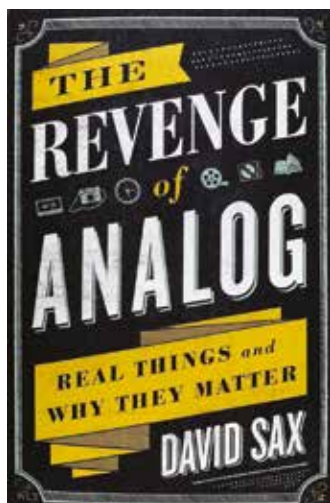


REVENGE OF ANALOGUE



“Sooner or later, everything old is new again,” an observation by Stephen King that’s never been truer. David Sax, writer, reporter and author of *The Revenge of Analog* goes on a

detailed journey of why analogue – things such as records or paperback books – are making waves in the digital flood.

Sax discovered that as physical objects and experiences are increasingly being replaced by virtual ones, analogue and its real, tangible properties are once again becoming sought after. We hear from Sax himself, as he gives us a little bit more insight into his book and why he believes real things matter.

WHY DID YOU FEEL IT WAS IMPORTANT TO WRITE ABOUT THE RESURGENCE OF ANALOGUE?

It is something that was personally fascinating to me as I hold a high regard for different analogue goods, tools and processes in my own life. When the internet and other technologies came about over the past 15 odd years, many analogue things like records or books started being dismissed as outdated, almost as if their value was denigrated.

Ironically in recent years, I began seeing these same dismissed items start to make a comeback, even achieving a different, almost higher value than before. People were starting to realise the new worth that these goods had. It’s as though there’s a correlation: the better the digital technology gets, the more valuable analogue becomes.

I wanted to show that there are advantages to things like paper and film. Not only are they interesting and fun, but there is a business there that isn’t going away and, in many cases, growing.

HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO THE PREVALENT VIEW THAT DIGITAL MEDIA IS THE WAY OF THE FUTURE AND ‘PRINT IS DEAD’?

I agree with the first part of the statement, but not with the second. I would say yes of course, digital technology has transformed every form of media over the past 20 or 30 years and undoubtedly that will continue to grow. However, the notion that this technology just kills off the analogue media that came before it such as records, film or print is blatantly false.

The reality is that we don’t live in a world that it’s one or the other, we want it all. I tend to read my news on the internet, but when it comes to books I’m exclusively in paper. With kids books, I would never dream of getting an e-book.

Even though a strong digital presence has become the standard for many fields, older technology such as paper doesn’t disappear, it gets re-framed. Its use and value becomes different and almost new.

In many ways, the future is print – but its going to be print in a different way than it was 30 or even a couple of years ago.

CONSUMERS DEMAND RESPONSIVENESS, FLEXIBILITY AND PERSONALISATION, QUALITIES GENERALLY ASSOCIATED WITH DIGITAL, HOW DOES ANALOGUE OVERCOME THESE VALUES?

What is more personal and flexible than a piece of paper? A blank document on Microsoft Word can only do what it has been programmed to do. If you have a pen, crayon, pencil or scissors, you can do anything with a piece of paper – there is literally no limit outside the physical confines of the page. Whereas software is restrictive and there is this counter-intuitive idea that the most efficient, flexible and creative tools are assumed to be digital.

When writing my book, I would go into any office whether it be in Melbourne, Toronto or Silicone Valley and I noticed that on top of a computer, phone and tablet, most people also had a notebook on their desk. This is because for certain processes or for certain individuals, paper notebooks provide the best way of communication.

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Obviously nowadays we have many more options available to us, sometimes digital will be the logical option and sometimes not. But if you look at things like cards for example, they have seen huge growth in all types. Digital is great for a last minute party invite, but if you want to send a wedding invite or if you have a baby, the advantage just isn't there for digital. Paper has a greater advantage, and that advantage is its tactile and personalised nature.

WHY DO YOU THINK ANALOGUE IS STANDING THE TEST OF TIME?

Well I think from a real fundamental level it is tactile and physical and we, as human beings, are tactile and physical and are always going to respond to things that meet us in that way.

Digital technology will undoubtedly continue to get smarter and quicker, but you can't substitute for that physical experience of receiving a greeting card that you can hold in your hands and put on your fridge.

Over time, I believe the perceived 'limitations' of analogue are only going to grow to be more valued as so much more of our life, whether work or personal, continues to be more screen based.

WHAT SHOULD MARKETERS, ADVERTISERS AND DESIGNERS LEARN FROM THE REVENGE OF ANALOGUE?

For designers it comes down to process. When in Italy doing research, I was at an advertising firm and heard about when they first brought Photoshop into the mix. Overnight, an immediate change in the quality of work was evident because their designers began to tailor concepts and ideas to the software instead of thinking freely - missing a crucial step in the design process.

To ensure brainstorming was happening, the firm decided to give each designer a notebook and told them to do all first drafts of a project strictly on paper - only when in the refining stage could the concept be moved onto screen. The results? They saw a huge increase in both quality and capability of work when designers were able to create concepts on paper first.

Ultimately, the technology shapes the method and the method is what is going to dictate how something looks. And for designers, it's important to see the creative value of paper in their process. That's why you're seeing companies like Moleskin collaborate with companies like Adobe to make paper notebooks that allow a smooth upload of concepts drawn on paper into a digital format.

Looking at this from a marketer's perspective, yes, on the surface it is easier and cheaper to buy digital ad space or send an email. But if you look deeper into it, the studies show that someone who reads in paper will look at it longer, develop a better relationship, have a greater loyalty and affinity to a brand than they ever will from looking at something online.

If you don't believe that, when was the last time you ripped an ad out of a magazine because it was interfering with an article you were reading? It might be harder to get the same audience size as digital, but it is a more defined and valuable audience. I think that this is something that people are and will hopefully continue to realise. The value of paper and other analogue things has not gone away, and if anything it's actually growing.

IS ANALOGUE THE NEW PATH FORWARD OR DOES IT COMPLEMENT DIGITAL?

I think it's complementary. No one is advocating an 'either or,' at least from the analogue side. Every person out there who is collecting records or starting new print publications is on their phone and using digital tools to create those businesses and communicate what they are doing.

It's about striking a balance and finding where paper gives an advantage and does something that digital can't. If you are able to combine their strengths together, that is a path to success.

WHAT ARE THE BOOK'S KEY TAKEAWAYS?

For most of us, there is no one solution or path for productivity. Sometimes a digital solution will be the best, and sometimes analogue will give you what you want. Being open to different ways of doing things is key.

For marketers, it is realising that analogue has a new different value, and those that have been able to realise that value and tap into it have been very successful in a way that complements what they are already doing with digital, or even supersedes it.

David Sax is a Canadian journalist, writing for publications such as New York Magazine, Vanity Fair, Bloomberg Business Week, The New York Times, Saveur, NPR, GQ and Toronto Life.