in the World combines sales, human nature, and philosophy in one. It is a book that primarily shows you how to create universal habits.

A salesman himself, Mandino presents ten scrolls with guidance not only to make better sales but to live a fuller life by forming constructive habits.

And this isn't a book just for salespeople (despite the title), since its advice is invaluable for anyone feeling stuck and looking for guidance. In fact, Oscar-winning actor Matthew McConaughey allegedly went to film school after reading it.

Mandino believes in living life to the best of your ability, as evidenced by this quote: "I ask not for gold or garments or even opportunities equal to my ability; instead, guide me so that I may acquire ability equal to my opportunities."

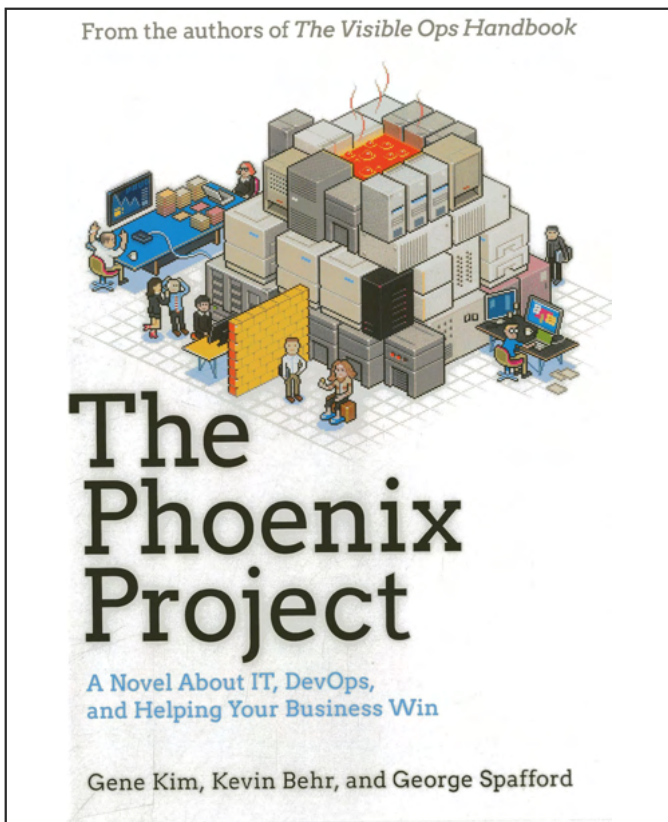


The Phoenix Project: A Novel about IT, DevOps, and Helping Your Business Win

by Gene Kim, George Spafford, and Kevin Behr



*Recommended by Vlad Bychkov,
Director of Technology*



I was amazed to recognize the main characters of this book within our organization, and we are facing exactly the same challenges.

Written as a novel, this is the story of Bill, who becomes CTO of a fictional company (Parts Unlimited) and has 90 days to overhaul a broken system into an IT infrastructure that works.

As the story goes, you discover how the protagonist and his coworkers reach the solution, which despite being fictional, has real-life takeaways for anyone working with tech.

The story helps you identify IT/DevOps problems in your organization and how to implement changes that work. There's even a summary at the end of the book to recap all the solutions presented by the authors.

The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business by Charles Duhigg

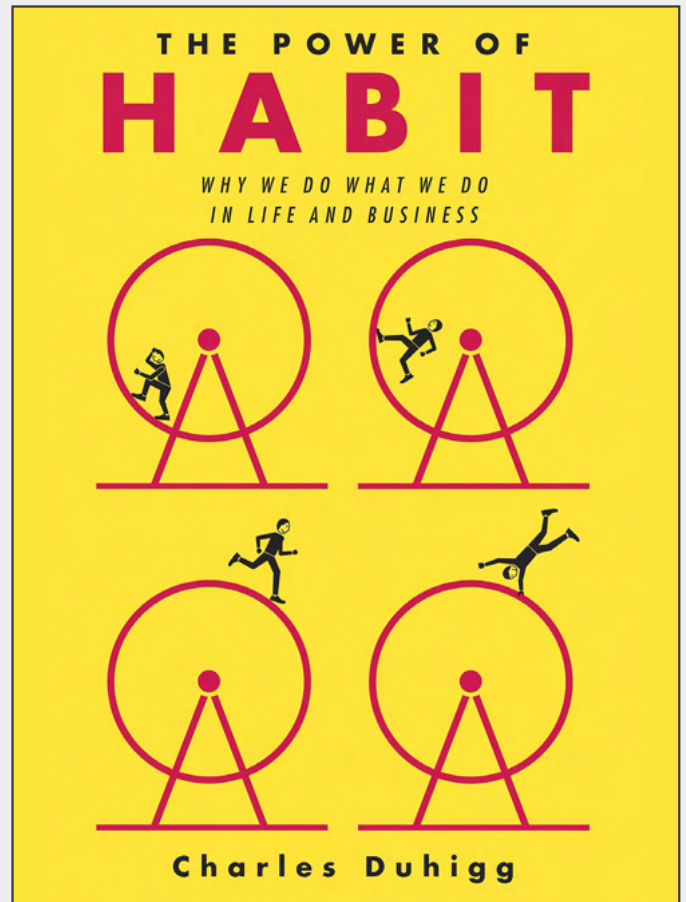


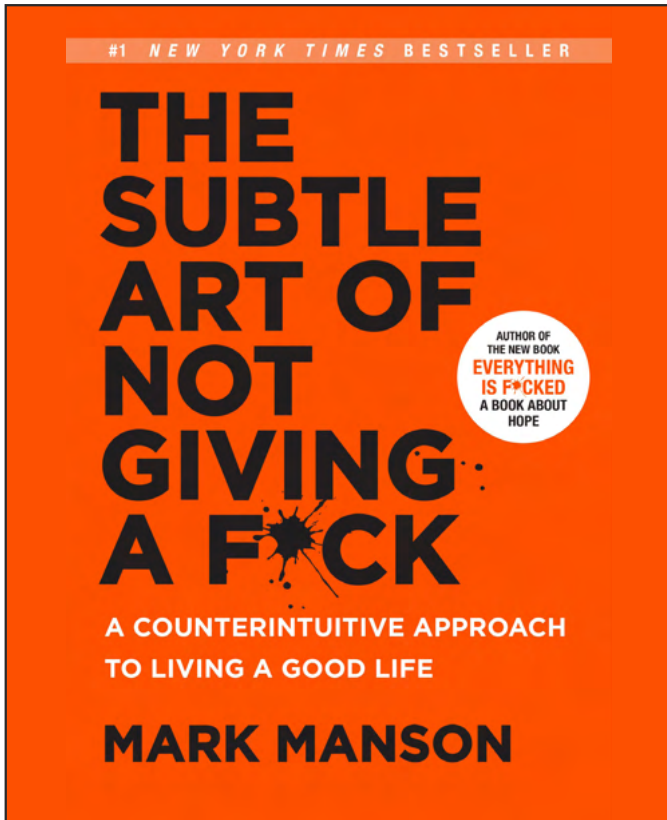
*Recommended by Jeff Cleasby,
VP of Strategic Accounts*

Learning the “Cue - Routine - Reward” habit loop was very intriguing. Overall, the book is fun, interesting, and packed with educational stories on what happens in our minds to form routines and habits.

From Procter & Gamble’s Febreze marketing re-set, Julio’s love of blackberry juice, Pepsodent toothpaste adding irritants to beat the competition while creating hygiene habits, and football coach Tony Dungy’s reframing his defense pre-snap cadence to “crave victory.”

Exceptional read, with numerous points to ponder alongside countless pages already dog-eared and more to surely come.





The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life by Mark Manson



*Recommended by Victoria Albert,
VP Marketing*

I know what you're thinking, but stay with me for a moment.

I purchased this book for my type A teenager in her junior year of high school, when conversations about GPA, SAT, ACT, etc. dominated our dinner table.

Those were college application days, and anyone with a high-schooler knows you need help to stay sane. This book is vulgar and in-your-face, but that's exactly the reality slap we needed.

Save for all the bombs, it adds a nice perspective to life that is missing in today's society. Recommended for young adults 16+.

I have since gifted it to several of my friend's grown children—all with raving feedback.

Uncopyable: How to Create an Unfair Advantage Over Your Competition

by Steve Miller



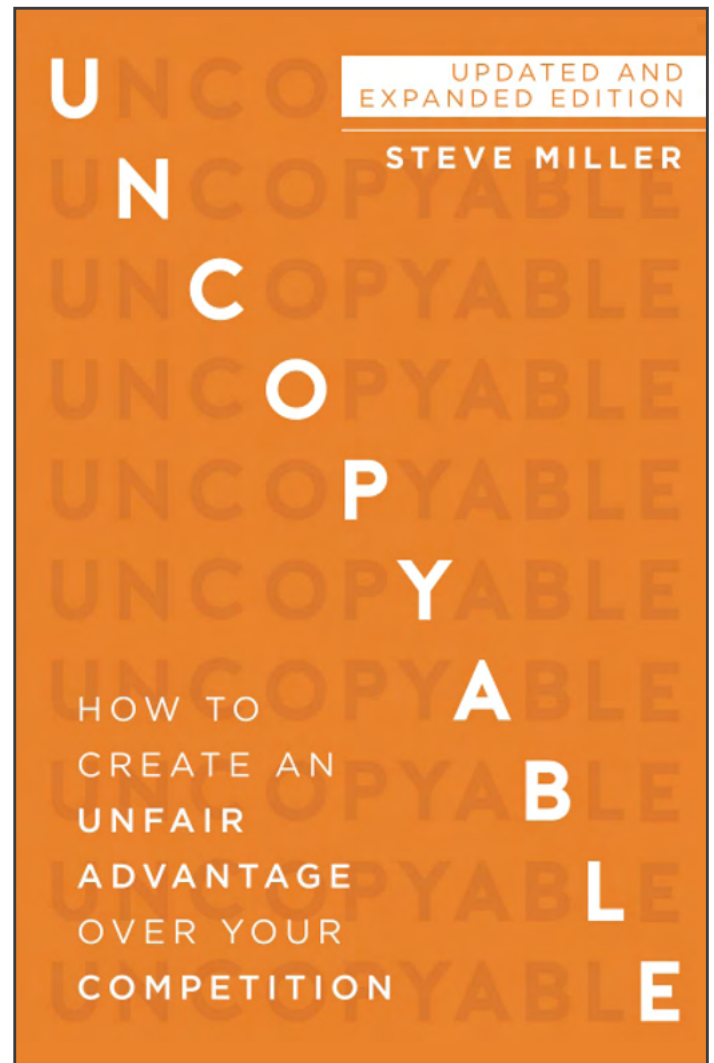
*Recommended by Victoria Albert,
VP Marketing*

I was given this book by a dear former colleague, and admittedly it sat on the shelf for about a year until my new boss and I began kicking around the idea of a competitive displacement product we could offer our clients.

Then, my mind wondered: how do other companies create truly competitive, uncopyable products?

This short, 152-page read provides clear suggestions of how to give your company (or yourself) a competitive edge, and what that means for your long-term survival.

Miller uses his personal experience and examples of companies that followed his principles to create products that can't be copied easily. The author asserts that nowadays, you can't keep ahead of the competition by plainly offering better pricing and customer service—you need something unique (uncopyable) to thrive.



Books for Fun



Do you seek tales of fantasy—or an easy read to chill at the beach?

These are INFUSEmedia's top books for leisure:

- Christine → [Page, 16](#)
- Fall of Giants → [Page, 16](#)
- Inferno → [Page, 17](#)
- I Am Pilgrim → [Page, 17](#)
- Infinite Jest → [Page, 18](#)
- Lunar Chronicles → [Page, 18](#)
- Nowhere → [Page, 19](#)
- One Hundred Years of Solitude → [Page, 19](#)
- Once Upon a Time in Hollywood → [Page, 20](#)
- Paddle Your Own Canoe → [Page, 21](#)
- Pet Sematary → [Page, 22](#)
- The Ninth Metal → [Page, 22](#)
- Yearbook → [Page, 23](#)





Christine by Stephen King



*Recommended by Wes Morris,
Marketing Coordinator*

This is the best scary story to rip through during hot summer nights.

The book is filled with the unnerving deaths the writer has known for a while, also supplying unconventional story arcs you usually expect in the realm of classic Stephen King.

What's most important, though, is that the characters suck you into typical challenges and scene backdrops anyone can relate to, including familial tension, high school romance, impending life events, and friendship in all its forms.

But if Richard Donner made you believe a man can fly, Stephen King will make you believe a man can get killed by a possessed car and that you should really check in on that friend who can't let go of his high school hot rod.

Fall of Giants by Ken Follett

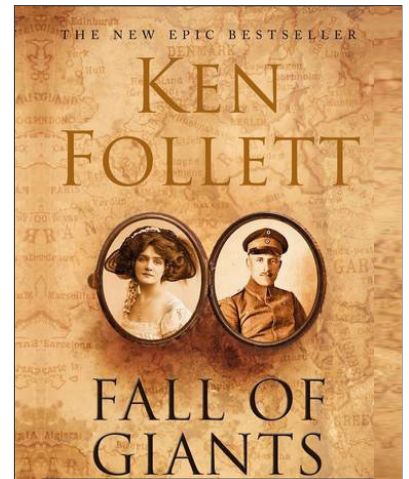


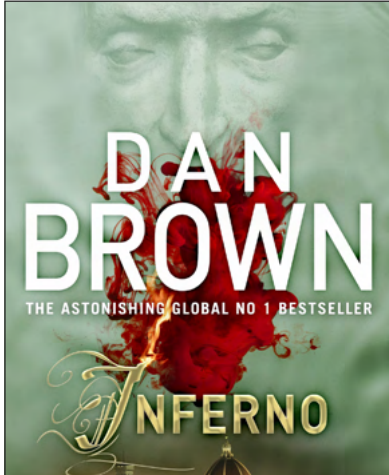
*Recommended by Caitlin Sweeney,
Account Executive*

Great start to a historical fiction trilogy that blends an amazing group of characters with accurate recounts of WWI.

The trilogy follows five families throughout the 20th century of different backgrounds and countries, such as two Russian orphaned brothers who wish to emigrate to America, and a housekeeper for an aristocratic family that takes a leap of faith beyond her duties.

It's a long book (942 pages), but you won't mind as you flick through the pages from riveting tale to tale, jumping between continents and unraveling the ill-made decisions that fueled such a bloody war.





Inferno by Dan Brown



*Recommended by Marcia Steffen,
Senior Account Executive*

The main character is recruited to help track down a deadly pathogen assumed to be created by a transhumanist who fears the world's collapse as a result of overpopulation—an entirely 2021 read!

If you're a fan of the Da Vinci Code or thrillers in general, this is a page-turner with cliffhanger after cliffhanger urging you not to put the book down. Dan Brown writes with a speedy flair, which gets the story going without boring preludes, heavy descriptions, or dull moments.

It's a bestseller written to entertain, and if you're looking for a riveting story, I can't recommend this enough.

I Am Pilgrim by Terry Hayes



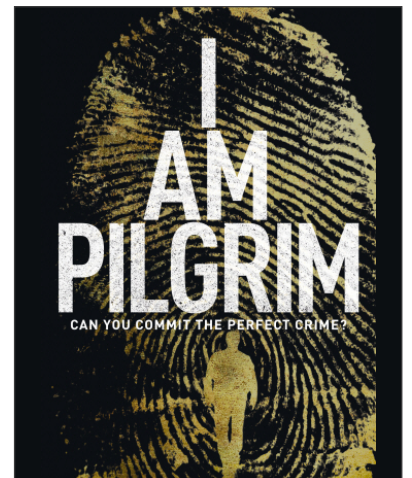
*Recommended by Matt Harmon,
Senior Account Executive*

This is simply one of the best suspense novels I've read in a long time.

It's the story of a retired special services FBI agent who can't space his past and continues to get roped back into a life he desperately longs to leave behind. A past he can't leave because he is hard-pressed by the imminent threat of a biohazard terrorist—and the FBI needs him.

The book will take you on twists and turns like no other. It's my beach book—and since I started reading it I have noticed my beach days have increased in frequency and length.

Terry Hayes presents a globetrotting tale of the likes of Tom Clancy and the Jason Bourne movies, so if you're a fan of spy thrillers, I Am Pilgrim will keep you at the edge of your seat.





Infinite Jest by David Foster Wallace



*Recommended by Vinicius Scott,
B2B Copywriter*

As the name suggests, this story is crazy. Foster Wallace creates so many layers in this novel, going down to the detail in the subworlds of the characters and including ironic endnotes for ordinary things.

The author subverts your expectations from a novel in its lack of seriousness, yet intricate detail for the plain average, and the uncanny ways in which the characters interact.

Mind you, this isn't a cliffhanger or page-turner in the least, yet a book in which the author pushes your patience to what a novel can be, and tests out literary devices in odd ways that'll make you pause and re-read several times. I recommend it for anyone wishing to read something truly different and to break their expectations of what literature can be.

Lunar Chronicles by Marissa Meyer

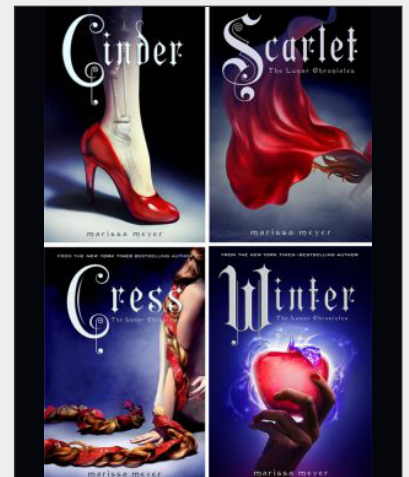


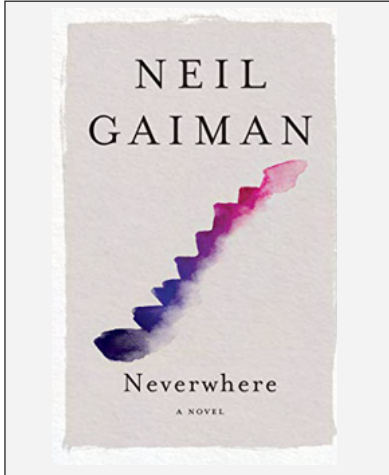
*Recommended by Trevor van Woerden,
Director of Strategic Accounts*

This book series was recommended to me by my 16-year-old daughter. And as any dad knows, if your 16-year-old daughter asks you to read something, you better well read it!

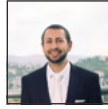
The Lunar Chronicles are timely and relevant twists on old heroine stories we all know and enjoy. It comprises four books (Cinder, Scarlet, Cress, and Winter), which mix up fairy tales with sci-fi, and a dash of fantasy on every page.

The worldbuilding is solid and you'll be taken into this futuristic world with a cyborg Cinderella and a lunar colony before you even know it. Recommended for teens that love fantasy novels.





Neverwhere by Neil Gaiman

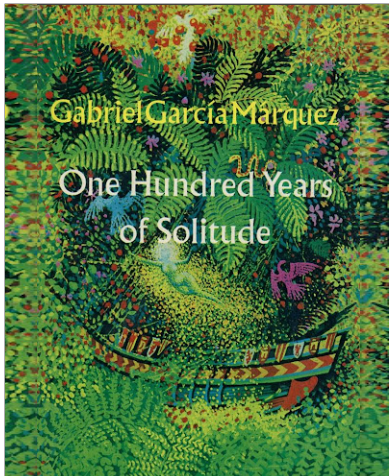


*Recommended by Justin Lubomirsky,
SEO Strategist*

This is my absolute favorite novel. It's an urban fantasy of an underground London inhabited by individuals that "fell through the cracks" of reality.

It possesses a lyrical storytelling style, amazing descriptions, compelling worldbuilding that I wish there was more of, an interesting twist on a typical "Alice in Wonderland" setup, social commentary on London and corporate life, clever concepts, shadow work, and labyrinths.

I love the running theme of the ordinary person growing above and beyond to become extraordinary. It reinforces the concept that you're never too old to change your life and achieve greatness. There is always a way out, you need only look for a door.



One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel García Márquez



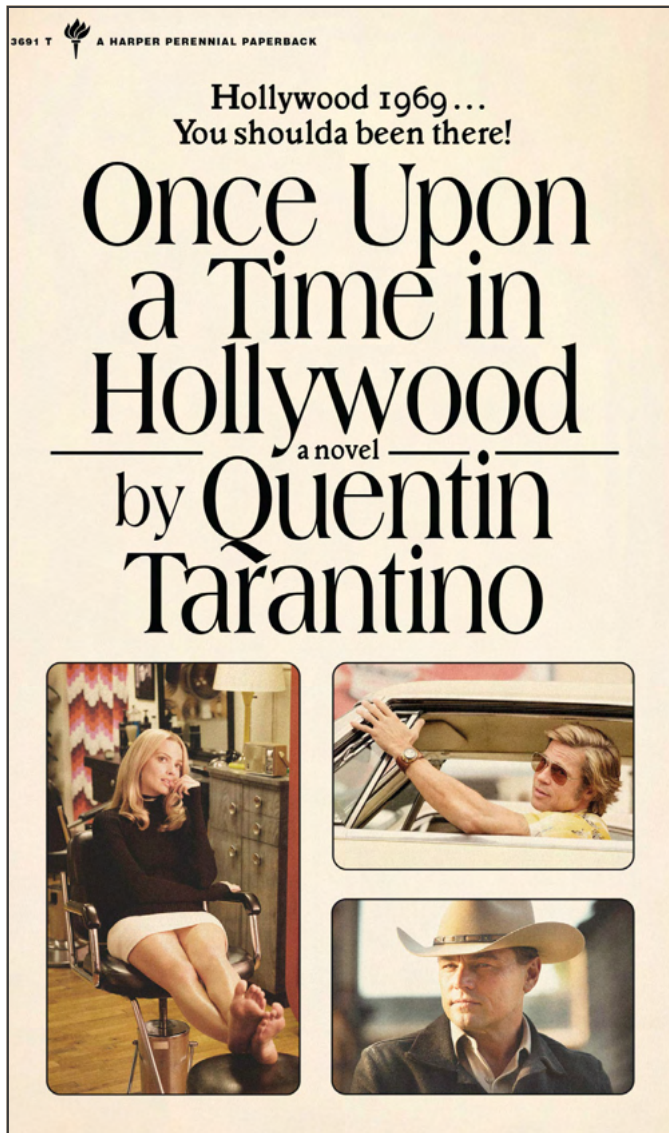
*Recommended by Vinicius Scott,
B2B Copywriter*

This magical realist tale breathes Latin American in every word. As a Scottish-Brazilian, there are many things that I relate to, such as the entangled Buendía family, the village fiascos, and the mysterious travelers.

Nobel prize winner García Márquez is a master of evoking magical imagery in the mundane, such as this passage: "The air was so damp that fish could have come in through the doors and swum out the windows" and he clearly knows how to ingrain a common theme into the entirety of a novel.

To summarize all the intricate passages of One Hundred Years of Solitude in a few sentences is a crime, so I'll comment on what the author illustrates best: As generations of the Buendía family toil through war and intrigue—all the while reaching existential epiphanies—García Márquez shows how life is simple, yet also quite complex.

If you have Latin American heritage (or are curious about the culture), this book is a majestic window into the whimsy of this region.



Once Upon a Time in Hollywood by Quentin Tarantino



*Recommended by Wes Morris,
Marketing Coordinator*

Want a good read, but you're time-averse?

As in I-don't-want-to-go-through-two-chapters-just-to-realize-I-don't-want-to-waste-my-time-with-this-averse?
This book would be perfect for you.

If you loved the 9th installment (or technically 10th, but don't tell him I said that) in Tarantino's movie catalog, you'll have a blast learning more about your favorite characters as you discover what else happened with them in 1969.

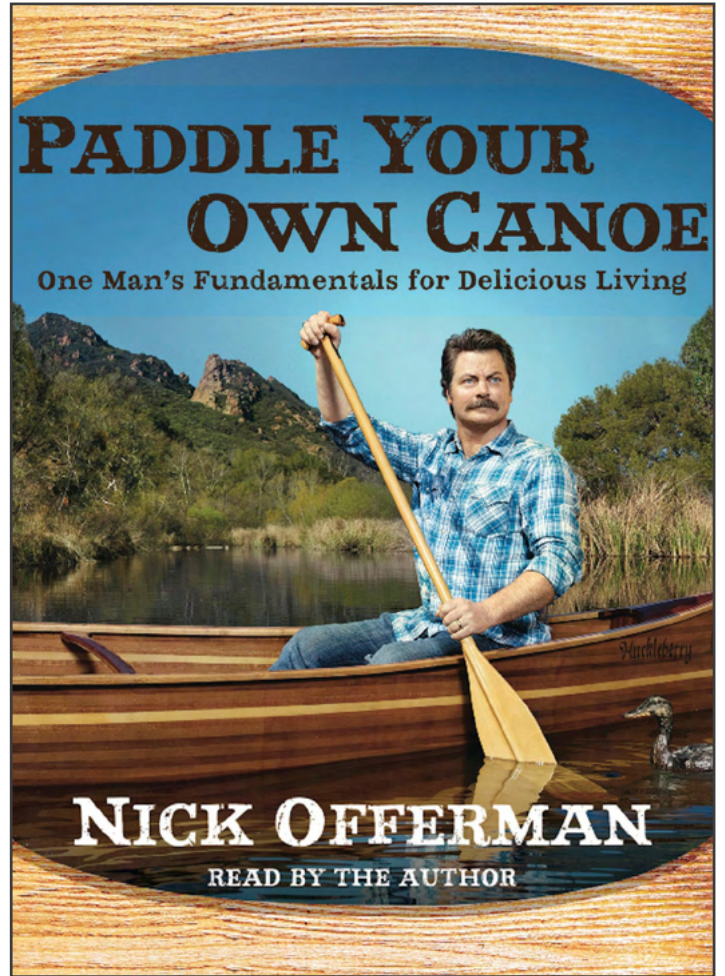
Accompanied by new scenes and character development the infamous writer couldn't force into his movie, you'll be easily guided from one fun beat in the movie to another, ensuring you love the journey just as much as the destination.

Lastly, whether it's the strength of the writing or the work the actors already did on the screen, it feels like cheating as you flip through the pages from one fun moment to the next.

Paddle Your Own Canoe: One Man’s Fundamentals for Delicious Living by Nick Offerman



*Recommended by Kevin Nolan,
Director of Strategic Accounts*

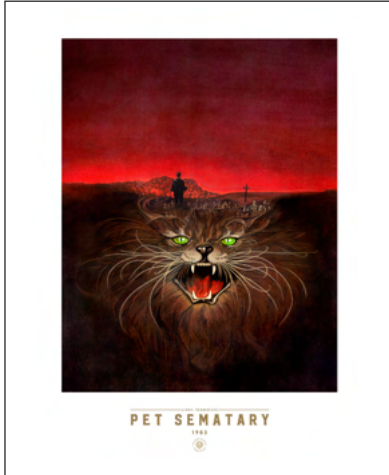


Who better than Parks and Recreation’s Ron Swanson to offer a tongue-in-cheek guide to manliness, mustaches, meat, and mating?

Nick Offerman, the man behind such a humorous character, wrote this book which is part-autobiography, part-manual on how he became an actor and his overall worldview and philosophy. Offerman talks about love, food, religion, politics, and doesn’t mince words when commenting on any topic.

Often self-deprecating—and always entertaining—it’s proving to be an easy read.

Also, there’s the audiobook read by Nick Offerman himself which is hilarious and feels like you’re listening to him at a bar with a nice cold beer.



Pet Sematary by Stephen King



*Recommended by Kyle Woodruff,
Senior Account Manager*

A light and cheery Sunday morning read for animal lovers and those who enjoy romantic tales about your typical American family next door!

That would be your takeaway if you stayed at the first pages of the book. Yet this is one of King’s most nerve-racking, scariest books, so it isn’t recommended to the light-hearted.

A doctor moves with his family to a quaint rural town and all seems fine and dandy, apart from a pet cemetery (sematary with an “S” and two “A’s”, as labeled by the local kids) that is the burial ground for the dogs and cats that pass on to the next life.

But there’s something not quite right with this cemetery, and you’ll have to read the book to know why.

The Ninth Metal by Benjamin Percy



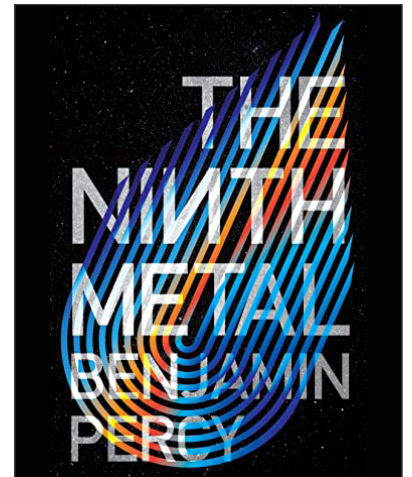
*Recommended by Wes Morris,
Marketing Coordinator*

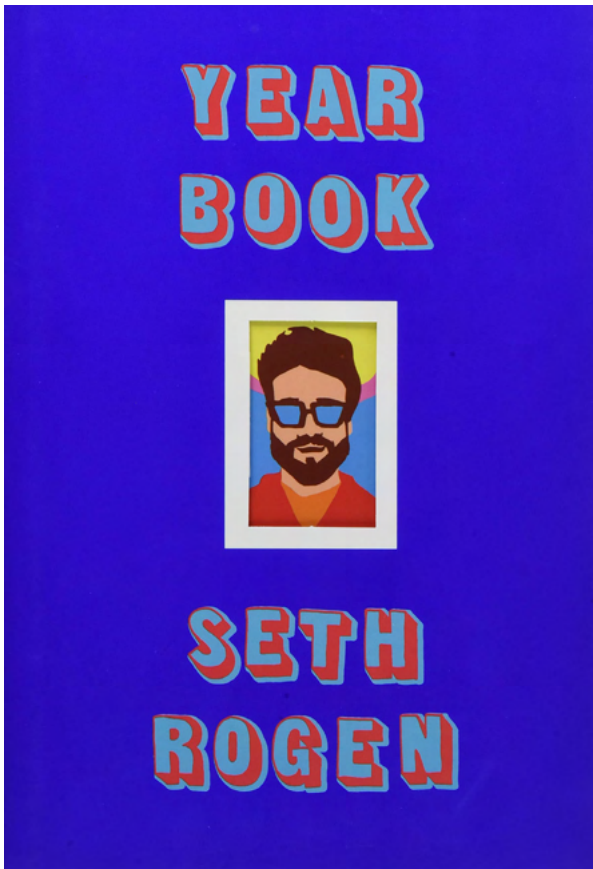
After the year we’ve had, I think everyone needs a flight of fancy or a grounded story with some uncomfortable metaphors and meteors crashing into the planet (at the very least, one of those two).

I’m just starting this book, but if you’re looking for something that’s a side-step out of reality and a good jumping-on point for a series, I can’t recommend this enough.

Set in Minnesota, Benjamin Percy takes you on a showcase of what the world would look like and how we would react if meteors flew down from the skies above, introducing a new metal that acts as a new volatile energy source (or a weapon?).

The author grounds this concept with three perspectives that explore and build the new world were introduced to in just 290 pages.





Yearbook by Seth Rogen



*Recommended by Wes Morris,
Marketing Coordinator*

Simply put, if you like any of Seth Rogen’s humor, you will love this from beginning to end.

It’s a quick 280 pages packed with tales of the comedian’s formative years and hilarious stories of some big pop culture names that all somehow tie together at the final page—Tom Cruise, Nicolas Cage, and George Lucas are only some of many hilarious encounters Seth Rogen spills the beans on in this book.

Not a big reader? Not to worry. He even reads the audiobook with cameo voice clips by the likes of Snoop Dogg and so many more.

If you are a fan of Seth Rogen’s movies, such as Superbad and Pineapple Express, then this is the book you’ve been waiting for.



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