Preface

I have been interested in the subject of business for many years. My business education started more formally in the 1960s, when I was enrolled in Lund University Business School. My major subject was finance and my minor subject was marketing. I began to understand that this decade was something of a breakthrough for marketing as an orientation in theory as well as in practice. The industrial part of the world was booming, backed up by purchasing power among customers in consumer markets at an all-time high. It was in this environment that Philip Kotler published *Marketing Management* in 1967, a book which quickly became a bestseller and hard to avoid by anybody operating in the marketing field. At that time, I was also close to starting a business myself, with one of my classmates. We had the idea to name that business 4M (Marketing with More Modern Methods). But that thought was never realized.

However, while studying for my Bachelor’s degree in Business, to improve my finances I started to work part-time as a night watchman in the neighbouring city of Malmö, and I did this for several years. At the end of the 1960s, the Swedish government issued a recommendation directed at companies or other organizations employing security people, implying that for anybody to call himself or herself a security officer, he or she should get some basic education and training in how to put out a fire, how to behave in a police-like fashion, how to be able to defend oneself, and other necessary skills to do the job well. So, an idea came to me. I saw a golden opportunity for starting a business to educate people in Sweden working in the field of security for them to live up to the government’s recommendation, in case they could not provide any evidence that they possessed the formal requirements in question. I bought a non-active limited company and re-registered it in the name of SeEd (Security Education) Ltd, designed a two-week educational programme containing various security aspects, drew up contracts with people from the local fire brigade, police force, self-defence institutes etc., to provide me with teachers and admitted about twenty students with the adequate orientation as a first group, got it going and hoped for a bright future.

To my surprise, however, no people applied to enrol on my educational programme after the first admitted group. The reason turned out to be
quite simple. Even though I had followed recommendations in my studies concerning how to start a business and how to support such a start with adequate marketing, all security companies in Sweden were boycotting the government’s recommendations, refusing to ‘waste money on unnecessary education’. So, I did not have the market that I expected, and was forced to terminate my company after just two months, having made a small personal financial loss.

I continued with business studies after my first degree, secured a MBA and doctorate in this subject and I was lucky (and ambitious) enough to be offered a permanent chair as professor in Business Administration at ‘my’ university in Lund in 1978. I made several friends (academics as well as practising outside the university) on the way. Guided by the idea that ‘I do not find it satisfying to be professor in a subject that cannot be applied in practice’, I started a consulting company with some of those friends that same year. We hardly had any clients to start with, but, spurred by the belief that market obstacles exist to be overcome, we combined our contact networks and were soon able to build a portfolio of consulting assignments to keep us as occupied as we wanted to be (and sometimes more than that). The name we gave our company was Albatross 78, justifying the choice of the name with symbolic statements like ‘an albatross is the world’s best flying animal; no other bird can stay that long in the air, and it never seems to give up’. We also became known after being asked to advertise in a book which listed all consulting companies in the country in the business field. On the background of our bird logo, we wrote the text: ‘We are too busy to have the time to advertise’! The company exists still today, but I am no longer one of its owners.

One assignment that I acquired in the name of Albatross78 started my solid interest in entrepreneurship. In the beginning of the 1980s, the Swedish shipyards could no longer compete with the Japanese and the Koreans, and had to finish business. One shipyard was situated in the harbour of a town 30 kilometres from Lund. Four thousand people employed there were given notice to quit. Including their families, around 6000 people were affected. To mitigate the social pain, the Swedish government at that time granted several millions Swedish krona to a fund which employed three people full-time, and I was asked to join part-time as a consultant. The objective of this group was to assist aspiring (or already active) entrepreneurs financially and with all possible support to establish businesses on the ruins of the shipyard, employing as many as possible of the former shipyard workers. The only restriction was that these new companies were not allowed to be involved in anything to do with boats. My task in this context was to give my opinion about who should be given support and who should not. During a period of about two years, we talked to
about 1000 individuals, and were willing to try to start a business with the people given a notice to quit (and, as time went on, actually had to quit). We supported 100 new startups, employing around 1000 people (25% of the former shipyard employees; approximately 50% of them found a job on their own; 25% of them unfortunately had to be retired prematurely, sometimes given social benefits; two persons even committed suicide – the whole situation was one big social trauma). This was the start of my keen interest in entrepreneurship, an interest which I still have today. I have done much research and published several books in the subject before this one. I was appointed as the third full professor in Entrepreneurship at University of Stockholm in 1999, and I still work today (at the age of 76 years) part-time as professor in this subject at another university close to one of the islands in the Baltic Sea, where I now live.

I was the founder of one of the new companies started on the former shipyard. It was a subcontracting company, employing about 400 of those having to quit from the shipyard. My task (as its general director), together with a small group of white collar workers among the 400, was to find subcontracting assignments which were suitable to use the workers’ technical skills. This company became very successful indeed. Through a lot of work and by using our connections, we were able to find work for all of these 400 during the rest of their working life. The company (like Albatross 78) started without any guaranteed customers, but (unlike Albatross 78) does not exist today – this was, however, the very idea on which it was built.

I started my fourth company about ten years ago. It is a partnership with my wife, and its purpose is to channel income I receive (apart from my pension) from selling books, providing guest lectures and being involved in consulting assignments (including the work I am doing part-time at the university). It is as successful as I want it to be without doing any kind of formal marketing. Through this company, I am able to make deductions for any cost that arise when pursuing my professional interests.

Being theoretically and practically interested in entrepreneurship, it is only natural to want to learn how to be a good marketer. As mentioned earlier, when studying for my Bachelor’s degree at Lund University Business School, one of my areas of concentrated study was marketing. During the 1980s and the 1990s, I worked at several universities outside Sweden, from the University of Southern California in the west to Waikato University in New Zealand in the east, and, in between, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals in Saudi Arabia and National University in Singapore, teaching subjects such as strategic management, business and culture, and international business alongside marketing. Focusing on entrepreneurship, I published about a dozen books on the way and presented papers in conferences all over the world almost every...
year. After having returned to Sweden at the end of the last century, I was financed for more than a decade by the Swedish Knowledge Foundation, leading a group of researchers and practitioners in the field of social entrepreneurship. I did this at the same time as being employed by Linnaeus University (with which I am still connected, even if only part-time these days). All in all, by starting four businesses of my own, teaching various business subjects and publishing books, presenting conference papers in the field of entrepreneurship in general and doing research on social entrepreneurship, I have learnt some crucial things about the relationship between entrepreneurship and marketing:

- Successful entrepreneurs are typically very good at marketing themselves.
- There is great variety in how entrepreneurs use marketing in practice.
- An obvious knowledge development of the academic subject of marketing (as well as of the subjects of entrepreneurship and leadership) increasingly shows the need to better and more intimately understand (and work closer with) customers and other users of what marketers, entrepreneurs and leaders are trying to achieve or produce.
- Some social entrepreneurs get good results without even using marketing in the usual sense.

This, combined with my experiences from starting four very different companies as described earlier, inspired me to write this book on the various and different ways to use marketing being an entrepreneur.

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The author