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LEVERAGE APPLIED PROPAGANDA

The twentieth century has been characterized by three developments of great political importance: the growth of democracy, the growth of corporate power, and the growth of corporate propaganda as a means of protecting corporate power against democracy.

— Australian scholar Alex Carey

SUBLIMINAL SELLING SECRET

Creating your own vocabulary is a powerful subliminal persuasion tool. Creating new names or renaming the commonplace can make something appear very powerful and new. For example, I specifically chose to call public relations Applied Propaganda because that is what it really is.

Propaganda is a very highly charged word. Some people will assume that I'm talking about the intentional misleading

of an audience. Others will assume I'm talking about mass education through the media. Both will take something away. But when I add the word *applied*, it causes you to pause and think, and it may even be a new construct that you can find yourself comfortable with.

Work hard to create precise word pictures that clearly identify who you are and what you do. Allow people to pick up your vocabulary and use it. Encourage your audience to be on the inside by using your specific language as a means of identifying one another.

But whatever you do, discuss how to use Applied Propaganda in your business.

Many people will find this chapter discomfiting and frightening because of the content. Stick with it, though. You'll see the effectiveness and ethical application of this chapter by the end. But to get you there, I need to take you through a history of propaganda so that you can learn my unique version of public relations, which I call *Applied Propaganda*.

If a given market has the capability to supply a neverending array of products, ideologies, concepts, and goods, how can we ultimately make our choices? What persuades enthusiastic and willing consumers like us to select Coke or Pepsi, McDonald's or Burger King, MasterCard or Visa, Crest or Colgate, Letterman or Leno?

Bigger picture: What makes us believe we actually *need* any of these commodities in the first place? The easy answer, of course, is *advertising*. We see the commercials, we hum the jingles, we even pay good money to adorn our bodies with clothing bearing corporate logos. Clearly, the many billions of dollars spent each year on advertising profoundly influence

our lives. But there's also a parallel industry—albeit with a much lower profile.

“In societies like ours, corporate propaganda is delivered through advertising and public relations,” says author and environmentalist Derrick Jensen. Advertising is a very overt attempt at persuading. The person or company who creates an advertisement is fully focused on creating an inducement that you will respond positively to. There is no exception based on what is being sold: ideas, services, or products. Applied Propaganda, on the other hand, is disguised as information, and called *public relations*. When asked, most people will say that they are not regularly influenced by the news and even hold it in low regard for its accuracy; yet we often don't realize we are being influenced by public relations.

If alarms began ringing in your head upon reading the term *propaganda*, you're certainly not alone. Given the unspeakable lessons learned from Joseph Goebbels and Nazi Germany, *propaganda* is officially a dirty word. But when Edward Bernays—nephew of Sigmund Freud, public relations pioneer, and America's most innovative social engineer—got his start in the early twentieth century, it was a word less charged but equally as potent. In fact, Bernays unabashedly named one of his books *Propaganda*.

“Edward Bernays was surely one of the most amazing and influential characters of the twentieth century,” explains John Stauber, co-author of *Toxic Sludge is Good for You: Lies, Damn Lies, and Public Relations*. “He was a nephew of Sigmund Freud and helped to popularize Freudianism in the U.S. Later, he used his relation to Freud to promote himself. And from his uncle's psychoanalysis techniques, Bernays developed a scientific method of managing behavior, to which he gave the

name ‘public relations.’” The Vienna-born Bernays was heavily influenced, of course, by his uncle’s work, but it was in the service of war that he helped shape what we call public relations today.

War has always been a proving ground for the development and dissemination of propaganda. Some of the most powerful lessons in managing the human perception of ideas comes from the selling of war. War sells the most costly idea of all, that there is something you should be willing to give your life for that is not you or your family. In what PR watchdog John Stauber calls “perhaps the most effective job of large-scale war propaganda which the world has ever witnessed,” the Committee on Public Information, run by veteran newspaperman George Creel with the help of others like Edward Bernays, used all available forms of media to promote the noble purpose behind World War I: *To keep the world safe for democracy*. The average American was notoriously wary of any hint of their country entering the bloody conflict. “The country was becoming formally more democratic,” notes linguist and social critic Noam Chomsky. “A lot more people were able to vote and that sort of thing. The country was becoming wealthier and more people could participate and a lot of new immigrants were coming in, and so on. So what do you do? It’s going to be harder to run things as a private club. Therefore, obviously, you have to control what people think.” As a result, men like Creel and Bernays were called upon to change some minds by leveraging one of the most powerful subliminal persuaders, public relations.

The Creel Committee (as it came to be known) was the first government agency for outright propaganda in U.S. history; it published 75 million books and pamphlets, had 250 paid employees, and mobilized 75,000 volunteer speakers known

as “four-minute men,” who delivered their pro-war messages in churches, theaters, and other places of civic gatherings. The idea, of course, was to give the war effort a positive spin. To do so, the nation had to be convinced that doing their part to support global military conflict on a scale never before seen was indeed a good idea. “It is not merely an army that we must train and shape for war,” President Woodrow Wilson declared at the time, “it is an entire nation.” The age of manipulated public opinion had begun in earnest.

Although Wilson won reelection in 1916 on a promise of peace, it wasn’t long before he severed diplomatic relations with Germany and proposed arming U.S. merchant ships—even without congressional authority. Upon the congressional declaration of war on Germany in April 1917, the president proclaimed, “Conformity will be the only virtue and any man who refuses to conform will have to pay the penalty.”

In time, the masses got the message as demonstrated by these (and other) results:

- Fourteen states passed laws forbidding the teaching of the German language
- Iowa and South Dakota outlawed the use of German in public or on the telephone
- German-language books were ceremonially burned from coast to coast
- The Philadelphia Symphony and the New York Metropolitan Opera Company excluded Beethoven, Wagner, and other German composers from their programs
- German shepherds were renamed Alsatians
- Sauerkraut became known as “liberty cabbage”

Buoyed by the indisputable success of the Creel Committee and armed with the powerful psychoanalytical techniques of his Uncle Sigmund, Bernays set about shaping the American consciousness in a major way. “The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society,” he wrote to open his influential book, *Propaganda*. “Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society.”

Bernays’s vision of a smoothly functioning society had a dominant economic component. As described by Tim Adams of the *London Observer*, Bernays “thought that the safest way of maintaining democracy was to distract people from dangerous political thought by letting them think that their real choices were as consumers.” This focus on maintaining democracy led to the development of the consumer-driven marketplace of today. It also began the process of mental conditioning that as a subliminal persuader you must leverage. In our society today, most people define themselves by the things that they own, the cars that they drive, and the schools their children go to. Marketers who understand this deep conditioning are much more able to create messaging that will allow them to affect their audiences quickly, easily, and completely.

Subliminal Selling Secret

Research your target audience; understand how they see themselves. Leverage their beliefs about who they are in your messaging. If who they see themselves as is not powerful enough or does not allow for you to profitably build on the image, create a new one.

As Bernays created the perception of choice as a consumer, how can you create a perception of who your audience is? This, of course, requires a great deal of thinking, questioning, and research, but it is incredibly powerful.

A fine illustration of Bernays's approach involves his efforts—for the American Tobacco Company—to persuade women to take up cigarette smoking. His slogan, “Reach for a Lucky Instead of a Sweet,” exploited women's fear about gaining weight (arguably a fear manufactured through previous advertising and public relations work). While Lucky Strike sales increased by 300 percent in the first year of Bernays's campaign, there was still one more barrier he needed to break down: smoking remained mostly taboo for “respectable” women.

This is where some watered-down Freud came in handy. As Bernays's biographer, Larry Tye, said, Bernays wanted to take his uncle's works and “popularize them into little ditties that housewives and others could relate to.” With input from psychoanalyst A. A. Brill, Bernays conjured up the now-legendary scheme to reframe cigarettes as a symbol of freedom.

“During the 1929 Easter Parade,” explains *New York Times* reporter Ron Chernow, “he had a troupe of fashionable ladies flounce down Fifth Avenue, conspicuously puffing their ‘Torches

of Freedom,' as he had called cigarettes." As Chernow reports, Bernays augmented this successful stunt by lining up "neutral experts" to "applaud the benefits of smoking, all the while concealing the tobacco company's sponsorship of his activity."

Bernays was also concealing his knowledge of tobacco's deleterious effects. "As he hypocritically seduced American women into smoking, he was trying to wean his own wife from the nasty habit," Chernow continues. "His daughter, Anne Bernays, the novelist, recalls that whenever he discovered a pack of his wife's Parliaments, 'he'd pull them all out and just snap them like bones, just snap them in half and throw them in the toilet. He hated her smoking.'"

This applied propaganda tactic of reframing or spinning an issue is still widely used today but often for more altruistic ends. For example, when AIDS first reared its ugly head, it was quickly—and inaccurately—labeled a "gay disease." This categorization was not only erroneous but it also carried with it a dangerously negative stigma. To be diagnosed as HIV-positive was to risk one's reputation and livelihood at the very least. Efforts began to reframe the AIDS crisis—and it went much further than lighting a cigarette during the Easter Parade.

By publicizing the scope and range of the disease, AIDS inevitably came to be viewed (correctly) as a global health emergency that could be contained by education, not finger pointing and labeling. On the American Red Cross web site, this issue is addressed as such:

Question: Isn't AIDS a gay disease?

Answer: No. AIDS (a result of HIV infection) is caused by HIV, a virus that can infect people regardless of sexual

orientation. HIV can infect anyone who has sexual or blood-to-blood contact with an HIV-positive person. The virus can infect men, women, and children. Men who have sex with men or women and women who have sex with men or women are at risk if their partners have HIV infection. Correct and consistent use of latex (or polyurethane if allergic to latex) condoms, however, greatly reduces the risk of transmission. Risk relates to what people do, not who they are.

“The global HIV/AIDS epidemic is an unprecedented crisis that requires an unprecedented response,” adds former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan. “In particular, it requires solidarity—between the healthy and the sick, between rich and poor, and above all, between richer and poorer nations. We have 30 million orphans already. How many more do we have to get, to wake up?”

Appropriately, in a classic bit of Bernaysian persuasion, a simple, small red ribbon has come to represent the international effort of AIDS awareness, prevention, and education. While the deadly disease remains a clear and present danger, the applied propaganda movement to reframe how it is perceived has undoubtedly saved many lives.

Another common Bernays tactic was independent third-party endorsement. Asked by Beechnut Packing to increase their sales of bacon, Bernays conducted a survey of medical professionals (“America’s leading physicians,” he claimed). “He didn’t just give them a wide open choice,” says Larry Tye. “He defined the choice as: the rushed breakfast that people are eating today or the good, hardy, bacon and eggs breakfast?”

Framed in such a manner, the vast majority of doctors agreed that a good, hardy breakfast was superior to a rushed breakfast. Defining “hardy” as meaning bacon and eggs, Bernays publicized his survey results with great fanfare. His deceptive, yet innovative, strategy did much more than increase Beechnut’s size of the bacon market; it expanded the market itself. “Modern propaganda,” wrote Bernays, “is a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an enterprise, idea, or group.” Thanks to this particular “enduring effort,” bacon and eggs eventually developed into the All-American breakfast.

In the twenty-first century, the concept of an independent third-party endorsement can have a much healthier connotation. For example, those seeking foods that are certified organic are apt to look for a third-party certification on the label. If you prefer your coffee to be “Fair Trade” certified, what better way to be sure than to ask that this is verified by a third party? Ironically, those opting for a “hardy,” animal-free breakfast will often demand a certified vegan label on their food products.

An additional Bernays breakthrough involved creating what he termed *ballyhoo* and he brought it all the way from Broadway to the White House. Calvin Coolidge became the thirtieth president when Warren G. Harding died in 1923. Coolidge was elected in his own right 15 months later. While an effective public speaker, Coolidge was economical with his words in private and soon earned the nickname “Silent Cal.”

His legendary reticence allegedly garnered the curiosity of the popular writer and socialite Dorothy Parker. As the story goes, Parker was seated next to the uncommunicative president at a dinner party. She turned to him and loudly declared,

“Mr. Coolidge, I’ve made a bet against a fellow who said it was impossible to get more than two words out of you.” He famously replied: “You lose.” (Upon being told of Coolidge’s death in 1933, Parker famously replied, “How can they tell?”)

“The words of a president have an enormous weight,” Coolidge said, “and ought not to be used indiscriminately.” Renowned newspaperman Walter Lippmann saw genius in Coolidge’s laid-back, taciturn style. “This active inactivity suits the mood and certain of the needs of the country admirably,” said Lippmann. “It suits all the business interests which want to be let alone. . . . And it suits all those who have become convinced that government in this country has become dangerously complicated and top-heavy.”

Edward Bernays saw things a little differently from Lippmann. To him, Silent Cal was “practically inarticulate, and no movement of any kind agitated his deadpan face.” Thus, when asked to help enhance and liven up the president’s image and demonstrate his “warm, sympathetic personality,” Bernays hit upon the concept of a “photo op.” He invited vaudeville stars to the White House because “stage people symbolize warmth, extroversion, and Bohemian camaraderie.”

A group that included Al Jolson, Ed Wynn, the Dolly Sisters, Charlotte Greenwood, and Raymond Hitchcock arrived for a pancake breakfast—and you can be certain there were plenty of cameras present. “I have met you all across the footlights,” welcomed Mrs. Coolidge, “but it’s not the same as greeting you here.”

The star power worked (was there ever any doubt?) and the next day’s newspaper headlines included: “Actor Eats Cake with the Coolidges,” “President Nearly Laughs,” and

“Guests Crack Dignified Jokes, Sing Songs, and Pledge to Support Coolidge.”

“Al Gore is, uh, not a dynamic speaker,” says late night comedian, David Letterman. “Halfway through his speech, squirrels were climbing on him.” So it went for the former vice president for the vast majority of his political career. Since losing the 2000 presidential election, however, Gore has reshaped his image with a little ballyhoo of own and, in the process, taught the world about global warming.

Thanks to star power that would have Mrs. Coolidge’s head spinning, Al Gore has gone from bore to prophet. By enlisting celebrities and other high profile groups to help him spread the word about climate change, he has ended up with an Oscar-winning documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*; the Nobel Peace Prize; and a series of consciousness-raising concerts called “Live Earth.” On July 7, 2007, millions of people around the world participated in what was essentially a global wake-up call, orchestrated by a man once perceived to be a bore.

Today, publicity stunts like the Live Earth concerts are more commonly known as *media events* or *photo ops*, but Bernays liked to call them *overt acts*. As demonstrated by the events leading up to the 1954 U.S.-sponsored coup in Guatemala, Edward Bernays had nothing against *covert* acts, either.

“He believed, and argued to Eisenhower, that fear of communists should be induced and encouraged, because by unleashing irrational fears, it would make Americans loyal to the state and to capitalism,” writes Tim Adams, in the *London Observer*.

The United Fruit Historical Society web site offers an instructive chronology of the United Fruit Company (now Chiquita). The entries include:

- 1901: The government of Guatemala hires United Fruit Company to manage the country's national postal service.
- 1904: Guatemalan dictator Manuel Estrada Cabrera grants United Fruit a 99-year concession to construct and maintain the country's main rail line from Guatemala City to Puerto Barrios.
- 1924: The Guatemalan government gives a concession to the United Fruit Company for all the uncultivated lands in a 100-square-kilometer territory.

United Fruit's domination of this Central American nation was challenged when, in a landslide victory, Jacobo Arbenz was freely and fairly elected president of Guatemala in 1951. Wishing to transform his country "from a backward country with a predominantly feudal economy to a modern capitalist state," Arbenz's modest reforms and his legalizing of the Communist Party were frowned upon in U.S. business circles. The Arbenz government became the target of a U.S. public relations campaign headed by none other than Edward Bernays. "As I anticipated," the PR pioneer boasted, "public interest in the Caribbean skyrocketed in this country."

Two years after Arbenz became president, *Life* magazine featured a piece on his "Red" land reforms, claiming that a nation just "two hours bombing time from the Panama Canal" was "openly and diligently toiling to create a Communist state." It mattered little that the U.S.S.R didn't even maintain diplomatic relations with Guatemala; the Cold War was in effect. Ever on the lookout for that invaluable pretext, the U.S. business class scored a public relations coup when Arbenz expropriated some unused land controlled by the United Fruit Company. His payment offer was predictably deemed inappropriate.

“If they gave a gold piece for every banana,” Secretary of State John Foster Dulles clarified, “the problem would still be Communist infiltration.”

“Articles began appearing in the *New York Times*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, the *New Leader*, and other publications, all discussing the growing influence of Guatemala’s Communists,” writes Larry Tye, Bernays’s biographer. “The fact that liberal journals like *The Nation* were also coming around was especially satisfying to Bernays, who believed that winning the liberals over was essential. . . . At the same time, plans were under way to mail to American Legion posts and auxiliaries 300,000 copies of a brochure titled ‘Communism in Guatemala—22 Facts.’”

Bernays’s clandestine efforts led directly to a brutal military coup when the CIA put Operation Success into action. “A legally elected government was overthrown by an invasion force of mercenaries trained by the CIA at military bases in Honduras and Nicaragua and supported by four American fighter planes flown by American pilots,” explains historian Howard Zinn.

Once in power, Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, a man who was trained at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, gave back the land to United Fruit, abolished the tax on interest and dividends to foreign investors, eliminated the secret ballot, and jailed thousands of political critics. The CIA coup ushered in 40 years of repression, resulting in more than 200,000 deaths and one of the most inhumane chapters of the twentieth century.

One of the most inhumane chapters of the still-young twenty-first century is the Darfur conflict. This complex crisis in the Darfur region of western Sudan is the result of decades

of drought, desertification, overpopulation, and a raging civil war. The United Nations (UN) estimates that the conflict has left as many as 450,000 people dead, and as many as 2.5 million people displaced.

Advocacy groups such as Amnesty International have long attempted to focus world attention on this situation, but it wasn't until outgoing United Nations President and Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan, Mukesh Kapila, called Darfur the "world's greatest humanitarian crisis" in 2004 that a movement emerged. In short order, Darfur was featured on MTV and shows like *The West Wing*. Celebrities like Green Day, Matt Damon, and George Clooney have worked to help bring attention to the conflict. Unlike the efforts to undermine democracy in Guatemala, the tools and techniques of persuasion are being exploited to mobilize people everywhere they live in the world.

**HOW TO ETHICALLY AND EFFECTIVELY LEVERAGE
APPLIED PROPAGANDA (WITHOUT ACTUALLY
OVERTHROWING A DEMOCRATICALLY-ELECTED
GOVERNMENT)**

To have great poets, there must be great audiences, too.

— Walt Whitman

As you can see, in one form or another, Bernays's tactics of persuasion—for better and for worse—remain deeply rooted in contemporary American culture. This is true in politics and, of course, business. And that should include *your* business.

In the modern marketplace, almost all buyers and sellers have access to the same technology. Differentiating oneself in

the midst of all the information changing hands at warp speed requires cleverness, creativity, and confidence (three characteristics Bernays had in spades). While many of us would be loathe to use the word *propaganda* to depict what we do to attract our audience, in a Bernaysian sense, it's an accurate description. When it comes down to it, one person's *propaganda* is another's *education* (and vice versa).

“Each of these nouns carries with it social and moral implications,” wrote Bernays. “The only difference between *propaganda* and *education*, really, is in the point of view. The advocacy of what we believe in is education. The advocacy of what we don't believe in is propaganda.”

What Bernays can teach today's marketer is indeed about *education*. In a market that is increasingly overstimulated and skeptical, you must use proven techniques to gain mass acceptance . . . and make the idea seem like it's that market audience's own. Reaching your target market in this manner takes audacity, but it's all for naught unless there is a story or lesson there to persuade that audience to consider your product or service. If you believe that what you have to offer has intrinsic value—if it's about more than just profit—you can ethically utilize propaganda to connect with a wider audience and to educate and inspire that audience once you have their attention.

Five Lessons We Can Learn from Edward Bernays

1. Recognize or create new markets

Let's revisit the “hardy breakfast” positioning. Bernays did not content himself with getting his client, Beechnut, a larger share of the established bacon-buying

population. Rather, his vision was bolder and ultimately, far more lucrative. He set out to drastically increase the actual number of Americans shopping for bacon and thus fashioned an entirely new market. Getting a bigger slice of the pie is fine, but Bernays took it to the next level: He created a larger pie.

Ask yourself: How many potential consumers are out there beyond perceived target markets and why aren't they being reached? What notions about our market can we create and leverage; what education can we provide that we currently are not?

By carefully looking at where your audience is today as determined by beliefs and experiences, you can often create a new experience that leads the market in a new way and leaves it forever changed. You not only create a new market identity but you create a niche in the marketplace that you fill before anyone else and become very difficult to knock out.

2. See with “new eyes”

If we were able to temporarily put aside the deceptive and unethical nature of Bernays's campaign to market cigarettes to women, we'd recognize a valuable lesson (besides *Don't smoke*). If Bernays had simply tried to address only the social taboo surrounding women and smoking, he would've had to go up against a deeply embedded societal belief (an immovable object if there ever was one). By looking at the issue from a fresh perspective, Bernays persuaded the average American to consider a new angle: women's liberation. The cigarettes became secondary to the “real” issue: equality. As author Marcel Proust once

said, “The only real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.”

Ask yourself: What is sitting—undiscovered—right in front of me?

3. Act locally, think globally

Edward Bernays once wrote: “Ideas are sifted and opinions stereotyped in the neighborhood bridge club. Leaders assert their authority through community drives and amateur theatricals. Thousands of women may unconsciously belong to a sorority which follows the fashions set by a single society leader.” Put into a more modern context: Individuals tend to follow trends. Marketers can exploit this straightforward reality in two primary ways:

a.) Help create a new trend

b.) Recognize an existing or emergent trend

Ask yourself: What development is lurking on the horizon that may affect my market, or what current trend has the potential to drive customers my way?

4. Get inside their heads

Being Sigmund Freud’s nephew gave Bernays access to the cutting edge in psychoanalytical thought and methods of persuasion. Bernays’s dissemination of Freud’s ideas taught businesses, marketers, advertisers, entrepreneurs, and yes, government officials, that persuasion is rarely about offering what people need. A deeper understanding of humans—their hopes, fears, desires, and so forth—made it possible to offer them what they dream about and truly want.

Ask yourself: How does my product or service appeal to consumers on a deeper level, and how can I create emotional content to bring this appeal to the forefront?

5. Be relentless

“Modern propaganda,” wrote Edward Bernays, “is a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an enterprise, idea or group.” Repetition works. Patience works. “The truth has to be repeated,” Pakistani scholar Eqbal Ahmed reminds us. “It doesn’t become stale just because it has been told once. So keep repeating it. Don’t bother about who has listened, who has not listened. . . . [T]he media and the other institutions of power are so powerful that telling the truth once is not enough. You’ve got to keep repeating different facts, prove the same point.”

Ask yourself: Do I give up too easily or expect results too quickly?

THE APPLIED PROPAGANDA STRATEGY

In my first book, *Persuasion: The Art of Getting What You Want* (Wiley, 2005), I shared with you that the difference between persuasion and manipulation comes down to one word . . . *intent*. When using Applied Propaganda, intent remains a key component in deciding whether the message you are spreading is appropriate or not. It isn’t my intention to ascertain for you whether it is or not, but I will ask that before you employ this highly effective strategy that you consider the following.

1. *Identify the people most susceptible to your message*—Subliminal persuasion, applied propaganda, and public relations work best when you initially target your audience carefully. The audience should be made up of people who are intensely curious about your offering. They may also be disenfranchised or feel left out. Your message should connect your audience to its other members and encourage connectors (those people who tend to reach out to others) to bridge the gap with the disenfranchised among your audience. Hermits are rarely the best to target with this style of messaging.
2. *Break your message down to the most easily understood piece*—The key to inducing message contagion is to create small, easy to consume, and easy-to-pass-on messages that have high emotional impact. The more people feel (literally) that the message was directed at them and their beliefs, the more likely they are to internalize it and pass it on.
3. *Choose your media*—People will often tell me that if they get on Oprah, it would change their life because so many people would hear about what they are doing. The challenge, of course, is that if what they are doing is not of interest to Oprah's audience at large, you are in front of a lot of uninterested people. For example, if you work in a niche, it is often much better and more profitable to be in smaller, targeted media than to appeal to a larger crowd. Also, first choose media that are supportive of your ideas to develop a following before you take on the ones where contention may exist. Contention can be a powerful tool because conflict is a key component of every good and enduring story. But you need to be

- prepared with an army of supporters and social proof before you take on a critic.
4. *Repeat your message as often as possible*—Beliefs develop as ideas become prevalent. The more people hear your messages in different places, the quicker acceptance occurs.
 5. *Employ social proof*—Demonstrate the movement by showing others who are already doing it. When people see others doing something specific, particularly in the media and especially when it is interesting, they are more likely to repeat it. Use testimonials, examples, figureheads, and so on to provide social proof.
 6. *Fully understand the public relations process*—By understanding exactly how to influence the media, you are better able to persuade your audience. Present the media with the information they need to spread your message in the format they want to receive it. Leverage new media (which I discuss in another chapter) to fully affect even the smallest niche audience.
 7. *Create common knowledge by publicizing your media through advertising*—Let your audience know what is true by reminding them through advertising and spreading the message further.

You must have an ongoing effort to most effectively leverage the applied propaganda strategy. Public relations and applied propaganda work because they are constant. The message is received through multiple media time and time again, until it becomes common knowledge, a truism. The ability for the message receiver to accept the message, repeat it, and then

act on it is the yardstick by which you'll measure successful implementation.

Subliminal Selling Secret

Sound bites are a staple of public relations, and they should be a staple of every person who persuades. A sound bite is a concise, easy-to-understand statement that can be made quickly and with great impact. Sound bites tend to be around one or two sentences long.

The challenge that many people have with sound bites is that they feel that they can't communicate a complex idea in one or two simple sentences. But, communicating a complex idea in a sentence or two is not the purpose of a sound bite at all. The purpose is to gain attention, generate intense interest, or stop an idea in its tracks, nothing more.

The best sound bites are created by taking the most interesting, volatile, agreeable, or obvious piece of the idea or argument and showcasing it. The focus of the effort is to get people to instantly understand and accept what you are saying. Sound bites can also be used to unravel other people's logic and arguments in the media when they don't have time (and are often not prepared) to respond to well-thought-out brief statements that are complete. A famous and very useful sound bite came during a Reagan-Mondale presidential campaign debate in 1984. When Reagan's age was brought into question, he responded, "I will not make age an issue of this campaign. I'm not going to exploit, for political purposes, my opponent's youth and inexperience." Another famous sound bite came from Johnny Cochran, a defense attorney for O. J. Simpson in Simpson's widely publicized murder trial in reference to a

glove found at the crime scene. Cochran's famous sound bite was: "If it doesn't fit, you must acquit."

When used effectively in the media or even one-on-one, sound bites are subliminally persuasive because they are an idea that the mind can grasp and that are easily remembered. When people are overwhelmed and overcommunicated, they will much more easily grasp ideas that are to the point and easy to understand. Finally, sound bites work because they seem to not need any interpretation; they make sense and drive people toward what appears to be a logical conclusion.

If you are going to persuade or educate using Applied Propaganda, spend time creating your sound bites. It will be one of the most profitable things that you can do.

Here is an easy way to remember how to use applied propaganda. "When you educate, relate, and sedate, the masses feel great." Feel free to quote me on that.

Implementation Is Everything

Money Follows Action

Before you read the next chapter, take the following actions:

Use Bernay's tactic of "seeing with new eyes" and look for opportunities to spin your current argument in a new way. See how you can recast or pitch your product or service in an unexpected way. Tie in a social cause; appeal to people's sensitivities or sensibilities.

Develop a back-of-napkin strategy leveraging Applied Propaganda through the new media, blogs, online video, social

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networking, wikis, and podcasts. The use of this free and oft-searched media is highly underused by most businesses today.

Begin thinking of your advertising and public relations efforts as education and see how it changes your efforts and propositions.

ESSENTIAL FURTHER STUDY

Books

Propaganda—Edward Bernays and Mark Crispin Miller
(Ig Publishing, 2004)

Coercion—Douglas Rushkoff (Riverhead Books, 2000)

The Culture Code—Clotaire Rapaille (Broadway, 2006)

Viral Video and Web Sites

“The Century of the Self”—Adam Curtis: search video
.google.com

Movies

Frontline: *The Persuaders* (PBS, 2004)