



## The Business of Love

***Saatchi & Saatchi Worldwide CEO Kevin Roberts blazes a trail of love. He explains why investing in powerful emotional connections between a company's people, clients, brands and beyond delivers the ultimate return – loyalty beyond reason.***

Love is central to our lives. So why are we so desperate to keep it out of business? And yet, when I put love and business together, why do eyes always start to shine?

In the eighties we pursued the perfect organization. Endless restructuring, re-engineering, downsizing, delaying, centralising, standardising and cost cutting. We were in danger of disappearing up our own rhetoric.

In the nineties we raced after technology to perfect ourselves. We forgot we needed a business plan, a revenue model, a customer benefit, an experienced leadership team. Result? The dot-com-dot-gone-tech-wreck.

Now we're down to earth in the zeros. Economies are soft. Politics are hard. Societies are terrorised by complexity – and by terrorism itself. Business is struggling in the face of questionable ethics, attention overload, brand commodification and consumer omnipotence.

Demand for meaning in commercial relationships is morphing the value proposition. This demand transcends the producer-consumer exchange system. It is a call from those who generate value and a declaration from those who seek it.

When I first used the "L" word three years ago CEO's made for the hills. Ever since they've been coming back down.

The business magazine "Fast Company" picked up on my Love message in 2000. By the next year "Fortune" magazine was quoting me and asking: "What's love got to do with it?" On checking the massive shareholder wealth created by emotional guys like Jack Welch and Herb Kelleher, they reckoned quite a bit.

"Fast Company" got in on the act again with its February 2001 cover story: "Love is the Killer App". Soon advertising was falling in love. Chrysler launched a new tag-line: Drive = Love. Volkswagen stamped love on the bug. Ford have put their heart into it.

Now love is knocking on the boardroom door. Senior Vice President at Toyota USA Don Esmond crystallized the new Toyota challenge: "It's time to move from the most respected car company in America to the most loved." Procter & Gamble, the biggest consumer products company in the world, have changed their inspirational dream to "We make every day better by creating and building brands that people love".

Business in a tough, see-through world is about relationships not transactions. The most powerful relationships are founded on the deepest emotional connections. Love cuts through the clutter. It goes where we take it, defying convention and classification.

That reality extends to the veil between personal and commercial relationships.

Invest love in business and you connect a company with its people, its brands and its customers. You cultivate enduring relationships that provide the highest return on investment imaginable - loyalty beyond reason.

### **Love on the Inside**

Consumer goods fast-mover Barbara Thomas said "You have to love the products if you are going to sell them." That principle has canonical relevance.

Love can't be faked or half-baked. Just as you know if you are in love or not, so purchasers' sense and reward when a product, service or experience is charged with emotional power.

To love what you're selling you have to believe in what you're doing. Saatchi & Saatchi sells world-changing ideas. How do we inspire our creatives? We build them an elastic-sided sandbox, pose them a simple killer problem, give them zero time to solve it, and get the hell out of their way!

Once the problem is solved the question is: how to inspire continuously over time? With tough unconditional love and challenge. By telling your people all the time that you love them and their ideas, and you'll support them no matter what. By always challenging them to aim for the next peak of achievement.

A challenge of love took Saatchi & Saatchi from 4th at the Cannes International Advertising Festival in 1999 to 3rd in 2000 to 1st equal in 2001 to number one in the world in 2002 by a margin double our nearest competitor. In parallel, it's seen our revenue grow for five years running.

Most people spend most of their waking life at work. How important then is that we love what we do and feel loved and challenged as we do it? Getting emotion back in the workplace will be a relief to everyone. Bringing love, family and dreams to work is a world changing idea.

### **Love on the outside**

You have to give love to get it. That applies doubly in a commoditized, commercial context. It applies even more in societies with emotional deficit.

The way we live is accelerating demand for meaning. In France, the number of people living alone has doubled since 1968. In the UK, three times as many adults live alone as 40 years ago. Four in 10 Londoners live alone. Fifty percent of households in Munich, Frankfurt and Paris now contain just one person.

People are seeking love in relationships with products, services and experiences because traditional sources of love – husband, wife, family, church - are growing distant. In this vacuum, emotional connections have premium value.

Brands and businesses become great because they win the love of their consumers and clients. Through mystery, sensuality and intimacy they surrender ownership and become Lovemarks.

*“Lovemarks delight.*

*They dazzle. They tap into dreams and desires. They inspire loyalty beyond reason for premium reward.”*

In 2002 science stirred. Harvard professor Douglas Holt found that many mega-brands retain long-term power because they provide imaginative resources for people to build their identities. University of California research confirmed that brand names engage the emotional, right hand side of the brain more than other words.

All this is academic. Love is a sensation. Read for the jolt... Apple iMac or Thinkpad? Harley Davidson or Suzuki? New York or Boise, Idaho? In the 60's Volkswagen was an inspiration of love. VW promised that no matter who you were - or where - your VW would make you one of us.

Richard Branson totally gets it. The epitome of Virgin is people power. Like Herb Kelleher's Southwest airlines, Virgin gives the finger to the corporate giants on behalf of its customers and then delights them with an unforgettable experience. Virgin's attitude is wild at heart. I'll buy anything that has "Virgin" on it. It's not a brand. It's not a corporation.

It's not even Richard Branson. It's me.

### **Love all over**

When I ask people whether they'd rather work for a company that's liked or loved, 100% of them go for love. Love retains employees and inspires them to peak perform. Who wants to work for a gutless, faceless corporate anyway? Or worse, for one pilloried for its social or environmental exploitation?

Lovemarks love the world and the world loves them right back. Turtle Island Resort in Fiji's Yasawa Islands is one emotional trailblazer. Every year the five star resorts' successful owners turn the plush suites into operating theatres and fund operations for locals afflicted with blindness-causing diseases.

Capitalism is the only system with a future. All other systems have failed. The role of business is to make the world a better place. By creating wealth? No. By building self-esteem – self-esteem through employment, through challenge, through opportunities. Implant self-esteem and wealth and balance follow.

Businesses that don't practice inclusive capitalism are on the way out. Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan touched on the paradox of intangible wealth: "Trust and reputation can vanish overnight," he said. "A factory cannot."

The idealism of love is the new realism of business. If you want to be part of the future, start by loving in the present.

For more information, see: [www.saatchikevin.com](http://www.saatchikevin.com) and [www.lovemarks.com](http://www.lovemarks.com).

Worldwide feedback on the power of emotional connections can be viewed at: <http://www.lovemarks.com/community/backchat.htm>