

BEYOND *BUSINESSWEEK*

HERE'S WHAT YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT READING—BUT SHOULD BE.

Great minds think alike. And that is exactly the problem. If everyone reasons the same way, then everyone is going to come to the same sorts of conclusions, and a true competitive advantage is going to be hard to come by.

Q. What does this mean for you and the publications you read?

A: Maybe you want to look at something besides the same business magazines they're reading at the company across the street. While there is nothing wrong with *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *BusinessWeek*, and *Harvard Business Review*, they are not about to give you an edge if the folks at Brand X are also going through them.

You could, of course, go completely in a different direction. Reading *Art & Antiques* if you are in the computer business or picking up *In Character* ("A Journal of Everyday Virtues") if you are the head of strategy at a conglomerate will certainly help give you a new perspective, but you need not go that far afield. There are a handful of non-traditional business magazines—beyond the one you're reading right now—that you may want to review to gain a fresh



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viewpoint. Here are four that are worth a look.

(I would add a fifth, *MIT Sloan Management Review*, to the list, but journalistic ethics forbid me from doing so. I am a[n unpaid] contributing editor to Sloan, so I can't, in good conscience, tell you to read it—although you should. The journal's recent decision to focus on innovation has given it a very interesting niche—but I didn't tell you that. We now return you to our regularly scheduled column.)

**THE PERSONAL/
CAREER ADVICE
IN *MEN'S HEALTH*
IS FAR AND AWAY
THE BEST OF ANY
NON-FINANCE
MAGAZINE.**

INCENSE AND PEPPERMINTS?

Last issue, I wrote a short sidebar on how to save journalism. I had hoped publishers would read it and sign me up at \$625 an hour to implement my plan. Well, I did get a bunch of calls and e-mails—all from journalists, most of whom were looking for jobs. However, since generating response of any kind is a good thing, here's another idea to get more people reading: Have fewer baby boomers writing.

While baby boomers—and I am a card-carrying one—find themselves endlessly fascinating, a frame of reference that includes the *Strawberry Alarm Clock*, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, and *Welcome Back, Kotter* doesn't mean much to those folks who never knew rotary phones or black-and-white TV sets. They simply don't find us as fascinating as we baby boomers find ourselves. Instead of trying to convince them of how great we are, we should gracefully step aside, or at the very least stop making references to our "glory days"—which, for the non-baby boomers out there, was a Bruce Springsteen hit a quarter-century ago. (Yes, it's been that long.) —P.B.B.

McKinsey Quarterly and *Strategy + Business* are published by two of the nation's best-known consulting firms, McKinsey and Booz & Co. The magazines are similar in that they devote most of the space in their quarterly issues to a single topic—China or talent management, for example—with several articles revolving around the theme.

They differ, though, in authorship and approach. *McKinsey* tends to pitch its pieces at a high level—as a rule, you get the 30,000-foot view, presented almost exclusively by the firm's employees, who write in a style that can only be described as "classic consultant-ese." As this example from a recent article shows, it's a combination of passive voice with a strange use of tenses: "We believe that for companies coming out of the current recession, investing to build robust multichannel capabilities provides an attractive opportunity for retailers to set themselves apart from their peers."

Strategy + Business comes closer to a traditional magazine. Not everything is written by Booz consultants, although you get the sense there are a lot of Booz clients writing stories (even though the magazine never discloses they are clients). The articles are more likely to get you to take a specific action—for

example, in the Fall issue, an article by Zia Khan and Jon Katzenbach, succinctly titled "Are You Killing Enough Ideas?," encourages you to think about placing bigger bets on a smaller number of projects.

(One complaint about both magazines is that there is not enough of a "how to" component. Presumably, both firms want you to hire their consultants to do the implementation.)

Slightly further afield is *Rotman*, the magazine of the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto. It is an odd hybrid. The back of the magazine contains the traditional alumni-publication fare ("As I celebrate my 30th wedding anniversary, I reflect on my many blessings," begins an entry by Anne Donaldson-Page, class of 1980). But the magazine devotes the bulk of its pages to a slightly different take on the big issues of the day. For example, the cover package for the Fall issue comes at the issue of "accountability" from a number of unusual angles. Although there is a story that discusses the legal issues surrounding corporate governance, other pieces go further afield. One article argues that "people have a tendency to evaluate unethical acts only after the fact—once the behavior has resulted in a bad out-

come." And another story contends that, if "left unchecked," diversity can "impair both performance and learning."

Yet your oddest choice may be *Family Business*, which, as its name implies, focuses on family-held companies. The appeal of the magazine is that just about every article deals with the interaction of employees—up/down, peer to peer, down/up. And there simply isn't a business issue—no matter what company you work for—that is more important than that.

READ THEM FOR THE ARTICLES—REALLY!

Once upon a time, *Playboy* paid me a reasonable sum of money to work up a detailed potential table of contents for a monthly personal-finance section the editors were thinking of adding. As a result, I spent a lot of time explaining to my wife why I needed to study the magazine in detail. ("No, honey, really. It's for my job. I need to know how the section will fit in.")

Displays of flesh and money apparently go well together. *Esquire*, which typically features partially clad young ladies, and *Men's Health*, which apparently doesn't believe in photographing guys wearing more than their underwear, are two other magazines doing extremely interesting personal-finance coverage. Ken Kurson in *Esquire* focuses each month on a specific sector worth investing in—and then singles out a specific stock to take a look at. Meanwhile, the personal/career advice in *Men's Health* is far and away the best of any non-finance magazine. Also check out the career advice in the magazine's "Jimmy the Bartender" column.

Should you find yourself staring too intently at the cover of either of these publications, feel free to use me as your excuse. ("Honey, really, the guy at *TCB Review* wrote that I should study this.") ■