

SUMMARY

SONIC

BOOM

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Summary of “Sonic Boom” by Joel Beckerman with Tyler Gray

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Learn about the remarkable relationship between
sound and marketing.

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Introduction

Have you ever found comfort in the notes of an old favorite song or danced the night away to a happy tune? We know the sound of a loved one's voice by heart; we feel soothed by the audible purr of a cat. We can hear a familiar song on the radio and be overcome by thoughts and memories. The soundtrack of a movie can make us cry. If you've experienced any of these things, then you already know that sound has a powerful impact on the human experience. But sadly, we often take our sense of sound for granted and we don't always think about the impact it has on our lives. However, the authors' research invites you to challenge that complacency today. By exploring their theories on the power of sound and its impact on our lives, we'll take a new look at familiar elements of the human experience. We'll even learn how sound can influence our purchasing decisions and why every entrepreneur needs to add this marketing tool to their repertoire.



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The Power of Sound

Have you ever used noise cancelling earphones? Maybe the sounds of your surroundings are just too much for you for the moment. Maybe you just want to close your eyes, turn your brain off, and just hear nothing for a while. Or maybe you've tried to use sound to block out another sound. For example, you don't want to hear your parents' argument, so you drown it out with loud music. We've all tried one of these strategies before, but the authors observe that they don't always work. Why? Because unless we're asleep or totally unconscious, our brains are always listening! And that's true even if you're not paying attention!

For example, in the hypothetical suggestion we mentioned above-- about using music to drown out your parents' argument-- you might not be listening to the music very closely. Maybe, in this case, you're simply using it as a sound barrier and you're not interested in engaging with the combination of sounds and lyrics. But even if you're not consciously paying attention, your brain is still hard at work absorbing that auditory information. Part of that absorption process is connecting what you're hearing with your life experiences and making it relevant to you. That's why, when you're listening to music, you automatically start thinking about a situation you've been in or a feeling you had! So, if you've ever listened to a song and suddenly found yourself thinking about an ex boyfriend or a sad moment in your life, that's why! These feelings can certainly be inconvenient if the music you're listening to dredges up uncomfortable memories, but it's really interesting to understand why that experience occurs! And as an extra fun fact, you might want to know that there's a name for that moment when sound evokes a memory. It's called a sonic boom and that's where this book gets its title!

However, although we typically think of music as being the primary auditory input that triggers our emotions, it's not the only one! Other sounds have a profound impact on us as well and these sounds can be weaponized as effective marketing tools because of the "boom moments" they create. For

example, just think about the familiar song of an ice cream truck. If you ever encountered an ice cream truck as a kid, there's a strong chance that you permanently associate that familiar tune with the taste of ice cream. But that sound is also connected to a string of memories. So, if you hear that ice cream truck song as an adult, you're going to remember the feeling of rushing out into the street to grab your ice cream. You're going to remember the heat of the summer sun, the joy of school being out for the semester, and the fun of playing with your friends. The combination of these pleasant memories and the promise of ice cream means that the ice cream truck song triggers an automatic response in you: as soon as you hear it, you want to buy some ice cream!

Pretty neat how that works, right? However, the author observes that the ice cream truck example is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the power of sound in our lives. And over the course of this summary, we're going to explore more examples and how they impact us.



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Find Your Sonic Identity

If you're new to the term "sonic identity," you're not alone! But I can tell you right off the bat that it has nothing to do with Sonic the Hedgehog or with the popular fast-food chain, Sonic. Rather, your sonic identity is all about the sound that people associate with you or your brand. And if you're an entrepreneur or marketing specialist, your sonic identity can be your new best friend. Why? Because the power of sound can help you to create a unique auditory branding scheme that reminds people of your business. For example, just consider the snapping, crunching sound of a Kit-Kat bar. You've probably heard that familiar snap on dozens of commercials and you instinctively associate it with Kit-Kat. You might even start craving the candy bar as soon as you hear the sound. Both of those things mean that Kit-Kat is a great example of an effective and positive sonic identity. Because when you're crafting your sonic identity, that's exactly what you want: a positive sound that people can instantly connect with your brand. So, how can you create your own sonic identity? And what should it sound like?

The good news is that there is no prescriptive formula that defines a "good" sonic identity. It's up to every brand and individual to find the sound that best works for them. So, just concentrate on finding a sound that triggers positive emotional associations for your customers and work on incorporating that into your brand. For example, if you're a beer or cider company, maybe your commercials feature the sound of a cold beer being opened at the end of a long work day. For most people, that's a pretty positive sound; they associate it with relaxation and the first sip of a delicious drink. So, that would be a great sound to feature in your commercials! Likewise, if you're a movie theater, the sound of popcorn popping would be a positive sonic identity to build on. Most people love popcorn and they associate it with the fun of going to the movies, so featuring this sound in your commercials would be highly effective.

Sonic identities are not static; they change according to the needs of every brand and its customers. So, don't worry about following the specific examples mentioned above; just focus on finding the sound that will trigger the right emotional experience for your customers!



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How Sound Affects Your Life

When we think of annoying or upsetting noises, everyone has a few standard sounds that come to mind. The sound of nails on a chalkboard, for example. Dogs barking. A baby crying. Pretty much any toy for kids that comes with sound. It's no surprise that all of these noises can put us in a bad mood if they're allowed to go on long enough. However, we often fail to acknowledge the power of other annoying or stressful sounds in our everyday lives. For example, if you live in a city, you might often wish to drown out the sound of traffic or neighbors fighting in the next apartment. Perhaps you live above a crowded bar or nightclub and your apartment is often treated to the unwelcome sounds of raucous laughter and partying. There's no doubt about it: these sounds can steal our peace, rob us of sleep, and make it difficult for us to function at work the next day. But most of us simply accept them as an unfortunate side-effect of modern life.

However, the authors acknowledge that this doesn't have to be the case! In fact, by applying some of their simple tips, you can reduce your stress and cultivate sonic peace. It all starts with two simple questions: What sounds do I need to feel at peace? and What auditory environment do I want to create for myself? Once you answer these questions, the authors believe that it's a simple matter of going out there and creating that environment. And it's easier than you might think! For example, if you're troubled by the sounds that surround you at night, you might try to counteract them by sleeping with a fan or air conditioner turned on. You could also introduce a white noise machine to your nighttime routine. Likewise, if you feel stressed during your commute or your workday, you can invest in some calming apps that will help you relax. These apps might invite you to engage in a moment of mindfulness, to listen to some soothing white noise, or to practice some guided breathing exercises while you engage with calming sounds.

And lastly, if you live in the city, you might also find it helpful to remove yourself from the hustle and bustle of urban life for a while. Whether it's for

a weekend or a relaxing afternoon, a walk in the quiet countryside will do you good! So, make time to disconnect from your chaotic, noisy life and engage with nature. There's something to be said for the quiet peace of a rippling brook or the cheerful song of a bird. All of these sounds can calm us down and restore our equilibrium, so be deliberate in your efforts to seek sonic peace. But now that we've discussed the sounds that can bother you, the authors invite you to turn your attention to another matter: the sounds we make that can affect others. Most of us probably give this issue a normal amount of thought; we try to be considerate and avoid raising our voices or making loud, rude noises around others. Many of us probably get anxious if we have to sneeze, cough, or blow our noses repeatedly. But it might surprise you to know that these aren't necessarily the noises the authors are talking about.

While we should certainly do our best to be considerate in all avenues of life, noises that offend others aren't the only category of noises to consider. Rather, we should also think about the sounds that affect our chances in life. Earlier in this chapter, we referenced noises that annoy pretty much everyone and cited the example of nails on a chalkboard. We would all agree that's universally annoying, right? But have you ever met someone whose voice sounded like that? Or maybe you've sat through a class with a teacher whose voice sounds like the slow, dreary drip of a water faucet. Maybe you know someone who says everything as if it's a question. All of these things are pretty annoying and the authors' research indicates that our perception of someone's voice can have serious repercussions for our interactions with them. After all, if you find someone's voice annoying, you're probably more interested in getting them to shut up than in listening to what they have to say. You might find it hard to have a conversation with them or you might dismiss them as being a holistically annoying person just because of their voice.

These perceptions are natural human responses because human beings are very sensitive to auditory stimuli. But of course, that doesn't mean that our subsequent impressions of people are necessarily accurate or charitable. For example, someone might be kind, funny, loving, and

intelligent-- and have the world's most annoying voice. It wouldn't be right to judge them because of that fact alone, but we might struggle to alter our perceptions of them and adjust to the unwelcome sonic identity they embody. And that's exactly why the authors posit that we should consider how our own voices and speech patterns affect us. For example, if you say every statement as if it's a question or if you mumble or speak in a very soft voice, people easily form the impression that you are weak, hesitant, or have nothing to offer. This could have a significant detrimental impact on your personal and professional future!

So, if you want to succeed in life, it might be worthwhile to think about your own sonic identity and how it impacts the image you project. And if you decide that you're not happy with your current speech patterns, you should concentrate on speaking with confidence, power, and precision. The authors guarantee that this will have a positive impact on your personal and professional life. Because if you sound confident, people will be more interested in what you have to say. And they'll definitely be more likely to offer you a job or say yes to a date!



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Final Summary

Sounds are all around us. From the sound of your alarm going off in the morning, to the rustle of bed sheets, to the purr of your cat, noises are everywhere. Some sounds are welcome; we seek them out, like when we turn on a favorite song or tune in to the radio. Others, like the sound of your next door neighbors' argument or the hum of traffic, are less inviting. But whether we like certain sounds or not, one thing is for certain: sound has a profound impact on our lives. For example, when a song triggers a memory, that's called a sonic boom. These boom moments can leave us with a host of unexpected feelings, some positive and some not so fun.

But sounds can also influence our purchasing decisions, our careers, and our dating opportunities. And if you're interested in starting a business, then it's crucial to learn more about the impact of sound on your customers. Creating a positive sonic identity is one great way to help your business succeed, as we've seen through the examples of ice cream trucks and Kit-Kat bars. There is no prescriptive formula for crafting a sonic identity, so feel free to get creative! To maximize the power of sound in your business, you just need to find a signature sound that triggers a positive emotional experience for your customers.



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