

WPP Group plc

Why Every Brand Encounter Counts:

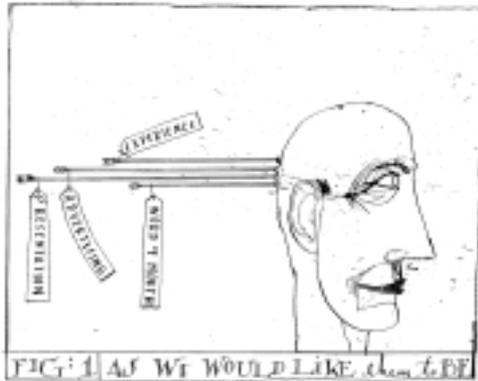
Seductive, Anarchic or Catastrophic



Jeremy Bullmore

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1999 Annual Report and Accounts

SOURCES OF BRAND



You read a compelling advertisement for a piece of electrical equipment and you buy it. And then you open the instruction manual.

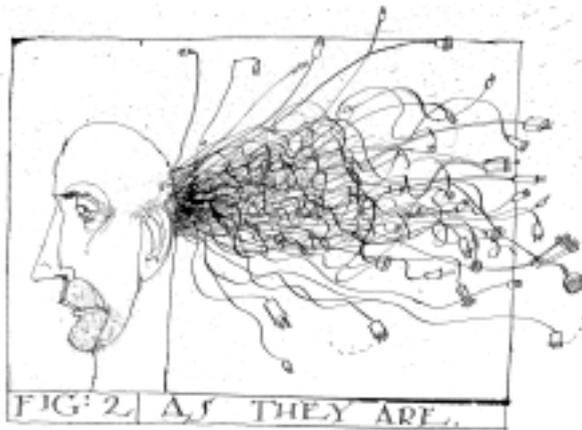
It is incomprehensible in seven languages.

The advertisement understood the reader; the manual does not. In design and empathy, the brand of the advertisement and the brand of the manual have nothing whatever in common. For the purchaser, those first moments of ownership are crucial. Critical faculties are on full alert; apprehension lurks; reassurance is anxiously awaited. And that's exactly when the dreaded manual strikes.

Not only has a perfect opportunity been lost to confirm new users in the wisdom of their choice, but a perverse and wilful act of brand mutilation has been committed.

For the best part of 50 years now, we've spoken confidently about brand image and brand reputation. Nobody has seriously challenged the view that people hold opinions about products and services that are based on more than

REPUTATION



function and direct experience. This shared understanding has helped shape and improve all conventional marketing communications: no-one much doubts that advertising, direct marketing, promotions, public relations and pack design, among others, can enhance the reputations of competitive enterprises (they don't have to be objects) to the benefit of buyers and sellers both.

Where we've been less assiduous – perhaps because we sense the quest would be such a nightmare – is in trying to identify the less obvious sources of a brand's reputation.

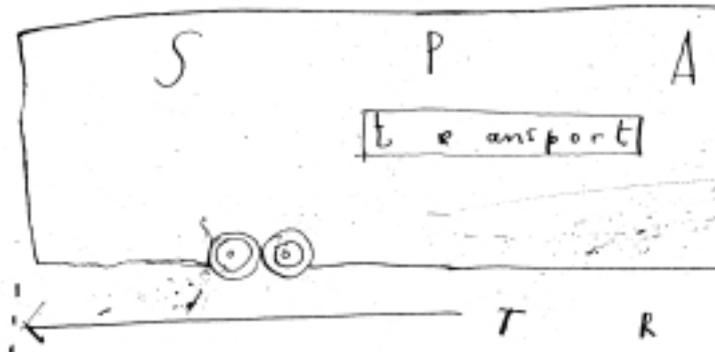
Imagine for a moment that it was possible to scan the human brain, isolate the cell that contained that particular brain's opinion of a particular brand – its image – and then trace and log its origins. Not for one second should we expect to see just a few strong, clearly differentiated wires labelled Experience, Advertising, Word-of-Mouth, Presentation. If we successfully traced and identified every encounter that had contributed over time to that brain's view of that brand, the resultant three-dimensional map would be like a huge bowl of multi-coloured spaghetti:

as if we believe that only conventional communications will be noted by our publics and that all other encounters will be screened out. But no manifestation of a brand is ever ignored; and all will make some contribution, positive or negative, to that brand's reputation.

The ill-conceived and incomprehensible instruction manual is one such example. But there are many other brand encounters which differ from seductive encounters in that they all have a reason for existence other than the courtship of the consumer. It's just such a pity that this primary function so often seems to blind companies to their potential for simultaneous (and free) brand-building.

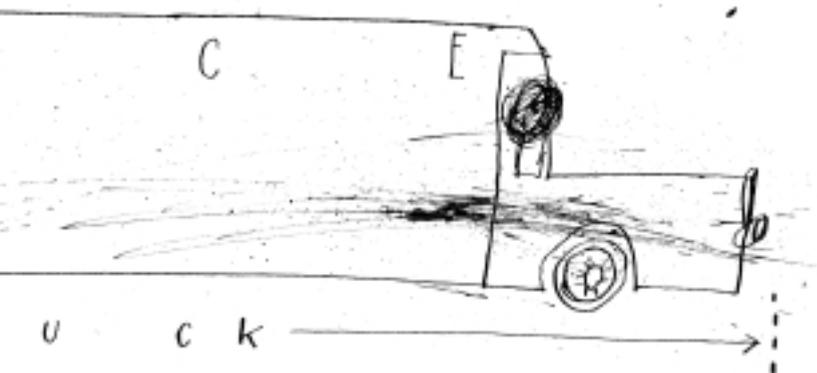
It is odd how little brand use is made of trucks. Vast travelling billboards, already paid for, thunder up and down the highways being seen by hundreds of thousands of people: yet with little or nothing on their sides to promote or enhance the company or the brand. Can it be, in the corporate structure, that trucks come under transport rather than communications? And who is a transport manager to know about brand values?

The contribution of architecture to corporate brands is widely debated but infrequently practised. At a time when



all are agreed that corporate brands need to be as clearly differentiated one from another as repeat-purchase consumer goods, tens of millions can be committed to buildings and internal design without a single reference made to the likely effect on the ultimate customer. It is as if senior management believes that creating a competitive reputation can safely be left to the hired hands in the marketing department and is nothing whatever to do with them.

Financial services companies were slow to understand the need for simple brand distinction – but they're catching up fast. Savings schemes and pension plans are now packaged far more attractively and the language in which they are described is sometimes even coherent. But then you get a letter from head office – and your conclusion is immediate. The presentation was a sham, no more than cosmetic. Behind that glossy package lies a company as bureaucratic, self-obsessed and insensitive as we always knew such companies to be. In its advertising – in its planned, seductive encounters – a large British financial institution makes much of its friendliness. But a recent head office communication from the same company contained the following sentence: “This is a computer-generated message and therefore has no signature.”



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Advertising

Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide
www.ogilvy.com

J. Walter Thompson Company
www.jwtworld.com

Conquest
www.conquestgroup.com

Cole & Weber

Asatsu-DK¹
www.asatsu-dk.co.jp

Batey¹
www.bateyads.com.sg

Chime Communications PLC²
www.chime-plc.co.uk

Equus¹

SCPF¹
www.scpf.com

Media investment management

MindShare
www.mindshareworld.com

Media Insight/Maximize

Portland Outdoor
www.portlandoutdoor.com

The Media Partnership¹

Tempus Group PLC²
www.tempusgroup.com

Information & consultancy

The Kantar Group:
Research International
www.research-int.com

Millward Brown
www.millwardbrown.com

Kantar Media Research
– AGB Italia¹
www.agbitalia.it

– BMRB International
www.bmr.com

– IBOPE Media Information¹

– Symmetrical Resources¹/Simmons¹
www.smr.com

Goldfarb Consultants
www.goldfarbconsultants.com

IMRB International¹
www.imrbint.com

Winona Group
www.winonaresearch.com

Center Partners
www.centerpartners.com

Public relations & public affairs

Hill and Knowlton
www.hillandknowlton.com

Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide
www.ogilvypr.com

Timmons and Company

The Wexler Group
www.wexlergroup.com

Carl Byoir & Associates

Buchanan Communications
www.buchanan.com

Chime Communications PLC¹

Branding & identity, healthcare and specialist communications

Branding, identity & corporate consultancy

Addison
www.addison.co.uk

Banner McBride
www.bannermcbride.com

BDG McColl
www.bdgmcoll.com

Brouillard
www.brouillard.com

Coley Porter Bell
www.cpb.co.uk

Enterprise IG
www.enterpriseig.com

– BPRI
www.bpri.co.uk

– Clever Media
www.clever.co.uk

JWT Specialized Communications
www.jwtworks.com

Lambie-Naim
www.lambie-naim.com

Scott Stern
www.scottstern.co.uk

Tütssels
www.tutssels.com

Healthcare

CommonHealth
www.commonhealth.com

Ogilvy Healthcare

Shire Hall Group
www.shirehall.com

Direct, promotion & relationship marketing

A. Eicoff & Co
www.eicoff.com

Brierley & Partners¹
www.brierley.com

Einson Freeman
www.einsonfreeman.com

EWA
www.ewa.ltd.uk

High Co¹
www.highco.fr

Mando Marketing
www.mando.co.uk

Oakley Young
www.oakley-young.co.uk

OgilvyOne Worldwide
www.ogilvyone.com

Perspectives
www.perspectives.co.uk

Promotional Campaigns Group
www.pcguk.com

RMG International
ROCGM
www.rocgm.co.uk

RTCDirect
www.rtcdirect.com

SpeechNet
www.speechnet.co.uk

The Grass Roots Group¹
www.grg.co.uk

ThompsonConnect Worldwide

Strategic marketing consulting

The Henley Centre
www.henleycentre.com

Management Ventures
www.mventures.com

MSI Consulting/Charles River
Strategies
www.msiconsulting.com/

www.crstrat.com

P-Four Consultancy
www.pfour.co.uk

Planners¹
www.planners.es

Quadra Advisory¹
www.quadraadvisory.com

Sector marketing

Business-to-business

Primary Contact
www.primary.co.uk

Demographic marketing

The Geppetto Group
www.geppettogroup.com

The Intuition Group
The Market Segment Group¹
www.marketsegment.com

Mendoza Dillon & Asociados

Foodservice
The Food Group
www.thefoodgroup.com

Investor relations

International Presentations¹
www.intpres.com

PR & sports marketing

PRISM Group
www.pristeam.com

Real estate

Pace

Retail

Walker Group/CNI
www.wgcn.com

Technology

Smith and Jones
www.smithandjones.co.uk

Media & technology services

Clockwork Capital¹

DigiReels

Metro Group
www.metrobroadcast.co.uk

Savatar
www.savatar.com

The Farm¹
www.farmpost.co.uk

New media investments

BigWords²
www.bigwords.com

Concept¹
www.concept.com

Deckchair²
www.deckchair.com

e-Rewards²
www.e-rewards.com

Imagine²
www.imagine.com

Intraspect²
www.intraspect.com

Media Technology Ventures¹
www.mtventures.com

Metapack²
www.metapack.com

NewsEdge Corporation²
www.newsedge.com

Red Sheriff¹
www.redsheriff.com

Syzygy¹
www.syzygy.net

TWii¹
www.imgworld.com

Visible World²
www.visibleworld.net

¹ Associate investment

² Minority investment

³ Venture fund

Details correct at 10 May 2000

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