
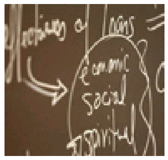


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INTERESTS consumer behavior, decision-making, innovation, marketing, pricing, more >

John Gourville is the Albert J. Weatherhead, Jr. Professor of Business Administration at the Harvard Business School. He joined the HBS Marketing Unit in 1995 after receiving his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago in marketing and behavioral research. He is currently the course head for the Core Marketing course in the first year of the MBA program and has previously taught Entrepreneurial Marketing and The Marketing of Innovations in the second year program. In the HBS Executive Education program, he has taught in the Strategic Marketing Management, the Business-to-Business Marketing Strategy, and the Leadership and Strategy in Pharmaceutical and Biotech courses and he has developed and chaired a course on the Marketing of Innovative Technologies. John also has participated in specialized executive education programs throughout the world. Prior to receiving his Ph.D., John held management positions with Booz, Allen & Hamilton, Mobil Oil, and New York Telephone.

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FEATURED WORK

EAGER SELLERS AND STONY BUYERS: UNDERSTANDING THE PSYCHOLOGY OF NEW-PRODUCT ADOPTION (HBR ONPOINT ENHANCED EDITION)
BY JOHN T. GOURVILLE, HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL PUBLISHING, JUNE 2006

Onpoint Cover

Companies that introduce new innovations are the most likely to flourish, so they spend billions of dollars making better products. But studies show that new innovations fail at a staggering rate. While many blame these misses on lackluster products, the reality isn't so simple. The goods that consumers dismiss often do offer improvements over existing ones. So why don't people purchase them? And why do companies keep peddling products that buyers are likely to reject? The answer, says the author, can be found in the brain. New products force consumers to change their behavior, and that has a psychological cost. Many products fail because people irrationally overvalue the benefits of the goods they own over those they don't possess. Executives, meanwhile, overvalue their own innovations. This leads to a serious clash. Studies show, in fact, that there is a mismatch of nine to one between what innovators think consumers want and what consumers truly desire.

Fortunately, companies can overcome this disconnect. To start, they can determine where their products fall in a matrix with four categories: easy sells, sure failures, long hauls, and smash hits. Each has a different ratio of product improvement to change required from the consumer. Once businesses know where their products fit into this grid, they can manage the resistance to change.

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