

And another thing ...

In the old days, alchemy was certainly not a calling for the faint-hearted. Many alchemists were financially ruined by their relentless pursuit of gold; others poisoned themselves or went insane after inhaling the noxious gases produced by their experiments. But with the advent of the printing press, some alchemists saw a new and perhaps more lucrative outlet for the talents – instead of practising alchemy, they'd write books about it.

One such alchemist-turned-author was the Italian, John Aurelio Augurello, who had a keen understanding of the value of publicity and so sent a copy of his alchemical treatise to Pope Leo X in the hope of receiving some kind of financial favour or, at the very least, a papal puff for the back cover. His spirits were high when he was summoned to the Vatican and received by His Holiness himself. At the end of his audience, with great ceremony, the Pope presented him with a large purse. But as the penniless alchemist weighed it in his hand, he realised that it was completely empty. He stared at the Pope, open mouthed, wondering what it could mean.

'As you're such a great magician,' the Pope told him, with a smile, 'I thought you'd need something to keep all your gold in.'

In business today, filling that purse with gold is the job of the marketing alchemist – and his chances of success are considerably higher than were those of poor Augurello. Indeed, I promised at the start of this book that the alchemical process of the Five 'I's was an infallible method for producing marketing gold. It's certainly a process that enables you to draw on all the resources, skills and knowledge of a company and allows them to work together to produce the one clear goal of any commercial enterprise: top-line growth. But the process also requires marketers to rethink their relationships with their collaborators and colleagues. Modern marketers should be as comfortable in the board room as they are at the product launch. They should be as fluent in the language of finance as they are in the dialects of advertising, design or branding. Marketing, as we've seen, is a 360 degree activity which requires attention to every aspect of business, from the quality of insights gained in the research lab to the way that a used package gets thrown out with the trash.

But can I really claim that the Five 'I's is an infallible process? Well, if you follow it to the letter, I guarantee your success – or at least I would, if it weren't for all the stuff that gets in the way.