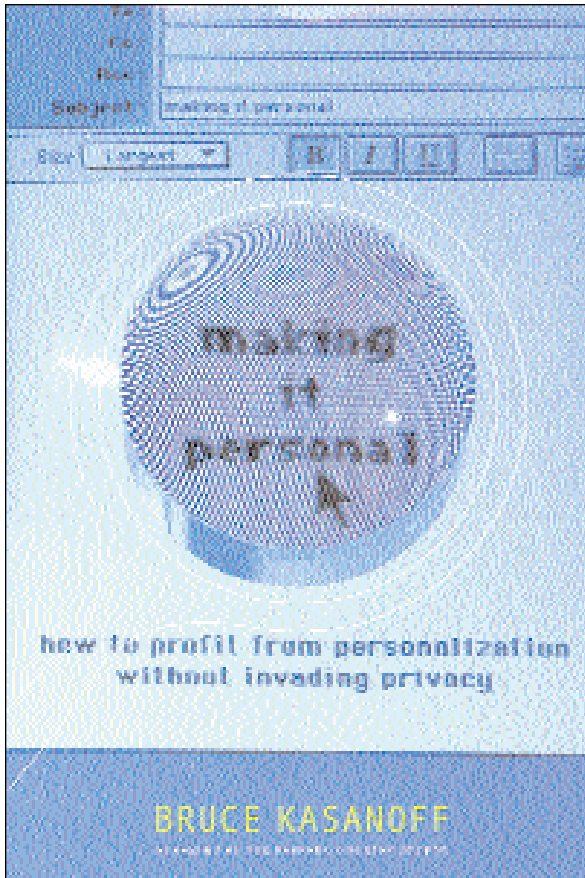


BOOKS



Making It Personal

By Bruce Kasanoff
Interview by Darin Hartley

I first saw Bruce Kasanoff in February 2002. I was in Orlando, Florida, attending a learning conference for associations, and he was the keynote speaker. His topic: personalization. He spoke of the power personalization could have on associations if they would harness it and use it appropriately. I took about five pages of notes—and I never take notes. But Kasanoff's message was so compelling and insightful that I wanted to capture every nugget I could.

In *Making It Personal*, Kasanoff, a business and technology expert, explores how a company can use technology to make the most of one-to-one relation-

ships with customers. "Most companies," he says, "begin with the question of how technology can be used to extract more from a person, instead of asking how it can be used to better serve the needs of people vital to the corporation's long-term success." Kasanoff offers sound advice on how to handle that dilemma in a manner that's profitable to the company and pleasing to customers.

Kasanoff also delves into the world of data mining and discusses how to keep it from crossing the line into invasion of privacy. Using references, Websites, and case studies, Kasanoff describes common practices and considers the consequences

ON THE NIGHT STAND

By Patti Phillips



I try to read from the stack of books on my nightstand, but most of my reading takes place on airplanes. Here are four books that represent my major interests and challenges.

Work Naked, by Cynthia C. Froggatt, introduces eight principles for peak performance in the virtual workplace. Froggatt focuses on initiative, trust, joy, individuality, quality, dialogue, connectivity, and workplace options. It's a good read for employees who work from virtual offices and independent consultants who work from home.

Robert I. Sutton offers an interesting take on creativity and innovation in *Weird Ideas That Work*. He covers 11 1/2 practices for promoting, managing, and sustaining innovation with intriguing suggestions—such as Weird Idea Number 1 1/2: "Hire people who make you uncomfortable, even those you dislike."

The market seems flooded with books on organizational change, but Pierre Mourier and Martin Smith's *Conquering Organizational Change* is different: It's easy to read and has a great layout and presentation. The authors address how to make change successful and avoid the failure that's commonplace in most change projects. They provide 10 tactics for successful change and 10 recovery tactics to revive stalled or failed change efforts, plus tools, templates, and checklists to help readers address change processes within their organizations.

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of company-customer interconnectivity (for example, what happens when mined data is misinterpreted). "Technology," Kasanoff says, "will change faster than the laws" governing personalization.

I spoke with Kasanoff.

Hartley: What implications do you think personalization has for learning and training?

Kasanoff: At the basic level, you must understand that people learn differently. You must accommodate those differences; they can make or break a program.

At a higher level, it's a mistake to think of anyone as "an employee." A human being has many roles, which may include, for example, being an employee, a financial expert, a parent, an athlete, and a writer. Training should take into account each person's broader goals and motivations, and provide mechanisms for supporting as many of those as possible. At the beginning of each program, I say, "Let's forget for a moment

why your company wants you to be here and talk about why you want to be here."

Hartley: For a trainer or learning professional, what's the most important aspect of personalization that he or she needs to know?

Kasanoff: Rather than concentrate on the similarities that enable you to deliver one piece of content to dozens or hundreds of people, look for the qualities that make each person unique. Highlight diversity, and nurture every possible opportunity to showcase quiet voices and differing points of view.

For example, encourage participants to play devil's advocate on some of the central points of a session. Or, when breaking into small groups, let participants provide feedback in any way they choose instead of asking them to report back in the same manner. Perhaps they'll use pictures instead of words or refute a previous point of view rather than advocate a new one.

Some managers fear that such an open approach leads to chaos; however, my experience has been that it strengthens organizations and injects vibrancy and excitement into training experiences.

Hartley: You've started some work on the concept of *less*. Can you tell me more?

Kasanoff: *Less* is my simple way of expressing the power of personalization without resorting to business-speak. It's the idea that companies can thrive by giving customers less of the things that drive them crazy: less bureaucracy, less wasted time, less junk to read.

My free e-newsletter www.nowpossible.com shares success stories of companies that have prospered by giving customers less. In compiling the stories, it has become obvious to me that the best-run organizations already think in terms of less and have numerous examples of how and why that approach works.


The best thing about the idea of less, however, is

that it resonates with every type of employee. From the loading dock to the executive suite, everyone understands the frustration of dealing with companies that make more problems for customers when they should be giving them less.

Less has many applications to the training process, and I'm starting to work with a few companies to incorporate that approach into their programs. The goal is to deliver all of the elements we've discussed in this interview—namely, programs that produce more significant results from the perspectives of the company and each participant.

Making It Personal: How to Profit From Personalization Without Invading Privacy by Bruce Kasanoff. New York: Perseus Books. 240 pp. US\$26

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Don't miss
Bruce Kasanoff's
Webinar on
September 24, 2002.
 www.astd.org/webinar