



Just Do It

Donald R. Katz

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The most powerful force in sports is not a football or baseball team. It is a shoe company. Nike is radically changing the way sports, business, and popular culture interact. Donald Katz is an award-winning author with a genius for getting inside places other journalists can't, and for writing nonfiction with the sweep and drama of a great novel. In his acclaimed bestseller, *The Big Store*, Katz gained unprecedented access to Sears, America's retail giant of the past. Now, in *Just Do It*, Katz has penetrated the company of the future, a dream machine that seeks nothing less than to define culture through the power of sports. The protagonist of *Just Do It* is Phil Knight, a reclusive billionaire who started a two-man operation importing Japanese running shoes and built it into a \$4 billion company. Irreverent, unpredictable, and leery of the sports establishment, Knight has created the most muscular jock culture in business, a place where employees routinely take two hours at lunch to work out and then strategize late into the night in their holy war against competitors Reebok and Adidas. Outsiders think Nike is a cult. Insiders believe they are furthering the company's mission: to improve the performance of serious athletes. Not everyone can be a Nike guy. It requires a certain attitude. For example: Michael Jordan refusing to wear Reebok at the 1992 Olympics, or Charles Barkley joking about becoming a porn star. Katz shows how Nike created the spectacular imagery and marketing campaigns that made Jordan, Barkley, and Bo Jackson international icons. He also documents Nike's increasingly influential role in the management of its high-priced talent, taking us inside lucrative endorsement deals involving Jim Courier, Andre Agassi, Deion Sanders, Alonzo Mourning, and Pete Sampras, as well as behind-closed-doors negotiations with the NBA and the NCAA as it considers a controversial plan for a collegiate Super Bowl brokered by Nike and superagent Michael Ovitz. Nike is

Just Do It Details

Date : Published January 1st 1997 by Adams Media Corporation (first published 1994)

ISBN : 9781558504790

Author : Donald R. Katz

Format : Paperback 336 pages

Genre : Business, Nonfiction, Sports and Games, Sports

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Drew says

I picked up this book to add to my collection of business books but it doesn't really fall into that. Rather than get into the business and how Nike is different other than the others it really is more of a corporate history. It goes a bit into the sports marketing and corporate culture but it primarily focuses on Nike's history and major players from inception to 1994, so it's not very enlightening from a business standpoint. In addition the author often jumps around from year to year rather than going chronologically so that he ends up repeating himself some times. If you like marketing or Nike this is probably a good book for you, otherwise you can probably skip it.

Nasser says

This Book is about the company Nike from the corporate point of view. I decided to read this book because everyone knows Nike for sports wear with shorts, sneakers and shirts but Does everyone know about Nike from the business standpoint. I think that this book was very helpful because it told us the money it takes for Nike to make the products and what happens when sales are good or bad. This book also says how Nike makes their decisions for certain products. I was really interested with this book that I actually am thinking about maybe working for Nike or a sports company like that from the business view point. So overall I really like this book and recommend people who wear Nike or are interested in this type of corporate thing to read this.

Kon R. says

Keep in mind that this book was written in 1994. The information regarding the start of Nike is great. Michael Jordan gets a lot of attention, so if you're a fan like me you'll really enjoy that. The issue comes from the fact that this book is 24 years old. They focus a lot of the book about what was going on in the early 90's as that was still fresh in the mind of people when it was written. Don't get stuck reading the entire book like me before realizing the age of it. You can easily get all the interesting information by simply reading the first half. This is one of those books that has aged terribly.

Donovan Moloney says

Nike is constantly manufacturing meaning for the masses through sports stars. It designs gods and goddesses for athletic endeavors. The ordinary and freakishly talented obsessives are rocketed into larger than life hero statues with immense power and noble personalities. Nike accomplishes this while maintaining a pragmatist agenda. The slogan should read "whatever works" rather than "just do it". Phil Knight is an opportunist with the best of intentions. He may actually believe in the great American fitness revolution mythology or may just be interested in creating it to sell more shoes. Either way, if you have ever wondered why there are so many check marks dashed across the shoes of passers by than read this book. It reveals the diabolical shrewd business sense of idealistic propaganda ad campaigns.

Greg says

Is it a biography? Is it a dramatic nonfiction? Is it a case study? Well, no.

The Nike characters are not very "fleshy". There are no tell-all interviews to bring us inside the minds of characters who are summed up mainly by which advertising campaign they worked on.

Not that there's nothing of interest here, but as an expose (don't have the right character) it's not particularly in depth. For a human interest piece, it's not particularly humane.

A book best read quickly and returned to Half Price Books, where it was found.

Kristie says

Audible freebie

Jacob says

I did not finish this dated book (published in 1994). I normally struggle with non-fiction and this one was no different. I enjoyed stories from the early days of the company. Bowerman seemed like a really cool guy. The story 1992 Olympic Reebok fiasco was interesting. However, once the book moved into Nike's corporate structure in the 70s and 80s, it was a real struggle. I got stuck about 1/3rd of the way through after several weeks of attempted reads.

Sunny says

this book was so boring that it took me ages to finish it. it's just an endless strand of names and events.

Dylan says

very informitive

Tigran Mamikonian says

This book is from Donald Katz, who is the founder of Audible (founded in 1995 and acquired by Amazon in 2008). Before founding Audible, Donald was journalist for 20 years and "Just Do It" is one of his business books.

I came across this book, because the corporate spirit of Nike and their way of doing business and marketing have been the subject of great interest for me for last 20 years, just starting from the time when Nike was

starting in Europe...

The book provides very in-depth explanation of the values which were used by Phil Knight (founder of Nike, along with his coach Bill Bowerman) to start and develop the company.

Nike is one of those companies which claims to be more than just product-maker, but creates dreams, inspiration and feeling of pain and glory of victory...

Phil Knight was one of the first and clearly the best businessman who could organize marketing of his brand using "brand ambassadors" - people like Michael Jordan, Ronaldo, Bubka, Prefontaine and many other sport idols who were acting as best practice examples in their fields.

Knight explains "the Nike heritage," ... "...employees who want to excel at Nike must understand what makes people able to cry and scream with pleasure while watching a game. They must be bull-moose fans-like Phil Knight...."

Phil was very charismatic and understood emotional side of sports inside-out... "...Professional tennis players like Andre Agassi who have played doubles with Knight are often shocked by how seriously he takes the game. "He clearly likes to win," Agassi has observed...."

Of course Knight has a great team, one of which Nike's key negotiators with ambassadors, sports attorney - Howard Slusher. Here is a great quote about Slusher from the book: "As a university student, Slusher came upon the classic sociological study of the role of play in a culture, Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*, and the book changed his life. Huizinga contended that the increasing absence of the playful invention, spontaneity, artlessness, daring, and "gladness" of games from other aspects of modern culture had caused sports and athletes to become more important in response. Slusher's fascination with the beauty of people at play and the glory of great athletes led to graduate study and a doctoral thesis that compared cognitive behavior and normative responses in an effort to discern whether or not athletes operated in a subculture. Slusher wrote a book called *Man, Sport, and Existence: A Critical Analysis* while teaching courses in the philosophy and psychology of sports at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles."

It is so representative that Nike's management saw the future of competition of Nike is not Reebok, Adidas or Fila, but such companies as Disney Land, Apple, etc.

During orientation, new employees receive lists of Nike values: Be flexible and adaptive. Stay lean and mean. Challenge the status quo. Accept that Nike is a big company (but that doesn't mean we have to be slow). Use structure to promote innovation. Manage with courage. Fight any feeling of entitlement. Be humble. We are not preordained to be #1. Live off the land." "There are only three things that can kill this company," Tom Clarke told a group of managers attending a Nike education program. "Arrogance, entitlement, and bureaucracy."

"Structure is necessary, bureaucracy is not" reads one of the many slogans listed in a draft of the Nike "values" and "brand mission" circulating during the spring. "Perfect results count ..." began another oft-repeated line from the statement of company values, "... not perfect process."

One of great quotes from Phil Knight's speeches to investors: "I know that the average Nike employee will not be on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*, but I also know that without the average Nike employee I wouldn't be on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*." Knight stared up into the crowd. "Without the Nike employee, I'm a rumpled suit and a pair of Oakley sunglasses. Without the Nike employee, there's no me. That is why these things are so painful. And that is why I personally hate Paul Fireman, Rob Strasser, and Gib Ford. I hope you can understand that at this moment. "I wouldn't trade places with any company in this industry. I think our opportunities and challenges have never been greater. There is an opportunity to be the first in this screwy

industry, to be a true global company. There's two billion dollars worth of sales out there. And I wouldn't say the opportunities are in the international division alone. It isn't enough to just win in Germany and not win in the United States. "Nike is as American as Coca-Cola. Nike's opportunities have never been better.... Let's win."

Also book provides detailed history how Nike was started by Phill and his running coach Bill Bowerman, who understood in very detail the shoe production process and was mastering shoes for his subordinates. This is great example when a great marketing guy (Phill Knight) combines his efforts with a passionate production guy to create iconic company - Nike.

To summarize I'd recommend anyone who wants to understand how Nike dream was created should read the book. In short, this dream is about the ability of Nike to find and engage the best athletes using the best techniques of design, video and storytelling... And such marketing activities are done so rhythmically and continuously that every single boy has his own idol among Nike ambassadors - in all major sports... And some boys become so called Ekins - employees of Nike who show by their example that being fit and sporty is cool!

I rate this book 5, because though it lacks a bit structure and stresses too much on negotiations with ambassadors 20 years back... but it is worth, because any company after great product is about the people starting from Bill Bowerman to Michael Jordan...

Tomislav Kos says

Nije loša, ali zanimljiva može biti samo onima koje zanima to razdoblje korporacija i sporta, inovativni marketing, kopiranje japanskog modela biznisa, ratovanja s Reebok, Adidasom, Converse i ostalima, sa politikom i zakonima... Tu i tamo zanimljiva priča o Jordanu, Barkleyu, Agassiju, Samprasu, Bubki i mnogim ostalim promotorima, razne kontroverze (Barcelona '92, tvornice u Aziju,...). Održavaju zanimanje taman toliko da se ne odustane, jer je previše rastegnuto.

John McPhee says

The real JUST DO IT - an incredible true story well told - THE must read for every NIKE JUNKIE

Tim Jin says

I would probably have bought this book despite getting it for free from Audible. I enjoy nonfiction and business topics. "Just Do It", Phil Knight's story on how he built the shoe company was interesting, but it also felt like a 14 hour ad campaign on their athletic wear. The constant endorsements from superstars, promoting their shoe product was a bit draining to listen to. Donald Katz has done a very poor job at explaining the business side of Nike. He didn't go in depth with the company. Just too much sports celebrities jumping on the bandwagon.

Geoffrey says

One of the best-written non-fiction books I've ever read. Very interesting history of Nike.

Zack Maley says

Very interesting, also came from an interesting period where Michael Jordan had retired from basketball (for the first time), and Nike was uncertain about future trajectory in sales. Also, interesting to note that at this time (early 90's, Nike was already second guessing their heavy presence in the AAU basketball scene).

Phil Knight is the coolest CEO ever, and the book describes headquarters in Beaverton as a notch above heaven.
