



# **Herd: How to Change Mass Behaviour by Harnessing Our True Nature**

*Mark Earls*

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Can you explain the explosion of social activities like textmessaging with little or no promotion of the behaviour? How a Mexican wave happens? The emergence of online communities? Or - more sensitively - the steady rise of floral roadside tributes to traffic accident victims from complete strangers? Unless you have a good explanation of mass behaviour, you'll have little chance of altering it. *Herd* reveals that most of us in the West have completely misunderstood the mechanics of mass behaviour because we have misplaced notions of what it means to be a human being. With a host of examples from Peter Kay and urinal etiquette to Apple and Desmond Tutu, Mark Earls offers the most new radical, controversial and significant new theory of consumer behaviour in a generation.

"At one level a profoundly simple and important idea, that just happens to overturn everything we thought we knew about marketing to the individual."

--Adam Morgan, Founder, Eatbigfish

"Mark Earls helps us see clearly that we need to re-write the rules and provides us with a playbook for doing so. Are you ready for the 'we' revolution?"

--Ed Keller, CEO, The Keller Fay Group

"Herd is a dazzling, nutrient-rich read that urged me to see afresh the big underlying forces driving media behaviour and why they especially matter now."

--David Abraham, EVP, The Learning Channel

"As important to read as Malcolm Gladwell and Adam Morgan were. I cannot recommend it highly enough unless you are a Luddite or a nostrich."

--Mark Sherrington, Global Brands Director, SABMiller

"Read this book. Think about it. If you're going to be any good at your job in the next 20 years then you need to question your assumptions about how stuff works."

--Russell Davies, Founder, Open Intelligence Agency

## **Herd: How to Change Mass Behaviour by Harnessing Our True Nature Details**

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# **From Reader Review Herd: How to Change Mass Behaviour by Harnessing Our True Nature for online ebook**

## **Nic Brisbane says**

"I really liked this book - Earls makes clear some things I have long felt in my gut:

1. Illusions over our own importance and impact and the 'I' view of the world in general undermine the validity of market research - people over estimate the importance of their conscious decision making and therefore can't be relied on to explain why they did or bought things.
  2. The key to marketing is to get people talking about your product/service
  3. Which you can do by being interesting, genuine and passionate - which means doing things you believe in
  4. And letting people co-create
  5. Which means you have to reconcile yourself to letting the community control aspects of your company"
- 

## **Duy Ha says**

Did this book going to teach me how to change mass behaviour? No, It's doesn't. The author bring the truth about true nature of myself to understand why we do what we do.

We act like more 'us' than 'I'. Our memory and decision-making have tricked us.

All mass behaviour is result of interacting individuals with a specific context. We do what we do mainly because of other people.

Influences is more important than persuasion. You can use word of mouth by consumer to marketing. It's better way than others marketing.

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## **James Kittredge says**

This book is a tad disappointing. The author seemed to have spent the first three chapters talking about all of the things he planned to cover later in the book, thus lending the impression of having a REALLY long introduction. Additionally, nothing he says is especially groundbreaking or even especially nuanced. Here it is, in a nutshell: We act like herd animals, even though we fancy ourselves ultimate individuals. Maybe the book will improve in later chapters. It's not poorly written, even though there does seem to be a fair amount of filler. I guess I'll just have to stick with it.

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## **shaunvir singh says**

**Its ok**

Some interesting points but found it a hard read with a lot of unnecessary detail ...others might however find it a more enjoyable read

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## **Dan Smith says**

Excellent book. It does touch on crowd sourcing but really it attempts to clarify the massive shift of like groups able to easily communicate and collaborate on interest. This is a must read for all marketing professionals and strategic business leaders.

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## **Belle Beth Cooper says**

My mind is blown several times over, and I'm not even 100 pages in! Apart from the frustrating typos and grammatical errors that I've come across too-often for a 2nd edition book, this really is a fantastic read.

Update: the second half wasn't nearly as good as the first. It's still worth reading, because I wasn't lying about my mind being blown. But, don't expect it to be that good all the way through.

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## **Temaris says**

I'm halfway through this book, written by a marketing exec, and much to my astonishment, I find his perspective on human behaviour both utterly fascinating and resonating really strongly with my experience and thoughts about the nature of online communities, how and why they arise, the value of reputation in a flat economy (such as the fannish community, although he never references it -- I would love to know what he would think of it).

I was recommended this book by a colleague who I'd been discussing the virtues and perils of viral marketing, the stupidity of astroturf blogs, and things like the flocking behaviour of people which tilts a good product into a runaway success. Earls has cogently and thoughtfully written many of the things I have thought, but from a marketing perspective that is frankly invaluable for the credibility that it gives his insights into the various things.

He apologises up front for being academic and dry and full of complicated theory, and frankly, that gives me a startlingly low opinion of his target audience.

I read through several of the middle chapters nodding to myself and scribbling. Brilliant stuff for anyone interested in the rise of social networks and social software and social intelligence (collective, collaborative behaviours and intelligence -- think Wikipedia), in the building of communities -- whether based around brand or some other thing, or in human behaviour, particularly anyone unconvinced by the psychologists insistence that there is no such thing as 'crowd psychology' only individual psychology.

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## **?Misericordia? ~ The Serendipity Aegis ~ ?????? ✨\*♥♥ says**

Very loosely scientific.

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## Joe O'Donnell says

*Herd* represents the quest of behaviourist Mark Earls to figure out how to change mass behaviour, whether that be the behaviour of customers, voters, employees or any other large group of people.

Earls is firmly of the belief that humans are social, group-driven beings who long for community & cooperation over individualism. The author's study of the animal kingdom (which makes up the opening few chapters) leads him to the conclusion that co-operation and community spirit gives an evolutionary advantage. In this regard, *Herd* stands as a refutation of the creed of individualism and atomisation detailed in sociological texts like *Bowling Alone*. Despite this, Earls has bad news for businesses trying to build brand communities, asserting that real communities based on human connections, not brands.

In setting out what he believes are the principles of Herd Marketing, Earls debunks a number of myths about mass behaviour. For example, persuasion is over-rated; interaction and influence are far more important in understanding changes to mass behaviour. Despite traditional consumer behaviour talk of early adopters, neither is there one group who are more influential than all others when it comes to behaviour change.

*Herd* places a huge amount of importance on the power of word of mouth communication. Earls sees this as far more effective than any intervention from marketers or advertising professionals (partly because the author believes that systems of human communication have evolved in a way that they are primed to dispense word-of-mouth). But it is not just relatively benign activities like FMCG marketing that word-of-mouth boosts; word-of-mouth is also integral to more nefarious behaviours like terrorist recruitment and to the transmission of bad information (such as the scares that the MMR vaccine causes autism).

While ostensibly a marketing textbook, *Herd* delivers some hard lessons for marketers. Earls insists that if marketing professionals want to affect mass change, they need to get over their own egotism. Crucially, they need to recognise that the systems and channels of communication have changed forever and that it's what folks say and do to and with each other that counts, not what we in business do to them. Earls urges marketers to relinquish complete control over the communication process, and embrace the co-creativity of the herd (the author recommends what he calls *C2C Marketing* where, instead of collaborating with the company to create value, customers collaborate with each other).

*Herd* is a provocative, pulsating read that demolishes many of the myths that have traditionally dominated the field of marketing communications. It is also an extremely accessible read, and Earls outlines his thesis through a string of engaging anecdotes. My only minor quibble with it is that I would like to see an updated edition that fully takes account of the social media revolution and the effect it has had on mass behaviour.

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## Evelyn says

*[Read for PR & Business Ethics module]*

From the blurb, I was expecting *Herd* to be another shallow, capitalist-minded rave about influencing consumers and getting them to buy, buy, buy. Instead, it delves much deeper into the human psyche and looks at the natural patterns within society that bring people together, how they interact with one another, but most importantly, *why* we do what we do. Earls begins by introducing a couple of key points that make people the way they are; for example how Culture promotes Intelligence, the genetic closeness of humans and apes, the ways in which babies copy those around them which shapes their development, how depression affects us etc.

Further on in the book, he develops on these points and elaborates on them in subsequent chapters, linking them to how this basic knowledge of human nature can shape the way marketers and PR people can use it for their businesses. Whilst this is obviously the aim of the game, I would also recommend it to those who work with charities, NGOs, grassroots groups, as way in which they can help promote their causes to the public arena. In turn, activists may find some of the human interaction tips useful when they're planning gatherings of people etc.

Whilst I like the friendly, chatty nature of this book, it does get a bit repetitive at times, so it's one to pick up and read in parts.

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## **Sam says**

When I checked "Currently reading" I meant as in "right this minute". Maybe Goodreads should add some functionality for that or integrate Twitter or something.

Anyway... he is writing well.

Is man as "super social animal" the contemporary opposite of free will?

And does Earls' exhortation at the end of the Introduction to "think for myself" about his argument undermine it in the act of exhorting me? Or maybe I just think that because one of my "herds" prides itself on skepticism and so in writing the sentence above I am just following... blablabla...

i'm now less sure that he writes well. the very folksy, chatty style is starting to grate.

In conclusion: writing style a bit annoying; 50% longer than it needed to be; but lots of interesting research summarised; and his basic point is interesting and timely (his basic point relates very closely related to Facebook and the success as an advertising platform).

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## **Steve Gibson says**

So far this is a great read that really challenges things I never even thought of as assumptions. I tend more toward a very independent, Ayn Rand view of life and some of the concepts in this book run up against my

precepts of individualism. It comes down to this though. We are humans, thus animals and we are innately group animals.

This book is about marketing, consumers, selling and general business strategy. It's also about Neuro science, behavioral conditioning, placebo effects and social science.

It will make you think. It may even make you rethink.

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### **Olivia says**

Insightful and thorough analysis about herd behaviour, made me rethink how to approach a problem.

The solution part is not that novel nor thorough. I think we need to take pointers from the analysis and experiment based on them.

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### **Hiten Samtani says**

These are thoughts that many of us who grew up in more collectivist cultures have ruminated upon, and so I must thank Mark Earls for bringing them together so brilliantly in Herd. Earls' thesis is that human behavior is primarily governed by social rather than individual forces; we gain meaning and significance through our relationship with the herd. Earls gives us the four principles that guide behavior, and gives us methods and tools to take advantage of these principles.

The book did not receive 5 stars because of its erratic organization; many of the examples were fascinating but required further development to bring the point home. Moreover, there were frequent asides that took away from the flow of the book.

Herd remains one of the most insightful guides to behavior, particularly on the topics of influence and engagement. Add to this a keen sense of humor and a ready wit, and you've got yourself a book that should be dog-eared, scribbled in, and repeatedly referred to in the years to come.

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### **Nicholas says**

Meh, It was ok but nothing really special.

The tv industrial complex was never the natural way that information spread through the population. It was always word of mouth. But with traditional advertising going down the tubes we are reverting the WOM. People think that it is some new buzz word or new technique but that's not true. It was always the underlying force behind our actions.

People do things primarily based on the actions of the people around them. If you want to change how people act you cannot target a single person. You cannot multiply the single channel exchange of information. You have to stop viewing them as individual people and start treating them as a single entity.



You cannot multiply the actions of an individual and expect to be able to predict what the herd will do. You must start with and end with the herd. There is no way to infer from a single person what a group will do. Think newtonian physics.

I feel like there was a lot of the narration bias. Company succeeds, people find management change most closely correlated and then infer a connection. I feel like many of the stories he told as evidence were used like this.

Cognitive dissonance in branding: after you buy into a brand and start to preach it then can you ever go back? Once you invest in it you will actually begin to like it more than the competitors for no reason other than you began to use it. You will begin to merge it into your story.

He did imply group selectionism which was disappointing.

A good question was "Why do we believe what consumers and employees tell us they remember?"

You cannot fake WOM. Your product must genuinely deserve it.

Quotes:

"Why do we believe what consumers and employees tell us they remember?"

"Individualism has become so central to Western culture that it has become transparent - we no longer really notice it; we take it as a given truth about the world...Consequently we pretend to ourselves that it is not an ideology after all. Instead we see it as a fact, a simple and unremarkable truth about how the world is."

"Market research assumes fundamentally that individuals make decisions about what to do on their own...it rarely bothers to consider the social context in which any behavior takes place and the fact that almost all human behavior is social because that is the nature of our species."

"All mass behavior is the result of interacting individuals within a specific context. We do what we do largely because of other people and our interaction with them. It is not because we decide on our own."

"The important relationships are the ones our customers and employees have with each other, not those we claim to have with them."

"This meeting - like all meetings - is not about the subject under discussion; it's about the social interactions around the subject."

"The company must learn and respect and encourage other value-creators in the network of parties in what it does."

diagram on page 270

"You have to get used to being out of control."

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