Lovability: How to Build a Business That People Love and Be Happy Doing It

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Love is the surprising emotion that company builders cannot afford to ignore.

Genuine, heartfelt devotion and loyalty from customers — yes, love — is what propels a select few companies ahead. Think about the products and companies that you really care about and how they make you feel. You do not merely likethose products, you *adore* them.

Consider your own emotions and a key insight is revealed: Love is central to business. Nobody talks about it, but it is obvious in hindsight.

Lovability: How to Build a Business That People Love and Be Happy Doing It
shares what Silicon Valley-based author and Aha! CEO Brian de Haaff knows from a career of founding successful technology companies and creating award-winning products. He reveals the secret to the phenomenal growth of Aha! and the engine that powers lasting customer devotion — a set of principles that he pioneered and named The Responsive Method.

Lovability provides valuable lessons and actionable steps for product and company builders everywhere, including:
- Why you should rethink everything you know about building a business
- What a product really is
- The magic of finding what your customers truly desire
- How to turn business strategy and product roadmaps into customer love
- Why you should chase company value, not valuation
- Surveys to measure your company's lovability

Brian de Haaff has spent the last 20 years focused on business strategy, product management, and bringing disruptive technologies to market. And in preparation for writing this book, he interviewed well-known startup founders, product managers, executives, and CEOs at hundreds of name brand and agile organizations. Their experiences, along with headline-grabbing case studies (both inspiring successes and cautionary tales), will help readers discover how to build something that matters.

Much has been written about how entrepreneurs build innovative products and successful businesses, but the author's message is original and refreshing. He convincingly explains that there is a better path forward — a people-first way grounded in love. In a business world that has increasingly emphasized hype over substance and get-big-at-any-cost thinking over profitable and sustainable growth, it's time for a new recipe for company success.

?Insightful, thought-provoking, and sometimes controversial, *Lovability* is the book that you turn to when you know there has to be a better way.

Lovability: How to Build a Business That People Love and Be Happy Doing It Details

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From Reader Review Lovability: How to Build a Business That People Love and Be Happy Doing It for online ebook

Dru Clegg says

If you've considered starting a business or launching a product, this is the book to read. As someone who spent several years working with tech startups, the approach Brian outlines is refreshing and proven with the growing success of his latest company, Aha!. His recommendation to be profit-focused and to lean on paying customers instead of investors may seem obvious, but it is rarely done. The tips and tricks shared in *Lovability* provide an innovative approach to building a business around a "complete product experience" (CPE) to make sustainable growth reality.

Nina says

I try and read a handful of books that are related to my work, professional development, or some project I have going. This book is one of those books that I now want everyone I work with to read. It combines business philosophy and anecdotes with real practical advice in an amazing and compelling way. I am ready to go out an evangelize about the importance of using lovability as a metric for success in the work I do.

Ilana says

We are living in a very future-oriented world, where technology seems to be the ticket to success, but the ways to make success happens are sometimes the old, classical human ones. Lovability proves that what it matters at the end of the day is the focus on human emotions and the bridge that shall be made between a brand and its customers. It applies to almost every kind of company, from the cloud-data operators to retail shops. It requires a bigger amount of dedication and time, much more than when it comes to learning how to use various apps and technical innovations, but it definitely has a transformative power. What I've found interesting in this approach was the long-term vision, which embraces not only the strict business targets, but can have tremendous effects on the employees and customers as well.
A book recommended to any small or big business owner or entrepreneur, looking forward to see more than a change of the bank account situation.
Disclaimer: Book offered by the publisher in exchange for an honest review

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Natz says

Some editor at some point should have mentioned how the repetitive use of a million different acronyms would get SO tiring. If I put this book down for a day and picked it up again, I'd have to go through the, "Huh? What did THAT acronym mean, again?" and go back to look it up because the author couldn't just make all his points without giving every strategy its own unique ~name~. Other than that, a more accurate title for this book should have been, "Lovability: How to Build a SOFTWARE Business That People Love and Be Happy Doing It."

Monty Mitra says

I'm a fan of what De Haaff has built and largely agree with the approach that he lays out in this book. Unfortunately, the book falls a bit short in being a persuasive argument for bucking the trend of Silicon Valley's 'raise as much cash and probably burn out' approach to building companies. The main issue I have with the book is that it reads more like a collection of long blog posts as opposed to a tightly constructed narrative. The consequences of this are excessive repetition, an outsider's tone, and glossing over interesting ideas.

The repetition of ideas and terminology was such that I found myself scanning the text until I found a new idea and this became more frequent the further I got into the book.

Regarding tone, I couldn't help but compare this book to the books and writings produced by Basecamp's leaders Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson as they have similar approaches to product and business building. Fried and Hansson's writing have a much more 'reporting from the trenches' tone that really ground their thinking in reality. However, Lovability feels a bit more like it was written by someone who just knew de Haaff really well. I'm not saying someone else wrote it but I do think some more upfront planning and overall editing could have fixed this. There's just not enough of him in this. De Haaff has a wealth of experience and that should have been more front and center in this book. As an example, he lays out a variety of phased steps for building a great product experience. This would have been a perfect place to include Aha!'s experience in getting these right and where in his career he saw these steps being implemented improperly. Without that, it just feels theoretical. There is a moment where he describes why chooses not to hire a sales team and feels that sales should be more akin to tour guides based on his experience of visiting historic sites in southern Spain. These are the moments that ground his ideas in something tangible but they are rare.

The book also gives equal time to cliched ideas and innovative ideas and that's a real miss. He devotes the same amount of writing to the idea that businesses should be kind (of course) to the idea that businesses should be interrupt driven and immediately squash all bugs (I guess that most software teams don't operate like this). It's such an interesting idea and seems to be a central operating principle of Aha! so why is it treated more of a bullet point than actually deep diving into this? It should have been its own chapter.

In general, Lovability feels like it was edited by a marketing team (that's not intended as an insult, editing marketing content and editing a novel are two vastly different things) and I hope that should he write another book, and I hope he does, that he finds a way to construct a narrative that includes his life, learnings, and failures, as a more central part of it.

Gabriela says

The lovability concept is one that should be applied by all companies, by all means. A complete product experience is what really makes the customer come back and at the same time develops a business based on trust and happiness for all parties involved. The book itself may seem a bit repetitive at times, nevertheless the basic concepts and framework should be considered and applied nowadays.

Angelo says

Such a great read. Anyone that works for a company with a product needs to read this as it provides a great insight into how focusing on the entire customer experience will ultimately lead to long term success.

Justin Weiss says

If you've already read a lot around building customer focus, empathic leadership, and the "build a *company*, not just an exit" writing around the web, a lot of the ideas in this book might not be surprising to you. That doesn't make them any less important -- and if you're new to this way of thinking, this book will be a revelation to you.

There were some ideas in the book I would usually have disagreed with. And here I found it especially interesting. Because the ideas I disagreed with, they were raised in a way that made me think less "well, I guess I have to take the good stuff and ignore the other stuff" and more "Huh. I wonder what would happen if I gave it a fair try?"

I read this book as I was getting ready to join Aha! And it made me even more curious to learn how this philosophy works in practice, and even more excited to start.

Jonathan Lu says

Grandpa rules - grow a profitable and successful business
- Story of mine craft vs. zygna. Building something people love vs. using a psychologist to figure out how to sell more add-ones
- "Lovability - the capacity to earn genuine, heartfelt love and loyalty from customers - is the secret ingredient that propels a select few organizations ahead and leads not only to consistent growth and profitability but sustainable happiness for everyone involved[…] we do not think about 'loving' a product as being a legitimate metric of its success. Too many of us are busy obsessing over vanity numbers, from unique visitors, to trials, to product engagement. But we should put love at center stage, because what is more important to a business's long term success than customers loving and being loyal to it?" [p10]

"To us it's silly to say, 'it's not personal, it's just business.' Business has always been personal. Unfortunately, that idea is the first casualty of the valuation over value model." [p123]

10 Building Blocks of Lovability
1) Hope - FMOT
2) Satisfaction - SMOT
3) Care - Customer-focused Service. Requires values > value
4) Confidence - Reputation sustainability / Brand
5) Trust - the "lovability" line
6) Scale - new versions anticipate customer needs. "wow" factor

7) Sustainability - Financial health
8) Motivation - Customers are inspired by your product
9) Fun - Customers enjoy what they do more
10) Halo - Customers become evangelists

Customer service people are like good tour guides [p103]
- They are knowledgeable, sometimes spending years of studying their domain, and have gained deep insights.
- They are empathetic and understand that it is not always easy to immerse yourself in something new.
- They are genuine, eager to share what they know because their knowledge and experience excites them.
- They are relaxed. They have no hidden agendas and are confident in presenting diverse perspectives.
- They are dependable. They show up on time and are responsive to questions because they know curiosity is a teacher's best friend.
Follow's Aha's approach of not having traditional sales people, but customer success people who in term create evangelists among users similar to Atlassian and Dropbox: "All great guides are motivated by intrinsic rewards. It's not a profession to pursue to get rich. They want to lead because it is in their nature to help and share what they know. Their passion fuels their work. And their professional success ultimately depends on their client's success and their joy of learning. That leads to love, enthusiastic referrals, steady growth… and no need for strong-armed sales." [p104]

It's possible to automate customer interactions (mandatory for scale) and be efficient while keeping a human face. Give customers info they need to self-serve, but also be incredibly responsive when they need to interact with you.
- Stop selling, people want to buy and not be sold to
- Intercept & Engage. Automate certain interception points, when you think a customer is likely to benefit from human interaction but they are too shy to ask
- When time to engage, make sure a human gets on quickly

The Responsive Method (TRM)
- Goal first: know the organization's vision and have clear, measurable goals
- Wow curious!: insatiable thirst for asking questions and learning about customers
- Interrupt-driven: interruptions from customers = valuable opportunities to learn
- Yea or nay now: answer inquiries immediately with a yes/no
- Transparent: openness, respect, honesty
- Kind: compassion, respect, caring

Success Disasters - good problems to have. Plan for what is likely and do not worry about everything that might happen along the way.
- "You can expend a lot of energy on things like that and the problems might never materialize, but the good things do not either because you were too preoccupied to make them happen. Fear carries a heavy opportunity cost. You can afford not to worry about unlikely problems ahead of time if you trust that you and your team can solve them when they happen." [p172]

Lovability Toolkit
- Are the building blocks for lovability there?
? Relief
? Satisfaction
? Support
? Confidence

? Trust
? Scale
? Sustainability
? Motivation
? Fun
? halo
- Are the signs of lovability there?
? Hugs
? Love notes
? megaphones
- How much do customers love/like/tolerate/despise your product?
- How lovable is your company among employees?
? Have purpose
? Value work
? Reject work/life
? 100 + 100 = 100 (equal priority of company and employee, ownership)
? Be anywhere
? Teach hard
? Grow talent
? Honor reality
? Work it
? Keep pedaling
? Let go

Anton Iokov says

This should have been a powerful medium-sized article but somehow grown into a book full of self-repetitiveness, narcissism and plain marketing bullshit.

Most of the ideas are reasonable and even inspiring but they are repeated so often that you can't help despising them after chapter 4.

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Dragan Nanic says

The fact that someone believed that book like this is necessary is worrying. The whole message is simple, if obvious: products should be built for people, solving a real issue; companies should aim for serving people

not the other way around and greed is a sin! (minus the last one, I added it myself. De Haaff mentioned greed only once, in passing.) Unfortunately, it is repeated ad nauseam. Furthermore, it is elevated to the status of method to practice and live by because:

Love is a fundamental concept central to all human interactions. It is a driver of good health and happiness. Business is made up of human interactions. Do the math and the solution is clear: Love is central to business. No longer should love be relevant only in the home, nor should it be a soft-squishy metric. Love is measurable, trackable, and predictable. It belongs in the workplace.

The fact that I agree with the message and the notion that it should be communicated broadly is maybe even more worrying. In today's world it is obvious that we are forgetting to care for the others (myself included). Yet the cynic in me cannot refrain from asking: wasn't it always the case? However, it feels good to hear it now, from the mouth of someone who actually lived according to the times (again, de Haaff never admitted it in so many words) and converted to the right way. The way of his grandfather (so maybe things were better then, after all :)

The fact that I actually liked the author's honest, if somewhat naive, approach wasn't enough to earned it three stars. This should have been a strong, if longer, article. Inspirational, motivational, lovable. Not a self-promotion of own company or a raving of a technocrat.

Michel Billard says

As part of joining Aha!, I was given a book to read: Lovability: How to Build a Business That People Love and Be Happy Doing It. It's a refreshing business book where Brian de Haaff, Aha!'s CEO, demonstrates how it's possible to build successful products and companies with methods that are (sadly) uncommon in a world where tech companies fight for venture capital (VC), growth at all costs and big exits.

I'm surprised I haven't come across the book before considering the values and ideas put forward in the book closely align with mine. You will probably disagree with some of the ideas as I did at first, but Aha! is proof that it can be done while building a world-class product.

Of course, with a name such as Lovability, there is a lot of talk about the concept of love. Brian explains how it can be tracked and why the metric is a good indicator of long term success. It's reminiscent of the Net Promoter Score which was so popular a couple of years ago.

If you went through (or currently going through) a VC-funded startup experience that didn't go as well as you hoped it would as I did, I strongly recommend giving this book a read.

Austin Merritt says

Lovability is outstanding. It's a wonderful model for building a business and delivering products and it will change the way you approach your work each day. Deliver real value, offer customers a complete experience, help them achieve something meaningful. Think about the businesses or products you love. They all work hard to deliver for you in these key areas. Lovability provides a framework and inspiration for

entrepreneurs, product managers, customer success leaders -- anyone who wants to build something great.

Jean-Francois Potvin says

My organization has been using Aha! for about 6 months now and I totally understand what #lovability mean. This is an awesome product, a great company and The Responsive Method combined with the Complete Product Experience seems to be great tools for building a successful digital solution and company culture. I'll definitely take some of Brian's advices and try to get our leaders onboard with this methodology.