

Small Business

New strategies

Women buy, men don't. So why do companies overlook the psychology of gender? Check this month's book picks for answers.

Women rule

Why She Buys:

The New Strategy for Reaching the World's Most Powerful Consumers

By Bridget Brennan

For decades responsible businesses have been striving to promote equality between the sexes. And now along comes Bridget Brennan with the news that treating customers the same regardless of their gender is, frankly, crazy.

The thesis of *Why She Buys* is simple: Women are the purchasing gender, and in crucial ways they do not think or act like men. This may seem obvious, but the author makes a powerful case that it's anything but to the clueless men who still dominate most boardrooms.

The resulting volume is lively, insightful and relentlessly engaging -- and should be required reading for anyone burdened with a Y chromosome. Despite the dissolution of many gender roles, Brennan argues, the gap between the sexes is still a canyon, and she bolsters her argument by explaining how women's brains, aspirations and upbringing differ from men's.

Since (full disclosure) I'm a guy, I might well be wrong about this book. Women may bristle at its breezy generalizations, which at times verge on stereotypes. But the author (a veteran marketing guru) is persuasive, and her central message strikes me as indisputable and even courageous given the taboos that surround discussion of male-female differences these days. As Brennan puts it, "Considering that there are only two genders in the human race, and one of them does most of the shopping, it's stunning how many companies overlook the psychology of gender."

By Daniel Akst

