

**FRONTLINE**[®]

THE PERSUADERS

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Transcript

The Persuaders

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ANNOUNCER: It's everywhere you look.

BOB GARFIELD, Columnist, *Advertising Age*: You cannot walk down the street without being bombarded.

ANNOUNCER: They call it a "clutter crisis."

NAOMI KLEIN, Author, *No Logo*: Consumers are like roaches. You spray them and spray them, and after a while, it doesn't work anymore. We develop immunities.

ANNOUNCER: And the multi-billion-dollar advertising industry is in a desperate struggle to break through.

JOHN HAYES, Chief Marketing Officer, American Express: We don't just come forward with what we want to sell, we engage you with things that you want.

ANNOUNCER: Advertisers have blurred the line between programming and product.

SCOTT DONATON, Editor-in-Chief, *Advertising Age*: It's advertising that people not only will tolerate but will actually go in search of.

ACTRESS: [*"Sex and the City"*] The way God and Madison Avenue intended.

ANNOUNCER: But how is advertising affecting our lives and the world around us?

MARK CRISPIN MILLER, New York University: Once a culture becomes entirely

advertising-friendly, it ceases to be a culture at all.

ANNOUNCER: Tonight on *FRONTLINE*—

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF, *FRONTLINE* Correspondent: —ask me this all the time. What about the environment?

ANNOUNCER: Correspondent Douglas Rushkoff takes you inside the changing world of *The Persuaders*.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: *[voice-over]* A spring night in New York City, two men hunt for just the right building.

1st MAN: We're always looking for a new wall to kind of do our thing on.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: They may not look it, but these guys are preparing a guerrilla operation.

2nd MAN: Kind of just scope out for a good location, and wherever we end up, we end up.

1st MAN: This is where we're going in, this construction site right here.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: At last, they find the building they've been looking for. They line up the target in their sights. What's this covert mission all about? It's a new kind of urban warfare, a sneaker company's all-out battle for our attention.

BOB GARFIELD, Columnist, *Advertising Age*: You cannot walk down the street without being bombarded. You stand in an elevator looking at advertising in the corner of the elevator car. And you go to play golf and you go to pick the ball up out of the cup, and there's an ad in the bottom of it. And you look up at the sky, and there's skywriting. And you look at a bus passing, and there's advertising. And you walk in Times Square and you go, "Is this Las Vegas on the Hudson? Am I entrapped inside a pinball machine?"

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Welcome to the new American metropolis. Somewhere beneath all these ads is the city I grew up in. But over the last 20 years, it's grown a second skin, a twinkling membrane of commercial messages. Advertisers have become prospectors for new space in an ever more crowded landscape. Even a subway tunnel becomes the backdrop for an American Express promotion.

But advertisers have a big problem. The more messages they create, the more they have to create to reach us. It's led to a vicious circle of clutter.

MARK CRISPIN MILLER, New York University: They are the ones who make clutter. They are therefore also the ones who are always trying desperately to "break through the clutter." That's the line you always hear in ad agencies, "We can break through the clutter with this." Well, every effort to break through the clutter is just more clutter.

NAOMI KLEIN, Author, *No Logo*: I have a quote in my book from an advertising executive who says consumers are like roaches. You spray them and spray them, and after a while, it doesn't work anymore. We develop immunities.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: So what's an advertiser supposed to do, stop advertising? That's the one thing they know they can't do because the moment they stop trying to

persuade us, we forget about them.

EUGENE SECUNDA, Former Executive, J. Walter Thompson: Once you're in the game, you can't stop, if for no other reason than the competition will eat you alive.

MARK CRISPIN MILLER: What advertising has always wanted to do is not simply to suffuse the atmosphere but to become the atmosphere. It wants us not to be able to find a way outside of the world that it creates for us.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: So this is the way our world fills up with advertising. For years, I've been studying and writing about what I call "the persuasion industry." I've even worked in it. But I still can't say for sure where all this is headed. Where will the advertising arms race lead, to a world made of marketing? And what would that mean for us?

I set out on a tour through the modern machinery of selling to meet some of the persuaders up close. My first stop, a downtown New York storefront. I've been invited to a hit party, or something that looks like one. What this really is, is the opening salvo in a marketing blitz for a new airline. They call themselves Song. Song is a subsidiary of Delta Airlines, but you won't find any mention of Delta here. Delta is old-fashioned air travel, and Song is their way of persuading us that they can compete with hip, low-cost carriers like Jet Blue.

TIM MAPES, Marketing Director, Song Airlines: A lot of people ask you, say, "You got to be crazy. You're starting an airline into the worst environment in the U.S. – in the history of U.S. commercial aviation. And we were and we are."

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Delta broke off a team of their best marketers and told them to start from scratch. The first thing the Song team decided was that it wasn't enough just to launch a new airline. To get our attention, they had to invent a new culture around flying. But how do you do that? Song started with a trusted tool, the focus group.

[Song market research video]

FOCUS GROUP LEADER: The homework was, "Choose images, words, things that capture what might be your ideal experience of traveling by air."

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Before long, Song's research yielded a nugget. There was a large group of flyers whose needs and desires were being ignored: women.

WOMAN IN FOCUS GROUP: The food I think they can improve a lot, you know?

PAUL WOOLMINGTON, CEO, The Media Kitchen: It was an incredible insight to say that this could be the first airline that had, you know, a real, you know, understanding, much deeper understanding of women and women's interests.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: The Song team created a detailed profile of their target consumer and even gave her a name, Carrie.

TIM MAPES: She's got three children, a husband. They both work. They have an SUV and a sports car, Nieman-Marcus credit cards, but she shops at Target. She has got a propensity to read kind of high-end literature, but she finds guilty pleasure in *People* magazine. And she doesn't have an airline.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Song would have low fares, organic food and more

entertainment options. But most importantly, it would forge a real connection with women. To pull that off, Song turned to a pro, Andy Spade. Spade is the co-creator of the Kate Spade Company, a multi-million-dollar line of fashion accessories that caters to women like Carrie.

TIM MAPES: I think early on, when you're shaping a new brand, you need those brand visionaries. He's got a gift, and he's had it from the very first time we started working with him. And that's why we love him so much. He gets us more than we get ourselves.

ANDY SPADE: I bring ideas, kind of visualize ideas that companies have and give them kind of a substance and a texture and a life that they may not know how – how to create. And I bring that. I take their – their idea or their point of view, and I try to create this – make it into something that's bigger, maybe emotional, maybe optimistic, you know, maybe classical, maybe, you know, happy.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Spade's been charged with producing Song's TV campaign, the first impression the airline will make on many Americans.

ANDY SPADE: All right, why don't we start? Let me create a campaign for Song that was spirited, that delivered on the benefits that we think are the most important, do it in a way that's emotional, do it in a way that I think is optimistic because we believe that's part of the Song ethos. So we're going to take you through five different – different concepts and five different commercials that deliver on five different – different benefits which we believe differentiate Song from everyone else.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Spade is proposing to downplay the airline's new features in favor of something much more intangible: its soul.

ANDY SPADE: There's a book called *Lovers* here, which I don't know if – if any of you are familiar with the book, *Lovers*? I'll pass it around. But there's these sweet, sweet images, and we were kind of inspired by this a few times, of – of just people together, and mainly Godard and Truffaut movies and all those old French new wave films, and then there are American films.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Spade's commercials will show no planes, no travelers, no low fares, no airline. This is an enormously risky strategy. These commercials, as planned, will consume almost a third of Song's \$12 million marketing budget. If the campaign doesn't connect, Song will just become part of the noise. And Delta, at the brink of bankruptcy, cannot afford for its new venture to fail. At least one member of Song's team is nervous.

TIM MAPES: Well, the risk is you invest an inordinate amount of money behind a message that is a fairly ethereal message that, as I say, doesn't feed the bulldog. I mean, this is a business, this isn't an art form. So we have got to ensure that it's communication that drives commerce, not just makes people feel good.

The number one purchase driver for this category is, in fact, first price. The strategy is the everyday low price airline that happens to have more style and everything else that we're doing.

ANDY SPADE: The more we pulled back and tried to make it a very, very kind of literal delivery on a benefit, it just – it lost that emotion, and we wanted to keep that emotion.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Spade isn't backing off. He's not content just to convey information, he's aiming for something bigger.

ANDY SPADE: At the end of the day, you want to become a part of culture. And when you get to that point, you've created a huge success. And that's what all the great, great, I think, companies have done, from Virgin to Apple to others.

And I think by spending 25 seconds on – on the style and the spirit, this is a void in your category, and you have to get there first. That's more important than really building a spot around low fare. I mean, everyone, you know, is going to be low fare.

What really differentiates something from another thing? I think it's – it's creating kind of – kind of something that communicates to people on – on another level, beyond a logical level.

[www.pbs.org: More on Spade's TV campaign]

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: The question is an advertising classic: Should the pitch be aimed at the head or the heart? How creative can an ad get and still be an ad?

BOB GARFIELD, Columnist, *Advertising Age*: Someone once wrote a book called *Advertisements for Myself*. That's what advertising is, it's advertising for the guys who are creating it far more than it is for the guys who are paying for it. They're trying to win awards. They're trying to make more money. They're trying to build their own portfolio. They're trying to get a better job. They're trying to make up for the fact that they're in advertising and not directing films or doing stand-up comedy or painting paintings of whatever they would prefer to do, I guarantee you.

And the consequence is a lot of advertising that's quite extravagant in its look or very clever and entertaining and funny but which doesn't do the thing that advertising is supposed to do, which is make you want to buy the good or service that's nominally being advertised.

[television commercial] Look at the coffee as it gets darker and stronger!

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Not so long ago, the high-concept ads of today were all but unthinkable.

[television commercial] Soap has never smelled this good before, and neither have you.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Ads laid claim to real, tangible differences between one product and another.

KEVIN ROBERTS, CEO, Saatchi & Saatchi Worldwide: What were brands? They were based on what I call "er" words: whiter, brighter, cleaner, stronger.

[television commercial] –smoothest, mildest, tastiest cigarette–

KEVIN ROBERTS: Watch any commercials on American TV and you'll see these words up in the first three seconds hammered remorselessly into your brain.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: But at some point, these words ceased to have meaning. We no longer believed that one product was any brighter or cleaner than any other.

KEVIN ROBERTS: Everything works now. You know, French Fries taste crisp. Coffee's hot. You know, beer tastes good, unless you live in America and then, you know, you've got to live with what you get. But all these things now are table stakes.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: By the early 1990s, a new approach to marketing came to the fore, one that leapt right over what the product did to what the product meant.

[television commercial] You know it's not just a car, it's an expression of the culture, an aesthetic that is connected somehow to nature. Infiniti.

NAOMI KLEIN, Author, *No Logo*: These were the super-brands, like Nike, Starbucks, the Body Shop. And what they noticed these brands had in common was that they were engaging in a kind of a sort of pseudo-spiritual marketing. So Nike said that they were about the meaning of sports, but more than that, that they were about transcendence through sports. Starbucks said that they were about the idea of community, of place, that is, a third place that is not home, not work. Benetton was, of course, selling multi-culturalism, racial diversity.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: This lesson – that a brand could forge an emotional, even spiritual bond with today's cynical consumer – wasn't lost on corporate America.

[television commercial] What are you saying with your Chinet plates?

NAOMI KLEIN: This wave of corporate epiphanies in the mid-'90s, where all these companies, you know, were told, "You know, what your problem is, is you don't have a big idea behind your brand." So they would hire high-priced consultants, and they would have these kind of corporate sweat lodges and gather around the campfire and sort of try to channel their inner brand meaning. And they would emerge from these processes sort of flushed and say, you know, "Polaroid isn't a camera, it's a social lubricant."

DOUGLAS ATKIN, Merkle and Partners Advertising: When I was a brand manager at Procter & Gamble, my job was basically to make sure the product was good, develop new advertising copy, design the pack. Now a brand manager has an entirely different kind of responsibility. In fact, they have more responsibility. Their job now is to create and maintain a whole meaning system for people, through which they get identity and understanding of the world. Their job now is to be a community leader.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Ad strategist Douglas Atkin, an expert on the relationship between consumers and brands, says he had a eureka moment one night during a focus group.

DOUGLAS ATKIN: I was in a research facility watching eight people rhapsodize about a sneaker. And I thought, "Where is this coming from? This is, at the end of the day, a piece of footwear." But the terms they were using were evangelical. So I thought, if these people are expressing cult-like devotion, then why not study cults? Why not study the original? Find out why people join cults and apply that knowledge to brands.

FALUN GONG MEMBER: I'm loyal to this practice because it's done so much for me.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: If Atkin could find what pushed a person from mere fan to devoted disciple, perhaps he could market that knowledge.

WRESTLING FAN: Most of the people I discuss the WWF with know that it's not a sport, you know, it's a masculine ballet.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: So he compared dozens of groups he considered cults with so called "cult brands," from Hare Krishna to Harley Davidson–

VW BEETLE OWNER: If you're smart and kind of individual, that's what you drive.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: –from Falun Gong to Mac.

MACINTOSH USER: I think there's something about Mac users. Like, they get it.

DEADHEAD: We just had discovered something.

LINUX USER: They realized there are other people like them, and they cooperate on certain projects, and it's part of belonging to the tribe.

DOUGLAS ATKIN: And the conclusion was this, is that people, whether they're joining a cult or joining a brand, do so for exactly the same reasons. They need to belong, and they want to make meaning. We need to figure out what the world is all about, and we need the company of others. It's simply that.

Saturn is a really good example. It's a mass cult brand. For example, 45,000 people turned up to spend their holiday vacation time at the factory in Tennessee instead of going to Disney World or the Grand Canyon. Now, why would they do that? It's because they wanted to meet other people who own Saturns. They wanted to meet the rest of the Saturn family. They wanted to meet the people who made the car. The people who made the car wanted to meet them. And the people who ran the Saturn business knew that.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: They not only knew it, they turned it into an ad, which only brought more people into the "Saturn family."

[television commercial] We called it the Saturn homecoming. They could see where the idea for a new kind of car company had taken shape, and we could thank them for believing we could do it.

DOUGLAS ATKIN: They created a great meaning system for Saturn in those fantastic commercials. Their meaning system was based on old-time values of community. It was a kind of an icon that America yearned for but couldn't find anymore.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: And that's the object of emotional branding: to fill the empty places where non-commercial institutions, like schools and churches, might once have done the job. Brands become more than just a mark of quality, they become an invitation to a longed-for lifestyle, a ready-made identity.

KEITH REINHARD, Chairman, DDB Worldwide: The campaign for iPod is remarkable. When I see the poster as I'm passing by, when I go on the Web site and it comes to life and I hear the music track going, and then when I put my little iPod ear-pods on and I see the white cords against my black jacket, I'm in that poster, and the poster is me! And then the music, my music, comes over my iPod, and it's a brand experience.

NAOMI KLEIN: When you listen to brand managers talk, you can get quite carried away in this idea that they actually are fulfilling these needs that we have for community and narrative and transcendence. But in the end, it is, you know, a laptop and a pair of running shoes. And they might be great, but they're not actually going to fulfill those needs, but which serves them very well because, of course, that means that you have to go shopping again.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Ironically, this new, more spiritual trend in branding has ultimately put enormous pressure back on ad agencies. There are only so many big

concepts to go around. Starry-eyed advertisers looking to become the next big thing are constantly dropping one agency for another. This churning of accounts has left hundreds of agencies weakened and vulnerable to takeover by one of six mammoth holding companies: most notably Publicis, Interpublic, WPP, and Omnicom. Each has snapped up dozens of advertising, PR and market research firms, consolidating their operations and slashing jobs. This cutthroat economic climate means that for many ad agencies, their most important pitch of all is for themselves.

SCOTT DONATON, Editor-in-Chief, *Advertising Age*: There's a lot of fear in the agency business right now. They are basically becoming commodities, and they're trying to figure out how to differentiate themselves. And if you boil it down— if you went to the Web sites of the top 20 ad agencies and you looked at what each one uses as the slogan or the motto that they think differentiates themselves from their competitors, these things read almost absurdly like the same sentence cast a lot of different ways.

KEVIN ROBERTS, CEO, Saatchi & Saatchi Worldwide: Boy, does the world need breakthrough ideas.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Kevin Roberts is the CEO of Saatchi and Saatchi. What used to be the biggest player in the ad business is now a small subsidiary of a giant French holding company. In the weeks before we saw Kevin Roberts, Saatchi took a major blow, losing \$185 million in billings from its client, Johnson & Johnson, including the Tylenol account that Saatchi had held for 28 years.

But Roberts is undaunted. He thinks he's found a path to revive Saatchi's fortunes.

KEVIN ROBERTS: You feel the world through your senses, the five senses, and that's what's next. The brands that can move to that emotional level, that can create loyalty beyond reason, are going to be the brands where premium profits lie.

So we figured out what the answer was, that there was something in outstanding brands that—

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: What sets Roberts's big idea apart from his competitors' is its boldness. He claims he has discovered the formula to turn nearly any product into an object of devotion.

KEVIN ROBERTS: —that there were brands that connected, and there were brands that people loved. They didn't like them, they didn't admire them, they didn't respect them, they didn't use them. None of that wimpy-wompy stuff. They loved them.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Roberts calls his big idea "lovemarks."

[on camera] What is a "lovemark"?

KEVIN ROBERTS: A lovemark is a brand that has created loyalty beyond reason, that's infused with mystery, sensuality and intimacy, and that you recognize immediately as having some kind of iconic place in your heart.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Well, where's the mystery in a Cheerios?

KEVIN ROBERTS: Oh, Cheerios is full of mystery! Do you — I mean you don't think that people just eat these, putting them in a bowl, do you? And that's not how they eat them anyway. Most kids play with them. They make stories up about them. They imagine them. We shot this great commercial with a grandma and a baby.

[www.pbs.org: Read Kevin Roberts's interview]

[television commercial]

GRANDMA: You know how much Grandma wanted to be here for your first Christmas. She came a long way. You see, Grandma lives way down here. Brian, your cousin, he's a little bit older than you, he lives here, in Chicago.

KEVIN ROBERTS: You can build mystery, as long as you believe in the story.

GRANDMA: But no matter where Grandma lives, we'll always be together for Christmas.

ANNOUNCER: Happy holidays from Cheerios.

GRANDMA: You just ate Dallas!

KEVIN ROBERTS: You know, we've moved from brands into experiences. Look at Tide, for instance, in the U.S. Tide's no longer a laundry detergent. It's not about getting clothes clean anymore. All detergents get your clothes clean. Tide's about a much deeper – a deeper thing than that. It's an enabler. It's a liberator. It's – I guess you think about moving Tide from the heart of the laundry to the heart of the family.

[television commercial] Take me home, take me home, to my family–

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: *[voice-over]* I guess so. But how many brands ever really succeed in creating loyalty beyond reason?

BOB GARFIELD, Columnist, *Advertising Age*: There are a few examples when advertising really does cast a Svengali spell. AT&T has done it. Hallmark has done it. Coca-Cola has done it. But most of the people who've tried to make emotional connections with consumers over the years – by far the vast, vast majority – have failed. They've gone down in flames.

JOANNE SMITH, President, Song Airlines: Think about it this way. Instead of saying "That's so cool," you'll say, "That's so Song."

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Just six months after it was first conceived, Song Airlines is in the skies. What began as a new way to market Delta's lower-cost flights has emerged as a company-wide culture, an ethos imprinted onto every available surface.

JOANNE SMITH: You can never be the only carrier or the only product offering a certain attribute for so long. So what we're trying to do with Song is, there is a spirit that you can't copy. There is an emotional bond that we are trying to get with our customers that cannot be copied. We are not an airline, we are Song.

PAUL WOOLMINGTON, CEO, *The Media Kitchen*: I think Song, you know, is about a lifestyle. It's more than an airline. You know, our translation is we want to create a movement. We want to create a movement of people that are going to have an emotional connection with this company.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Song hired one of the world's leading branding agencies to create a name and a look like no other airline's.

AL ST. GERMAIN, *Landor Associates*: The logo is the easy part, it's, it's everything

else. It goes from the ticket jacket, to the boarding pass, to the screen on the kiosk when you check in, to what's on the back wall behind that kiosk when you check in, to what goes on the screen that says what time your flight is leaving, to what the gate area looks like. Then you move on board the plane. What does the outside of the plane look like? What does the inside of the plane look like? That means carpet. That means bulkhead patterns in front of the seats. What goes on the baby changing table in the lav? What does the lav smell like?

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Song not only branded their planes, they branded their people. Instead of holding job interviews, Song "auditioned" their flight attendants, then taught them how to "be Song," giving them scripts for what to say and how to act.

JOANNE SMITH: "Song" is becoming an adjective at our airline. So we've got an expression, "You are so Song." We can never do anything that's off-Song or off-tune. It has to be on-brand.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: *[on camera]* Did they kind of teach you to "be Song"?

1st SONG EMPLOYEE: Oh, no. We had Song in us before Song was Song.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: So they give you more permission to be Song?

1st SONG EMPLOYEE: They were, like, "You are so Song. Bring it, show it, right?"

2nd SONG EMPLOYEE: Bring it on.

1st SONG EMPLOYEE: Be it. Be Song."

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Have you every done anything that you were being and it turned out it wasn't Song? In other words, you're just so Song, in your natural state—

SONG EMPLOYEE: Always. Always.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: —you just live Song, do you?

SONG EMPLOYEE: When I'm sleeping, when I'm eating, when I'm breathing—

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: You're born Song.

SONG EMPLOYEE: —when I'm talking. I'm Song, baby!

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: *[voice-over]* But despite Song's enthusiasm, there's reason to wonder if they are breaking through the clutter. A dozen actors with Song TVs strapped to their stomachs got lots of puzzled stares in the streets of Boston.

PASSERBY: I'm not sure, but I'm either really drunk or some strange *[deleted]* going down!

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: But so did every other walking billboard. They've opened a new Song concept store in Boston, but it seems like one more distraction in a giant mall, and it may have raised more questions than it answered.

MAN IN STORE: So you're an airline?

SONG EMPLOYEE: Yes, we are.

MAN IN STORE: Or a travel agency?

SONG EMPLOYEE: We're an airline.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Can consumers see through all of this brand experience to the product Song is supposed to be selling?

MAN IN STORE: OK. Thanks.

SONG EMPLOYEE: You're welcome. Have a great day.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: If you scratch the self-confident surface of advertising, you'll uncover an unnerving anxiety. Is any of this really working? There's an aphorism as old as advertising itself: "I know I'm wasting half my ad dollars, I just don't know which half." What works? When does it work? And with whom? The whispered truth on Madison Avenue is that despite enough studies to fill a library, still, nobody really knows.

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, the executive producers and stars of *NYPD Blue* past and present!

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: This is the financial bedrock of the advertising industry – called the "upfronts" – where every year, network TV executives present their coming fall season and its stars and advertisers line up to buy commercial minutes. But in recent years, the model has begun to break down.

JOHN HAYES, Chief Marketing Officer, American Express: Where else in the world can you be convinced to pay more for a commodity that is experiencing diminishing returns?

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Giant advertisers like American Express are losing faith in the traditional 30-second ad.

JOHN HAYES: We, as advertisers, are paying more to reach less. Now, the definition of insanity is to continually do the same things over and over and expect different results, right?

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Television audiences are watching fewer ads. The networks are losing viewers to cable, and the appearance of digital video recorders like TiVo now allow people to zap the ads altogether.

PAUL WOOLMINGTON, CEO, The Media Kitchen: Advertisers are frightened, I think. They're sort of deer in the headlights – "What do we do?" And within, you know, a matter of five years, we will have a huge percentage of the country will be – you know, will have this technology. Five years, you know, isn't a lot of time in the – you know, in terms of creating new models.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: So what countermeasure have advertisers come up with to the remote-wielding viewer?

FASHION GUY: [*"Queer Eye for the Straight Guy"*]: Aside from the stuff I got at J. Crew, I went to French Connection. These are from Clark's – Steve Madden. And I got you some great eyewear from Ray-Ban!

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: If the audience is skipping commercials to get to the programs, why not become part of the programs themselves?

RICH FRANK, Fmr. President, Walt Disney Studios: If I were starting *Friends* today, instead of it taking place in a coffee shop, a generic coffee shop, if you were Starbucks, wouldn't it be great to have them meet in a Starbucks? You would never have to mention cappuccino. It would just be there.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Starbucks may have missed that opportunity, but the world's largest coffee chain caught a break on the next one. In the big-budget Hollywood movie *I Am Sam*, Sean Penn's character doesn't just happen to work at a Starbucks, Starbucks becomes a key character in the story.

SEAN PENN: [*"I Am Sam"*] I need to make coffee! I need to pay my lawyer!

MITCH KANNER, Integrated Entertainment Partners: The idea of taking a brand and integrating all of its assets into an idea where it becomes a hero – let's look at *Cast Away*, for example. We open up getting on a plane. The plane crashes. All but one person is killed. How bold was that of Fred Smith, the founder and chairman of FedEx, A, to allow it, but to do it himself? And at the end of the film, not only did we deliver the packages, but we found romance. How much better could you feel about the brand?

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: *Ad Age* magazine dubbed this alliance between New York's ad-men and Hollywood's studios, "Madison and Vine." It is the integration of entertainment with advertising, in a partnership that often begins before a show is even conceived.

ACTRESS: [*"Sex and the City"*] Meanwhile, Samantha had used her pushiness to parlay her new man's hit off-Broadway show into a hot on-Broadway poster.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: To mate a brand with the commercial-free HBO series *Sex and the City*, Absolut Vodka and HBO writers worked out a storyline in which one of the show's characters finds his way onto an Absolut billboard. HBO got to use the brand's name in a key plot twist, and Absolut got unprecedented access to HBO'S upscale audience.

ACTRESS: [*"Sex and the City"*] Guess what I'm drinking? An Absolut Hunk!

LINDA EATHERTON, Ketchum Public Relations: They created a drink called the Absolut Hunk.

ACTRESS: [*"Sex and the City"*] And you're delish!

LINDA EATHERTON: So we went to the producers of *Sex and the City*, and we said, "OK, we've got a real product and a real drink called the Absolut Hunk. We want you to weave an entire storyline around this drink and this product, so that it is unmistakably the conversation piece on Monday morning at the water cooler." It was quite the buzz.

ACTRESS: [*"Sex and the City"*] The way God and Madison Avenue intended!

EUGENE SECUNDA, Fmr exec, J. Walter Thompson: There are agencies, for instance, in Hollywood who go through every script before it is produced and find specific opportunities for automobiles, for beer, for virtually any product that you might want to name.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: One such agency is called Integrated Entertainment Partners, itself a marriage of ad executives and entertainment heavyweights, like ex-Disney president Rich Frank, who came out of retirement on his Napa Valley vineyard to grab a piece of the action.

[meeting at Toyota Corp. headquarters, LA]

RICH FRANK, Integrated Entertainment Partners: As the networks cease being able to generate the money to keep their shows going, they will be forced to change.

MITCH KANNER, Integrated Entertainment Partners: What we're talking about, essentially, is how do we look at this coming season's shows. We've started to look at the pilot season, to see what looks like it's new that's coming up and that would look good for Toyota.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: IEP looks for ways to integrate products into programs.

MITCH KANNER: We've all heard about *The Contender* this week, the DreamWorks/Mark Burnett show with Sylvester Stallone as the Donald Trump character, this show being a show about amateur boxers. How would that work for you guys, in terms of brand?

DEBORAH MEYER, Corporate Marketing Manager, Toyota: The first thing we look at, is there a strategic fit with our vehicles? So let's see, boxing. Is it – it's tough and our vehicles are tough. Is that strong enough of a match to make – you know, to get a good message across? What we're looking for is, it's obvious why this vehicle is the only vehicle that should be placed this way and then–

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Progress is slow. There are still cultural barriers between Madison Avenue and Vine Street.

SCOTT DONATON, Editor-in-Chief, Advertising Age: It's an uneasy alliance, if you will, and it's also– it's being driven, you know, by these economic imperatives. "My business model's broken, yours is broken, maybe we can lean against each other and make it better. Well, should I trust you? Can I trust you? What do you get out of it? What do I get out of it? Just give me your money and don't try and influence the creative process."

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Neither advertisers nor broadcasters are quite sure how much these integrated ads are really worth. Some predict the whole experiment will backfire. Have advertisers finally gone too far?

CONTESTANT: ["Survivor"] Could I get some more Sierra Mists?

BOB GARFIELD, Columnist, Advertising Age: There's no secret that the American public, and the public of every society on the face of the earth, is willing to consume crap. They consume crap, you know, from their cupboards and pantries, and they consume crap on television. But they're very particular about which is which, and they don't want to see them conflated. And they don't want the purity of their tele-crap to be adulterated by merchandising of the fast food crap. And they will rebel.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: But there is little evidence so far of an uprising among consumers or Hollywood creatives. In fact, more and more deals are being struck. This summer, the USA Network broadcast a movie called *The Last Ride*, written for the Pontiac GTO and paid for by the General Motors Corporation. *Variety* magazine called it "little more than a two-hour infomercial designed to sell muscle cars."

MITCH KANNER: If you can tell that it was advertising within the context of content, it didn't work, OK? It's not seamless enough.

ACTRESS: ["*The Last Ride*"] Pontiac is proud to bring you the all new, 2004 Pontiac

GTO!

MITCH KANNER: You can't talk about brand. It's all about how the writer and brand engage in that very, very interesting narrow space so that it feels natural.

BOB GARFIELD: "Oh no, it's not product placement. No, no. It's the seamless integration of merchandise and narrative." No! It's product placement! And whatever kind of, you know, MBA euphemism that you want to attach to it, it's still product placement.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Some advertisers are venturing even further into programming. BMW Motors took the first plunge in 2001, developing a new form, a perfect hybrid of ad and movie. BMW was not only the sponsor but also the creator.

SCOTT DONATON, Editor-in-Chief, *Advertising Age*: They had these eight-minute films shot by directors like Guy Ritchie, starring people like James Brown and Madonna.

ACTRESS: [*BMW Films, "The Hire"*] If you'd keep your eyes on the road instead of on me, we might be getting somewhere.

SCOTT DONATON: And they were beautiful little stories. BMWs had starring roles. They played integral parts in the plot lines. And they put these films on the Internet. It's advertising as a piece of entertainment in and of itself that people not only will tolerate but will actually go in search of. And BMW sales went dramatically through the roof in the years after these films aired.

[*"The Adventures of Seinfeld and Superman"*]

1st ACTOR: Do you have a reservation?

2nd ACTOR: Superman.

1st ACTOR: I don't see anything.

2nd ACTOR: Might be under Man of Steel.

1st ACTOR: Man of Steel, Man of Steel— oh, yeah, Man of Steel.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: American Express, with one of the biggest marketing budgets in the world, has followed suit. In the last 10 years, they've cut the portion of their budget devoted to television ads by more than half. Instead, they're pouring millions into a series of what they call "Webisodes" starring their corporate pitchman, Jerry Seinfeld, and directed by A-list Hollywood veteran Barry Levinson.

JOHN HAYES, Chief Marketing Officer, American Express: We're launching a new medium here. That should be central to everything we talk about out there in the market. This is about – because that's where Jerry's excitement has come from. You know, he has been proud to be part of, you know, creating something brand-new here.

AMERICAN EXPRESS EMPLOYEE: Then we're going to have on-line advertisement's going to pop up at the end of watching the webisodes, which is going to prompt people to apply for the card. We're going to get a lot of learning to see what's sticky about the site, what's engaging, and then what can we carry forth to other future experiences like this, because you know, this is all about interacting with the users in new ways.

JOHN HAYES: We did it because consumers want to be entertained. It has an American Express message built in. We think it's built in in a fairly seamless way. It doesn't interfere with the enjoyment of the entertainment. So the consumer gets something, and they start to see the value of a relationship with American Express. We don't just come forward with what we want to sell, we engage you with things that you want in terms of the entertainment.

ACTOR: [*"The Adventures of Seinfeld and Superman"*] And I'm invulnerable to damage, theft, or things bouncing off of a superhero's chest within 90 days of purchase.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: The boundaries between content and advertising are blurring in nearly every popular medium. Rock stars like Sting are partnering up with big brands and debuting their songs in advertisements as a way of reaching a wider audience. Even anti-establishment icon Bob Dylan starred in a hybrid of music video and ad for Victoria's Secret and got his CD stocked in their lingerie stores to boot. The times they are a-changin', some fear for the worse.

MARK CRISPIN MILLER, New York University: Once a culture becomes entirely advertising-friendly, it ceases to be a culture at all. It ceases to be a culture worth the name. It has to have the constant mood that shoppers require. There has to be a kind of Muzak playing in the background all the time.

Now, you think back to those dramas, those comedies that have really stayed with you, that have moved you tremendously, that you want to see again, that you think about for days. Well, those kinds of works are increasingly unlikely when the stuff that's on TV basically functions to sell Pepsis, to sell Nikes, to sell selling, to sell consumption.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Far away from the boardrooms of the entertainment industry, in places like this nondescript office park outside Boston, the nitty-gritty work of selling starts with a simple questionnaire about bread.

INTERVIEWER: And now what do you see as the disadvantages to eating grain-based foods?

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Today, faced with a nation hooked on low-carb diets, the baked goods industry needs to find out just how Americans feel about their products.

INTERVIEWER: I'm going to read you some different emotions. I've got a whole list of them here. For each one of them, I just want you to tell me yes or no as to whether you think you feel that emotion when you're eating white bread, OK? The first one is accepting. Do you feel accepting when you're eating white bread?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, I would say yes.

INTERVIEWER: Affectionate?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Lonely?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Disappointed?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Afraid?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Trusting?

INTERVIEWEE: No, I don't think that would be an issue.

INTERVIEWER: Would you feel uncertain?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, a little uncertain. I've got one question. Can I ask a question? The question was, "When you eat bread, do you feel lonely?" Have you found people that say, yes, they feel lonely when they're eating bread?

INTERVIEWER: Not a lot on this one.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Welcome to the strange world of market research—

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE, Market Research Guru: Now, we have to be careful because that's not politically correct to say women—

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: —where those who claim to have figured out the hidden desires of consumers are treated as gurus.

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: We all come from a woman. We all spend nine months inside of a woman, so women are expert in the inside. Translation: When a woman buy a car, the first thing she is looking at is, do they have cupholders?

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Dr. Clotaire Rapaille lives in a baronial mansion in upstate New York. *Fortune 500* companies and their advertising agencies flock there to drink French champagne, admire Rapaille's many cars and listen with rapt attention to his insights on the irrational mind of the American shopper.

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: And we have to understand for each product what the dynamic is behind that. What is it that people are really buying there? We still have people that buy things they don't really need. Sometimes a product is not expensive enough.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: What sets Rapaille apart from many other market researchers is his belief that consumers are driven by unconscious needs and impulses.

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: My experience is that most of the time, people have no idea why they're doing what they're doing. They have no idea. So they're going to try to make up something that makes sense. Why do you need a Hummer to go shopping? "Well, you know, in case I need to go off road." Well, you live in Manhattan. Why do you need a four-wheel drive in Manhattan? "Well, you know, sometime I go out and I go in"—I mean, this is— you don't need to be a rocket scientist to understand that this is disconnected. This has nothing to do with what the real reason is for people to do what they do.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Rapaille began his career as a psychiatrist in Europe studying autism.

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: My training with autistic children is that I had to understand what these kids were trying to tell me with no words, because they don't speak. Wow!

So then, that's part of my training. How can I decode this kind of behavior which is not a word?

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Rapaille claims that there are unconscious associations for nearly every product we buy buried deep in our brains.

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: One of my discoveries was that when you learn a word – whatever it is, coffee, love, mother – the first time you understand, you imprint the meaning of this word, you create a mental connection. And so actually, every word has a mental highway. I call that a code, an unconscious code in the brain.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Corporations love the idea of buying a single key to the psyches of vast numbers of consumers, a simple "code" that lies behind millions of individual decisions. Rapaille gave up psychiatry and says he has never looked back.

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: I have 50 of the *Fortune 100* companies as clients.

MAN: I saw that. That's very impressive.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Tonight Rapaille has been invited to speak to the Luxury Marketing Council of America.

GREGORY FURMAN, Chairman, Luxury Marketing Council: The premise of the council has been to bring the smartest minds in marketing together and help us all figure out ways to get money from the customers with the most money.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Rapaille has been commissioned by a handful of big companies like Boeing and Acura to "break the code on luxury."

GREGORY FURMAN: We're just delighted to have you with us.

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: Thank you. Thank you. *[applause]* I don't believe what people say. So some people listen to what they say and they say, "Well, do you want to buy that? Do you want to do this?" I don't believe what people say. I want to understand why they do what they do.

I found this word, and with that I want to understand you guys. And this is the word. I hope I didn't make a mistake. The right spelling?

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: To crack the code on luxury, Rapaille conducts a series of focus groups.

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: I'm serious. That's what I want to understand, how you feel about it. And anything for me is interesting.

WOMAN: Money?

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: Money!

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: He takes his subjects on what he hopes will be a three-stage psychic journey, past reason, through emotion to the primal core, where Rapaille insists all purchasing decisions really lie.

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: We start with the cortex because people want to show how intelligent they are. So give them a chance. We don't care what they say,

When people try to sell you luxury things, what kind of word they use?

MAN: Well made.

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: Well made.

Nothing new there. And then we have a break. They're usually very happy with themselves. "Oh, we did a good job," and so on. When they come back, now we're going to the emotions. And I tell them, "You're going to tell me a little story, like if I was a 5-year-old from another planet."

INTERVIEWEES: Once upon a time— *[laughter]*

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: So suddenly, they are into a mindset that is completely different. They don't try to be logical or intelligent, they just try to please the 5-year-old from another planet.

MAN: I will send you and your entire family to Maui.

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: They don't understand what they're doing anymore. Good! That's what I want. At the end of the second hour, when we go to the break, they say, "This guy is crazy. What is he doing? I thought I understood what we were doing. Now I don't understand anything. I mean, I get paid to do that?" This is excellent. This is what I want.

MAN: We're going to be chosen for a new reality show.

WOMAN: That's what it is, a reality show! Wait, there's 19 of us?

MAN: They're going to give you a million dollars, and they want to see how you spend it!

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: Then when they come back for the third hour, then there is no more chairs. "Uh-huh! What is going on here? How come no chairs?" And I explain to them that I would like them to try to go back to the very first time that they experienced what we're trying to understand.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Rapaille is hunting for our primal urges. He's after what he calls the "reptilian hot buttons" that compel us to action.

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: It's absolutely crucial to understand what I call "the reptilian hot button." My theory is very simple. The reptilian always win. I don't care what you're going to tell me intellectually, give me the reptilian.

RAPAILLE EMPLOYEE: So I'm going to turn off the lights now, and we're going to all relax together.

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: I want you to be in a mindset a little bit like the one you had when you wake up in the morning. You'll be surprised to see that things come back to your mind that you forgot sometime for 20, 30 years. It's amazing.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: The scribbles of consumers in the semi-darkness, half-remembered words and pictures associated with "luxury," somehow become Rapaille's keys to unlocking the luxury code.

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: Once you get the code, suddenly, everything start making sense. I understand why this car sells, this car doesn't sell. You know, I understand why— why a small \$29,000 Cadillac cannot sell. You know, I understand why. Because it's off code. Oh!

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Over the years, Rapaille has told car makers to beef up the size of their SUVs and tint the windows because the code for SUVs is domination. He told a French company trying to sell cheese to Americans that they were off-code.

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: In France, the cheese is alive. You never put the cheese in the refrigerator because you don't put your cat in the refrigerator. It's the same. It's alive. If I know that in America the cheese is dead – and I have been studying cheese in almost 50 states in America I can tell you, the cheese is dead everywhere – then I have to put that up front. I have to say, "This cheese is safe, is pasteurized, is wrapped up in plastic." I know the plastic is a body bag. "You can put it in the fridge." I know the fridge is the morgue. That's where you put the dead bodies, eh? And so once you know that, this is the way you market cheese in America.

[www.pbs.org: Read Rapaille's extended interview]

[television commercial] It just got easier to just say cheese!

LUXURY PROJECT PARTICIPANT: One word that kept coming up is – in the stories and I think in – is a "reach," reaching to the next level.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: While Clotaire Rapaille and his clients continue their quest to crack the code on luxury—

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: You know, it might be interesting to explore the difference between "first class" and "world class."

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: –Song Airlines is running out of time and money. A year into operation, the full marketing team convenes in Las Vegas to assess how the experiment in creating a lifestyle brand is working out.

TIM MAPES, Marketing Director, Song Airlines: On behalf of Song, I want to welcome everybody here to Las Vegas. This time last year, this airline was a project. We had to create a brand, a product, an identity and everything that is Song today out of absolutely nothing. This team has done an incredible job of introducing the brand called Song, this new airline.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: But there are clouds on the horizon. Parent company Delta is losing billions of dollars, and Song's marketing budget has been drastically cut. The intangible thing called Song must deliver some tangible results. To do so, it must penetrate the distracted minds of Americans. The news so far is mixed.

1st SONG MARKETING TEAM MEMBER: Right now, the greatest thing you've done so far is build a really solid brand identity for yourself. That's coming through completely clearly in the advertising. People are completely identifying with it.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: But while people are responding to the advertising, many consumers don't know what the advertising is for.

2nd MARKETING TEAM MEMBER: In terms of overall recall, 35 percent of our sample felt that they had seen you somewhere. Where we do start to see a slight problem is in terms of which airline do you think this advertising is for. We're losing

almost 50 percent at that point. So what we're calling our true recognition figure is those people who both saw the advertising and were confident and knew that it was for Song. And that was 15 percent of our sample.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Making matters worse for the Song marketing team, runaway success JetBlue has decided to go after the same markets as Song.

3rd MARKETING TEAM MEMBER: This one was unique. *The Boston Herald*, which is kind of like *The New York Post* or *The New York Daily News*, more of a tabloid-ish newspaper in Boston, sold their front page, actually allowed hard news to be pushed off the cover. So the entire cover looks just like a *Herald* cover, and if you were walking by a newsstand and you saw it, you were, like, "Wow, JetBlue must really be important because they're on the cover of *The Herald*," when they really weren't.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Song cannot compete dollar for dollar against JetBlue, so they must be more nimble.

4th MARKETING TEAM MEMBER: I think we're very much a guerrilla military force going out and fighting against the big guys. We're going to have to pick and choose our battles and do it wisely, placing media in places where you wouldn't necessarily expect an airline to be.

5th MARKETING TEAM MEMBER: –handing out at concerts branded earplugs–

4th MARKETING TEAM MEMBER: We like the scratch-and-sniff new plane smell.

5th MARKETING TEAM MEMBER: –nightclub hand-stamps, so instead of getting the club name, you would have the Song logo.

6th MARKETING TEAM MEMBER: –a fictional story where someone in need gets an invitation to a mystical villa on a little-known island off of Italy's coast. What does that have to do with Song? This is just one example of a story that might come out from Song Books.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: With few bankable ideas, Song's marketing effort more than ever will depend on its TV commercial. A few weeks later, the Song team flies out to Los Angeles to hear consultant Andy Spade describe his final vision for the commercial.

ANDY SPADE: We can also introduce it, like, from the side, like that the girl running through, like, this little kid runs by, and then suddenly, out of nowhere, comes, you know, this other woman who's kind of running through camera. So all these people are going toward this gate, which is obviously somewhere. These are happy people. It's, like, these are happy people. We're almost a voyeur watching these happy people running through this thing, and we're boarding them now. And I feel like you look at that, and you'll just say, Wow, this thing is about–

MARKETING TEAM MEMBER: A cross-section of–

ANDY SPADE: –these things.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Spade is scanning headshots for faces that exude the essence of Song.

ANDY SPADE: Models are wrong. You know, real people are wrong because it makes it very kind of pedestrian. Real people, but they looked like they were happy, not real

people, like *LA Law* people. They feel very Song. She feels very Song. He feels very Song.

TIM MAPES, Marketing Director, Song Airlines: Yeah, it's definitely coming together.

ANDY SPADE: It just brings you, you know, to this place, but not being weird.

TIM MAPES: Magical without being, like, surreal is kind of a tough thing to pull off.

ANDY SPADE: Exactly.

TIM MAPES: It's sure as hell hard to describe, so—

ANDY SPADE: It's very hard to describe. That's why it sounds corny saying it, but the pieces are coming together.

JOANNE SMITH, President, Song Airlines: It's just happy.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Spade's ad finally went on the air, but it may have been too little, too late. Though Song has built loyalty, its parent company, Delta, is careening towards bankruptcy and may bring Song down with it.

In Tuxedo Park, New York, Dr. Rapaille is also nearing the end of his process. He's ready to unveil the code on luxury. Rapaille's clients, who represent industries as diverse as insurance, automobiles and fragrances, are filled with anticipation. Having together paid several hundred thousand dollars, they are convinced the code will give them a competitive advantage, no matter what they're selling.

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: I think the code we discovered was there already a long time, you know, ago and is going to be around for generations and generations.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: We were not allowed to see the actual code. Its secrecy is worth a lot of money to Rapaille's customers.

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: The content might vary, but the structure is the same.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: But the clients, many of whom have worked with Rapaille before, are enthusiastic.

[on camera] So far, you're sold on what he's doing?

MARC SALMON, VP Dvt, Firmenich: Yes. I strongly believe in what he's doing. Strongly.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: *[voice-over]* Marc Salmon is the vice president for development at Firmenich, a Swiss fragrance and flavor designer.

MARC SALMON: We need to absorb the code, check it, create products that are in code, try to understand, looking at what is existing, what are the on-code and off-code.

BLAKE EMERY, Boeing Corporation: We're here because we're always looking for ways to be more competitive in the marketplace.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Blake Emery is an executive at the Boeing Corporation,

which has been working with Dr. Rapaille for almost a year.

BLAKE EMERY: The interior of our new airplane, the 7E7 Dreamliner, much of that interior is based on research that we did with Dr. Rapaille. Everything you see has an overt improvement, but there is also a hidden, unarticulated itch that we're scratching. And I can't give you an example of those.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: *[on camera]* So in other words, the bigger bin, if you find out—

BLAKE EMERY: But see, there's an obvious—

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: People see the bin as "Mommy." So then you make the bin shaped like Mommy, so now they get Mommy out of it? Or is there another feature somewhere?

BLAKE EMERY: No, no. You know, once this information gets out into the marketplace, once our interior is out there, the competition can copy it, right? You would say, "Well, why don't they just make a bin like that and then they can do just what we did." However, if you don't really know why we did the bin the way we did, you will not do it right.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: *[voice-over]* Of course, it's impossible to know if Rapaille's excursions through the collective unconscious really uncover what drives us, whether to Boeing airplanes or any other product. But even if he is onto something, you have to wonder about the net effect of reducing us to our most primal impulses.

[on camera] What about the environment? If the lizard wants the Hummer—

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: Right.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: —then— and the lizard's not going to listen to the environmentalist—

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: Right.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: —then isn't it our job, as aware people, to get the reptile to shut up and appeal to the cortex, to appeal to the mammal?

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: Now, you see, the problem is here, is that, if you think, right, the people who want to do good not always do good, all right? So the people that want to do good — for example, let's say, OK, we need to make smaller cars, right, to protect the environment. Then nobody buys the smaller car. Why? Because they're too small. So then the result is they go into trucks.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: *[voice-over]* Looks like I'm not going to win this one. After all, it's hard to argue against the reptilian brain.

CLOTAIRE RAPAILLE: We have to understand the unspoken needs of the people. It works. Good marketing research works. When we say it works, it means that marketers understand the real need of the customers — sometime unspoken — and they deliver. "Give me what I want."

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: "Give us what we want." It has become the imperative that no corporation — or any persuader — can afford to ignore. That's why modern political campaigns have also come to rely on an army of pollsters and market

researchers all taking the moment-by-moment pulse of the man on the street.

FRANK LUNTZ, The Luntz Research Companies: I've got a rule, which is cab drivers and antique dealers know more about America than anybody else. And when the cab drivers feel a certain way, I know I need to listen.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: No one has imported the techniques and philosophy of market research into politics more successfully than Frank Luntz. His suburban Washington mansion is a shrine to the public zeitgeist.

FRANK LUNTZ: Everything in here has a relationship to pop culture. It's what people prioritize in their lives. The truth is, as much as we want to focus on politics, the American people would rather watch television. As much as we want to talk about substance, they'd rather listen to music. So I have to know what they're watching, I have to know what they're listening to, and I got to know why.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Luntz has built his career on a simple idea: It doesn't matter what you want to tell the public, it's about what they want to hear. His clients have been some of the most prominent Republican politicians of the last decade. There was the mayoral campaign for Rudolph Giuliani in 1993, his work for Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, and especially his collaboration with Newt Gingrich on the famous "Contract With America," the document that ushered in the Republican revolution in Congress.

Luntz gives his clients one consistent piece of advice: Heed the public will.

FRANK LUNTZ: There's one technique that's more important than anything else, and that's the technique of listening. And that's basically what I do. I ask a lot of questions, and I know how to listen.

If an electricity company stood up and said, "We want to do it for your benefit, we want to do it for our benefit, we want to do it for everyone's benefit, and so we have a better approach to efficiency and to environmental cleanliness," is that kind of language positive or negative to you?

FOCUS GROUP MEMBERS: Positive.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Tonight, Luntz's client is not a candidate but a Florida utility wanting to build public support for a change in how it's regulated on the environment.

FRANK LUNTZ: I know that the public is very down on corporate America in general and they're down on power companies. So what is the language, what is the information, what are the facts, what are the figures that would get Americans to say, "You know what? My electricity company, it's OK."

"21st-century technology?" *[counting hands]* One, two, three, four. "21st-century approach?"

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Luntz's specialty is testing language, finding words that work.

FRANK LUNTZ: "Integrity?" One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven. "Reliability?" There's the other one. If an electric company can demonstrate accountability, responsibility and reliability when it comes to the environment, will that make you feel better about them?

FOCUS GROUP MEMBERS: Yes.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: It's art that even his political opponents seem to grudgingly admire.

ROB STEIN, Democratic Strategist: Frank Luntz doesn't do issues, he does language around issues. He figures out what words will best sell an issue, and he polls them and he tests them and he focus groups them and he comes up, issue by issue, with how to talk about it and how not to talk about it.

FRANK LUNTZ: If the language works, the language works.

LUNTZ EMPLOYEE: I know. It's just amazing.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Luntz has sold his corporate and political clients the idea that a few carefully chosen words can make all the difference. But he's not just looking for any words. Luntz's quarry are those words that grab our guts and move us to act on an emotional level.

LUNTZ EMPLOYEE: It is amazing that those two words, constantly, in everything that we do, come up at the top.

FRANK LUNTZ: So why do you think that companies don't use them enough?

LUNTZ EMPLOYEE: I don't know!

FRANK LUNTZ: 80 percent of our life is emotion and only 20 percent is intellect. I am much more interested in how you feel than how you think. How you think is on the outside, how you feel is on the inside, so that's what I need to understand.

You're going to use these to register whether you agree or disagree, whether you believe or disbelieve. The dials go from zero to 100.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: To get at his subjects' gut feelings, Luntz has them register their moment-by-moment responses to a speech by a power company executive. Republicans are on the red line and Democrats on the green. Luntz is watching for both sides to meet in an emotional crescendo.

FRANK LUNTZ: Climbing, climbing, climbing. "Changing fuels." Bingo! Look! "Phasing out of older plants," he's now up into the mid- to upper 70s with that. You're replacing the bad with the good. It's almost like in with the good air, out with the bad. That might be an analogy that we might want to try, instead of the automobile analogy. This is going to work. Watch. This will work. Check it. I told you! The words work. The words apply to the policy. This how we're going to sell it. Look at this! Hold it. Stop, stop!

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: By the end of his session, Luntz thinks he's found the language his client can use to create a groundswell of public support.

FRANK LUNTZ: Now I'll be able to walk to this electricity company on Monday and be able to say to them, "Your policy makes sense, and here's the language to explain it." That was the eureka moment, when I watched people nod their heads, I watched them look to each other, and they were willing at this point to fight for this position.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: But watching Luntz work, I couldn't help wondering: Do the words he's found help the public see the issue more clearly, or do they disguise it? Is

Luntz listening to us so his clients can give us what we want, or so he can figure out how to make us want what they have to sell?

ROB STEIN: This is a guy who is merchandising ideas and merchandising a movement and merchandising a political party. And in many instances, the words that he says are the ones that resonate, are ones that make – that obscure, to some extent, the issue.

NICHOLAS LEMANN, *The New Yorker*: The right name makes the policy sell better. It's just like putting a name on a bar of soap or any other commercial product. It matters what you name things.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Journalist Nicholas Lemann wrote a profile of Luntz in *The New Yorker* magazine called "The Word Lab." He described how Luntz once turned public opinion simply by replacing the name "estate tax" with the more emotionally charged "death tax."

NICHOLAS LEMANN: As far as I can tell, in the entire developed world, every single country had an estate tax, and it was completely uncontroversial all over the world. And it is clearly the case that this construction, this rhetorical construction of calling it the "death tax," took it from the realm of something everybody was for in a just unquestioned way into something that most people seem to be against and is on its way to being eliminated.

FRANK LUNTZ: Look, for years, political people and lawyers – who, by the way are the worst communicators – used the phrase "estate tax." And for years, they couldn't eliminate it. The public wouldn't support it because the word "estate" sounds wealthy. Someone like me comes around and realizes that it's not an estate tax, it's a death tax because you're taxed at death. And suddenly, something that isn't viable achieves the support of 75 percent of the American people. It's the same tax, but nobody really knows what an estate is, but they certainly know what it means to be taxed when you die. I'd argue that is a clarification, it's not an obfuscation.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Luntz has admonished Republican politicians to talk about "tax relief" instead of "tax cuts," and to replace the "war in Iraq" with the "war on terror." He once told his party to speak of "climate change," not "global warming."

FRANK LUNTZ: What is the difference? It is climate change. Some people call it global warming, some people call it climate change. What is the difference?

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: It apparently made enough difference to Republicans that they began to use "climate change" almost exclusively.

Sen. JAMES INHOFE (R-OK): –cause global – cause climate change.

SPENCER ABRAHAM, Secretary of Energy: –the President's global climate change initiative–

Vice Pres. DICK CHENEY: –climate change research–

Pres. GEORGE W. BUSH: –and we must address the issue of global climate change.

FRANK LUNTZ: I don't argue with you that words can sometimes be used to confuse, but it's up to the practitioners of the study of language to apply them for good and not for evil. It is just like fire. Fire can heat your house or burn it down.

Pres. GEORGE W. BUSH: *[television commercial]* I'm optimistic about America because I believe in the people of America.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Still, the rise of consultants like Luntz has led to an increase in the emotionality of American political campaigns.

Sen. JOHN KERRY (D), Presidential Nominee: *[television commercial]* We are a country of the future. We're a country of optimists. We're the can-do people.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: More and more, electioneering, particularly political advertising, has left behind facts for visceral appeals.

BOB GARFIELD, Columnist, *Advertising Age*: If you're looking for an example of how advertising is a really corrosive force in society, I advise you to look away from consumer product advertising and just look at political advertising because it's a stain on our democracy. You know, if you're selling soup or soap or oatmeal, one thing you basically have to do is tell the truth – not the eternal truth, but the factual truth. So by and large, advertising is essentially truthful, except political advertising, which year after year – and it gets worse every year – is just the artful assembling of nominal facts into hideous, outrageous lies.

ANNOUNCER: *[anti-Kerry commercial]* Raising taxes is a habit of Kerry's.

ANNOUNCER: *[anti-Bush commercial]* He supported tax breaks for exporting jobs.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: In fact, while consumers are protected by law from false advertising of products, politicians can legally say pretty much whatever they want.

VETERAN: *[Swift Boat Veterans for Truth commercial]* John Kerry lied to get his Bronze Star.

ANNOUNCER: *[anti-Bush commercial]* For Bush, drug campaign profits come first.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: The ads leading up to the 2004 election, according to many experts, were the most deceptive ever.

ANNOUNCER: *[anti-Kerry commercial]* Pressured by fellow liberals, he's changed his position.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: All this noise has worn many voters out. To fight political ad fatigue, marketers have had to get creative. The idea that emerged in a major way in this past election is a twist on an old strategy: reaching out to voters on a one-to-one basis. They call it "narrowcasting."

ROB STEIN: We are at the threshold of a revolution in political communication. What we're about to see is the ability to send very directed messages to very small audiences on an ongoing basis anywhere in the country.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: These canvassers for America Coming Together, a liberal advocacy group, did some of the first experiments with narrowcasting techniques in the run-up to the 2004 election. Every afternoon, ACT canvassers here in the key swing state of Ohio were given the names and addresses of potential voters. They were sent into the field with a lot of information about each of the voters they were visiting, profiles compiled by computer from demographic data, including exactly what issues the voters were likely to respond to. Each ACT canvasser was armed with a Palm Pilot that could play a short customized video.

ACT CANVASSER: If you don't mind, I just have a clip that's not even one minute that I just wanted to show you about some of the issues that I just mentioned.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: This potential voter was being shown a movie about job losses for African-Americans in Ohio.

ANNOUNCER: [*Palm Pilot video*] African-American unemployment has skyrocketed to a 10-year high—

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Elsewhere, other Ohioans were seeing different video messages tailored to their own personal demographic profiles.

ANNOUNCER: [*Palm Pilot video*] Ohio has gone backwards.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Right now, there are only a few different messages, but pretty soon, if all goes according to plan, they will be customized for dozens of different demographic groups.

PETER SWIRE, Ohio State University: If you want to get up to 51 percent of the vote, you probably have to assemble a coalition of 20 or 30 or 50 demographic groups. So as a modern candidate, you will want to have a strategy for how to communicate with each one of those demographic groups. You want a targeted ad on the gun control, on the pro-life, on the military, on the economic issues. You're going to want to have a message that's tailored for each one of those groups. If you don't do it, you're putting out broadcast ads in a narrowcast world.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: But where did all this information come from? How did political parties and advocacy groups know whom to reach with what message? The answer to that question begins here. The Acxiom Corporation of Little Rock, Arkansas, is one of the biggest companies you've never heard of.

Somewhere in these acres of blinking computers is carefully guarded data about you, not just your name, address and phone number, but probably also the catalogs you get, the cars you've bought, and maybe even what shoes you wear and whether you like dogs or cats. Acxiom's information is culled from census data and tax records, those product surveys you answered and customer records supplied by corporations and credit card companies that are Acxiom clients. Acxiom sifts all this data to produce lists of target consumers for their clients.

PETER SWIRE: If you're a company, a bank, a retailer, what you would do is say you want left-handed people of a certain ethnic group, and they're going to be able to do a list for you. You can get marketing lists of Hispanics who make between \$20,000 and \$40,000 who are U.S. citizens. You can get marketing lists of people who suffer from incontinence and have bought those kinds of products in the pharmacy. You can get all sorts of things that can be very narrow.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Acxiom divides all consumers into one of 70 different types they call "lifestage segments," encompassing everything from what hobbies you have to what products you buy, where you live to what you believe in. According to Acxiom, I am a "shooting star": 36 to 45, married, wake up early and go for runs, watch *Seinfeld* reruns, travel abroad and no kids yet.

We're working on the kids part, but Acxiom probably already knows that. Their computers are programmed not only to figure out who we are now, but where we are going and when we will get there. What Acxiom is promising is nothing less than the solution to clutter: Send us ads only for products we really want, and anticipate just

when we will want them.

RICHARD HOWE, Chief Marketing Officer, Acxiom: You can't just now take an ad and put it on TV and hope for the best. You have to get smarter about your consumers. You need to understand their purchasing predisposition. You need to understand how they're changing. You need to understand more about them. And that's technology.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Of course, the prospect of finding the right audience at the right time is irresistible to politicians, as well.

TERRY McAULIFFE, Chairman, Democratic National Committee: I'd like to welcome everybody to the grand opening of the new headquarters of the Democratic Party of the United States of America!

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: In recent years, both parties have bought data from Acxiom and companies like it. The Republicans don't talk about how they use it, but the Democrats do.

TERRY McAULIFFE: But if I want to sit at my desk, pull up on the screen the state of Ohio, and say, "Who in Ohio says that education is going to be the number one issue they're going to vote on," six seconds later, 1.2 million names will pop up. I then have the ability to hit buttons and do telemarketing to them immediately, or to send emails to them immediately, send direct mail to them immediately, or actually send someone to their door to talk to them.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: One Democrat found narrowcasting just in time. John Kerry's victories in the 2004 Iowa and New Hampshire primaries were national news, but few knew the whole story of Kerry's stunning comeback. He was behind in the polls and couldn't find a way to reach voters through all that political noise. But the Kerry campaign had discovered a way to identify and talk to thousands of voters who'd been turned off by political ads. It wasn't campaign workers who found them, it was a couple of off-the-shelf PCs sifting reams of demographic data.

Overseeing the operation was a little-known Kerry consultant named Kenneth Strasma.

KENNETH STRASMA, Kerry Campaign Consultant: Democratic primary voters in Iowa and New Hampshire were getting called by 10 different candidates for months and months, and it was getting very hard to reach people. So what we did is, we looked at all the information we had from the folks we'd called so far and came up with a Kerry voter profile, which gave us the percent likelihood that someone would say, yes, they'd support Kerry, if we called them.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: This sort of voter profiling – which both parties used to chase down swing voters in the general election – incorporates behaviors we don't normally associate with voting, like whether you have caller ID, a sedan or a hatchback, or more than one pet. The thing about narrowcasting is that it gives politicians a chance to say things to some people they might not want others to hear.

[on camera] You can take the most controversial message that maybe wouldn't work on TV but still deliver it to the 20,000 people in a certain district who will respond favorably to it.

KENNETH STRASMA: Oh, absolutely. There are – some of the biggest motivators in terms of issues are also the most divisive issues. On one end of the spectrum, you've got abortion rights, pro-life/pro-choice, and you've also got gun control and gun ownership rights. And those are both messages that people aren't likely to go up on TV with in a

national campaign because they're very polarizing. But there are advocacy groups on both sides who've gotten very good at figuring out where their voters, who vote based on those issues, are and getting a message to those people without necessarily getting a divisive message to the whole electorate.

GEORGIA PROTESTER: Roy Barnes sold all us Georgians out!

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: In 2001, President Bush's chief strategist, Karl Rove, conducted a series of experiments in narrowcasting for the GOP. The following year, the state Republican parties put Rove's findings into practice. In Georgia, they were used in a campaign to unseat a slew of incumbent Democrats.

VOTER: I mean, it – you know, the flag did have something to do with it.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: The GOP used the incendiary issue of the Confederate emblem on the Georgia state flag to galvanize a select group of usually apathetic male voters.

GEORGIA PROTESTER: You mess with our flag, you pack you bag!

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Targeting their message door-to-door and through telemarketing, the team drove high numbers of rural males to the polls and delivered a Republican sweep.

STUART EWEN, Hunter College: When you start sending messages which appeal to sort of, you know, white people in pick-up trucks, and then you're also sending messages to black people in Cleveland, and it's a qualitatively different kind of message, you're really trying to stir – or you're really trying to appeal to those aspects of people which sees themselves as different from each other.

PETER SWIRE: Instead of being Americans, we're sliced into 70 demographic groups. We might be sliced into hundreds of subcategories under that. And then the worry is that we don't share anything as a people.

STUART EWEN: The result is living in a society where people, rather than having an idea of the common good, increasingly see their own personal well-being or their own community's or ethnicity's well-being as the essential issue of democracy.

[www.pbs.org: More on what this is doing to us]

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: Sorted and sifted, we slip easily into our demographic tribes, each of us focused on our own list of needs and desires. which, after all, is exactly the way marketers want it. because as long as we're thinking about ourselves, we're better consumers.

MARK CRISPIN MILLER, New York University: Take a look at advertisements per se. What is their ideology? What is their message? What do they value? What do they ask of us?

[television commercials]

We see you.

There's no limit to what you can accomplish.

MARK CRISPIN MILLER: Commercials say to us, endlessly, "You come first."

[television commercials]

Any way you want it!

It will let out the seat for you.

I didn't even have to leave home!

MARK CRISPIN MILLER: You are the focus of attention. You matter. An army of one, you see.

Because you're worth it!

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: It does feel good to live in a world where we come first, where our every desire is mapped, our every thought seems to matter. The persuaders listen to us when others won't, and tell us we can be anything we want to be. Best of all, they make us feel powerful.

KEVIN ROBERTS, CEO, Saatchi & Saatchi Worldwide: The consumer is now in total control. I mean, she can go home, she's going to decide when she buys, what she buys, where she buys, how she buys. Oh, boy. They get it, you know? They are so empowered at every age. All the fear's gone and all the control is passed over to the consumer. It's a good thing.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF: It was near the end of my tour through the landscape of persuasion that I came to realize how the problem of clutter finally gets solved. Marketers find a way so deep inside each one of us that it no longer feels like persuasion at all. Maybe we are in control. Once the market becomes the lens through which we choose to see the world, then there's no "us" and "them" anymore. We're all persuaders.

STUART EWEN: The secret of it all, the secret of all persuasion, is to induce the person to persuade himself.

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ANNOUNCER: This report continues on *FRONTLINE*'s Web site, where you'll find a forum with Douglas Rushkoff and others on the new techniques of persuasion, why we're vulnerable, what it's doing to us, what we can do about it, a look at the concerns over the Internet's virtual marketing and a look into the research on how cultural messages act on the brain, plus *FRONTLINE*'s extended interviews with those featured in this report and a chance to watch the full program again on line. Then join the discussion at pbs.org.

Next time on *FRONTLINE*: They're rolling back prices—

Wal-Mart has given an increase in income to every American.

ANNOUNCER: —rolling back competition—

It's more efficient and more powerful. It is destroying competitors.

ANNOUNCER: —and rolling jobs overseas.

Wal-Mart basically tells its suppliers, "You need to move to China."

Wal-Mart's putting people out of work. That's what it's doing.

ANNOUNCER: *Is Wal-Mart good for America?* Next time on *FRONTLINE*.

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