

REBRANDING AMERICA

By Mark Silber

"How is it that the country that invented Hollywood and Madison Avenue has such trouble promoting a positive image of itself? ... If any nation has been a greater force for good in the long and tormented history of this world, I'm unaware of it. We have guarded whole continents from conquest, showered aid on distant lands, send thousands of youthful idealists to remote and often inhospitable areas to help the world's forgotten. Our generosity is a matter of record, from rebuilding our defeated enemies to feeding tens of millions around the world."

--Rep. Henry Hyde

To: The Secretary of Advertising

From: The Society of Image-Making Professionals

These days, we talk a lot about American values. But we rarely discuss America's value proposition. Simply put, our messaging is a mess.

If the US were a corporation, its VP Marketing would get canned and its account would go into review. Our target audience believes we are evil, when in fact we are good. Talk about failing to communicate your USP!

Fortunately, brands can be turned around. Right now, America is like New Coke, and our customers just aren't buying. But our nation will emerge from this crisis, stronger than before, as beloved America Classic!

YOU LIKE US, YOU REALLY LIKE US
We've given the world so much. But does the world ever say thank you? Perhaps not everyone is aware that all the good things they love come from us. Levis. Marlboros. WindowsXP. Stinger shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles. We need to do for the US, say, what Archer Daniels Midland does for soybeans: show we're essential! Life

wouldn't be the same without us! Why do you think there's a Starbuck's on every street corner?

THANK YOU, AMERICA!

Of course, it's not just consumer products. It's military prowess. We envision a TV campaign along the lines of that old Paine Weber classic—ours is tagged, "Thank you, America!"

Open on a Kuwaiti sheik standing proudly in his oilfield Dissolve to Panamanians, applauding as Noriega is led away in disgrace ... Fade to the Berlin Wall, crumbling in slow motion ... Then quick cuts: a Grenadan, a Haitian, a Hutu hugging a Tutsi ... Serbs cheer as a G.I. slaps the cuffs on Milosevic ... The soldier winks as if to say, "Just doin' my job, ma'am." Punctuating each sequence, a local citizen turns to the camera and says, "Thank you, America!" in thickly accented English ...

Think of this as a classic partner/channel management effort. We must remind our resellers why our brand is superior. Also, a tie-in with Disney at the retail level wouldn't hurt.

WE ARE THE (MUSLIM) WORLD

Take all our most famous Muslim celebrities—Kareem Abdul-Jabbar,

Muhammad Ali, Cat Stevens, Jesse Jackson—and get them all to sing a song together. We already have a jingle-writer working on this. You'd be surprised how many words rhyme with Afghanistan, e.g., Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Al Jazeera will broadcast the concert live!

PRODUCT PLACEMENTS

The war against al Qaeda represents an opportunity for Corporate America to leverage one of its favorite marketing tools—product placements. Having trouble digesting your Meals Ready-to-Eat? America would like to give you some Alka-Seltzer. Tired of MRE's? We'll air-drop Kraft Lunchables instead (and how about some coupons while we're at it?). Perhaps Nike could design a new "fleeing" shoe? And isn't the Afghan landscape the perfect setting for a new Jeep Liberty spot? It's America's way of saying, We're right here with you ... ready to address your need-state.

WE ♥ ISLAM

There is a great misperception that America is making war on Islam. To counter this notion, we propose a "WE ♥ ISLAM"

campaign, complete with posters, T-shirts, and choreographed Broadway performers. To enhance the impact of the message, we recommend stenciling this tagline on the ordnance being dropped on the Taliban.

Other ways we can show solidarity with our Muslim brethren:

- During Ramadan, McDonald's renames flagship product the "Big Mecca."
- Announce we are changing name of beloved TV series to "Kate and Allah."
- Tone Loc redoes "Funky Cold Medina" as a paean to Islam's other holy city.
- "I SLAM FOR ISLAM"—every time an NBA player dunks, we donate a dollar to the Northern Alliance.
- Britney Spears reveals new look: completely veiled from head to toe.

Madame Secretary, today we are seen as the Great Satan, but in reality, we're the Great Santa! Every day we remain silent, our competitors—you know, the evil ones— increase their share-of-voice, making our task more challenging. The most fearsome image-making machine the world has ever known is at your disposal.

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