

Send in the salesmen

It struck me the other day, that as the recognized world leader in marketing, we're doing a pretty lousy job of selling ourselves *to* ourselves.

Yes, I'm talking (again) about the political parties and their candidates for the *big job*, as well as our beloved Congressmen and Senators. Imagine this... you have just developed a truly fantastic product. You're sure it's going to sell a gazillion units. You've called in the pitchmen from the Home Shopping Network to look it over. Hans, the quirky fellow that sells those Scam Towels (the towel that picks up 50 gallons of cola just by touching it for a few seconds) gives it a double thumbs up and high-fives you a dozen times before leaving the room floating on a cloud of enthusiasm while mumbling to himself how he's going to sell the hell out of this one!

Later that night you begin to have second thoughts. You've concluded that the intrinsic value of this product (here the reader can substitute political philosophy, economic policy, landmark legislation, etc.) is so great that it can sell itself. The more you think about it, the less you want to stoop to *selling* this product; that it would be beneath your dignity to do so. So, the next morning, you call Hans and politely tell him that the deal's off and that you're going your own way at which point he offers you 50¢ on the dollar for your entire inventory because, according to him, you're not going to sell a single one without him. Shocked, you hang up the phone and wonder if he's right and if you've made the wrong decision.

Welcome, my friend. You have just entered marketing purgatory – that no-man's land located somewhere between the fear of failure and extreme self-doubt, a place of constant angst where echoes of, "I told you so," reverberate off the walls of your own head. Don't you think this happens with lawmakers, presidential candidates and their staffs, too? Sure it does. They make the same stupid mistakes that our inventor friend has made, except many of them have committed THE most unforgivable marketing errors of all time...

They continually develop products that can't be explained, that never live up to their claims, that don't meet the customer's needs, and are too expensive to use. Yes, I'm speaking about legislation (pick a bill, any bill), campaign rhetoric and unfulfillable campaign promises.

I keep waiting for the candidates to turn their microphones over to the pitchmen to close the deal, but they never do! Instead, they enter the twilight zone with an endless loop of déjà vu by re-reading the same script that you just heard! What must the rest of the world, that has come to know if not love the great American salesmen, think of us? It must be a shocker to see our pros turn amateur, those same folks that brought the planet Coca Cola, McDonalds, baseball and iphones now stumbling around trying to find a truly great slogan or message.

Fear not. I've decided to give the presidential candidates a hand with a few slogans (by the way, the word slogan comes from the Gaelic words meaning *battle cry*). Here they are, first for the President: "America: Where opportunity is only a generation away," or "My America: Love it or divide it." Maybe, "America: It's all in the details." Finally, "America: You won't recognize it when I'm done with it!"

For the challenger, he should consider, "America: Our bottom line is yet to come," or "America: A tax shelter in every home." Maybe, "America: Club Med not Club Fed."

Admittedly, those slogans are very different, but that's what's needed now, SOMETHING DIFFERENT (shouting). Leave "Change we can believe in" in the political history books. Reviving it now would remind too many people of their circumstances. Better stick with the one being used on the side of 'Greyhound One' as he tours the battleground states, "Bet on America." That one will at least help him win back Las Vegas.

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