

**To Tell The Truth, I Was Terrified**  
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**for Sekret Firmy - October 2005**

SEKRET FIRMY: The Russian edition of your book entitled Lovemarks is coming out one of these days. Why would you want to write it?

KEVIN ROBERTS: Because I was scared. Honestly, I was just terrified. I realize that all brands are becoming exchange commodities. All shampoos make hair shiny, all beers taste well. Therefore, the power switches from producers to retailers. I thought that this was a bad omen for the companies that Saatchi & Saatchi works with, such as Procter & Gamble and Toyota. And I began speculating about what will come after the brands, which era will replace the era of brands.

SF: So, the book is the fruit of your speculations about the new age in the marketing?

KR: That's exactly right. I started thinking if there was anything better than the brand. Probably, something, in which you can place all your trust. However, I realized that this would not take me far. For example, you don't marry a woman whom you just trust; you marry a woman whom you love. People don't merely respect the most successful trademarks for their quality and price, they really love them. Those are the lovemarks, the marks that people love. So I decided to write a book about that. Now it's translated into 16 languages, because the idea of love is clear and close to everyone.

SF: In other words, you think that people need to love yogurts and shampoos? Don't you think that it's too much?

KR: Well, love is a metaphor. Love has many meanings. I love my wife, my mother, my homeland, and a restaurant. These are different types of love. Don't take love literally. It's an idea, a concept.

SF: I got it. The question is how to create a lovemark?

KR: Call us at Saatchi & Saatchi. We will do everything you need.

SF: Can I do it myself?

KR: Yes, you can. You should begin with respect. For example, I use a Samsung cell phone. First and foremost, this is a good product. It is fairly priced, the size is good, and it works fine, combines a phone, a camera, a video camera and an MP3 player in one. In other words, the product design deserves respect. But this is not enough. Now you need to add some magic. For example, create a special

design that would stir the emotions. It must make me perceive a phone as something individual, something custom-designed for me personally. It must not look like just another phone, but something that is part of myself. When I pull out my phone, it must be able to speak volumes about me as a person. It must say that I'm cool, sophisticated and hip. In other words, love must be added on top of respect. Just take a look: doesn't Lovemarks look differently than any other business book?

SF: It looks like Re-Imagine! by Tom Peters.

KR: Well, yes. By the way, Tom Peters thinks that my Lovemarks is the best book of 2005. He says so on his website. We wanted the book to impact the senses. We have chosen the red color for the cover, because it is very sensual. We decided to use the paper, which is 30% more expensive than the regular one, that is why the book has an unusual scent. We have used many colors inside the book. We have inserted multicolored pictures. There is no particular order in the sequence of chapters, so you can start reading at any page. Finally, the book has my picture, which brings me closer to the reader. There is also a picture of my house, my wife and my mother-in-law. Have you ever seen a book with a picture of the author's mother-in-law? That way, we try to make not just any book, but a lovemark.

SF: Wait a second, but earlier, during the age of branding, everybody was also talking about the need to create quality products with classy design, which must help consumers express themselves... What's new here?

KR: You see, there are three words on the wall of our Moscow office, which are "mystery, intimacy, sense." This is the way to the lovemark. This is what is new. Nobody has ever put these three concepts together.

SF: What are you trying to say?

KR: Look, the marketing is built on information. The goal is to let people know as much information as possible. Our product is better, less expensive, whiter, faster or cleaner. But this is a waste of time. Consumers think with their heart, they are annoyed by the information. That is why I say: "No-no, the more you know about something, the more bored you get." The more you know about your wife, the sooner you'll dump her. I've been married for 32 years, because I'm not out of home for three weeks out of four, and I always want to see my wife. First thing, we need a mystery. Secondly, we need some intimacy.

Most of the commercials that I've seen in Russia are devoid of the personal touch. They educate or inform, but nobody needs this. Today, people across the world feel the lack of protection because of the economy, diseases, terrorism and job insecurity. They seek protection, intimacy and sincere relations. People don't want just transactions, they want to feel that the bank does take care of them.

Lovemarks make us feel that they understand us, that they listen to us or speak the same language as we do. Almost all commercials in Russia tend to yell. When you come home and talk to your wife you don't yell, do you?

SF: You mean, the commercials must be intimate? Is that it?

KR: No, the concept is much broader. If the advertisement is somewhat intimate but the situation at the stores doesn't change a bit, nothing good will come out of it.

SF: How can anything intimate be done at a store?

KR: Here's an example. When I come to a restaurant, the maitre d' greets me: "Hello, Kevin". This is exactly what I mean.

SF: This is not interesting. What is interesting is how the Tide detergent can establish intimate relationships with the consumers.

KR: For instance, I come to a supermarket where Tide runs a show for the kids. If Tide manages to do the show in a way that my kids were dreaming of, that would mean they are close to the customer. Or, if the producers of the diapers direct me to a web site where I can get some expert advice about the infant hygiene, then I, being a mother, will think: "This is great!"

SF: Mystery and intimacy are now clear. What do you mean when you talk about the senses?

KR: Most of the brands appeal only to one or two senses, that is sight and hearing. Successful lovemarks must appeal to all five sense channels. SF: Martin Lindstrom wrote a book about the sensory marketing, Brand Sense. Are you familiar with it?

KR: Lindstrom? We have similar outlook on the world. The only difference is that he is a consultant and I am a practitioner. By the way, Lindstrom also said that Lovemarks was the best book that he read in 2005. Interestingly enough, Tom Peters also realized that all the consumers' senses must be impacted. But I was the first one to do it.

SF: How convinced are you that three components are enough to establish a lovemark?

KR: We've been studying this subject for five years already. I'm 100% convinced.

SF: What kind of studies are these?

KR: We have taken up for analysis hundreds of the leading world brands. We have studied the car-making industry, beer and diaper, credit card and many other markets. We have considered them from the perspective of mystery, senses and intimacy. We then stacked it up against the success of these companies. Let's take motorcycles as an example, OK? Harley-Davidson or Suzuki, which one is a lovemark?

SF: Harley.

KR: There you go! If Suzuki were selling for half the price of Harley, were twice as fast as Harley and had a 20-year longer lifespan, they would still be plain freaking bikes. Harley-Davidson nothing in common with the other makes whatsoever. They are a lovemark. People love the idea freedom, and they love Harley. iPod is another example. I live in Manhattan and I share the neighborhood with Robert de Niro. This is the place where the white fat guys live. When you go to a bar and put on a regular player, you leave the bar alone. If you put on an iPod, you leave the bar in the company of other white fat guys. It works that way, because iPod is a lovemark. We grew up in the marketing environment, which tried to make the product indispensable. Instead, iPod tries to be irresistible. Take Virgin Atlantic...

SF: Excuse me, but they write above these trademarks in all the books, and each author explains their success in his own way. Honestly, these examples are slightly annoying...

KR: There is a reason why we all talk about these brands: these are global brands, and such examples make sense in any country. But I can give you other examples, too. I don't think you've read anything about the Prius car. Well, Prius is a lovemark. It enjoys a mind-blowing design, very individual, very sensual. You don't even need a key to start Prius, you just press a button and the car is ready to go. It is mysterious, because it has a hybrid motor, which uses equal proportions of gas and electricity as fuel. It is also a very good value for money. Even Leonardo di Caprio and Brad Pitt own these vehicles. They have already sold 50,000 of these cars in America. This is a lovemark. And when you create lovemarks, you cannot be stopped.

SF: Same as the Palm Pilot, which you mentioned in your book? Of late, Palm almost lost the market to Pocket PC. Tell me, who needs a lovemark when it doesn't protect against a defeat?

KR: The problem of Palm is that it lost the consumers respect, because others were evolving while Palm lagged behind. Becoming a lovemark is difficult; staying a lovemark is still harder. You need to win over the love each and every day. You can fall out of love after you have fallen in love. I think you understand what I mean. You cannot stop moving forward.

Here's what happened at Nike. At first, it was merely a product: you could just run a little bit faster due to the good quality of the shoes. Then they started building the brand with the Just Do It slogan and excellent advertising. Then, they became a lovemark mainly due to one person, Michael Jordan. And then everything went downhill: Jordan left, the company's rating dropped and the earnings followed. Today, Nike tries to become a lovemark again. The road to the lovemark is a long and tough journey.

SF: What tools are used to create mystery, sensuality and intimacy? Have you developed them?

KR: Yes, we have created a lovemark approach. We can analyze any mark, any market and say who is respected, who is loved and who is a lovemark, both respected and loved. We have studied the American politicians. Everybody likes Bill Clinton, but nobody respects him. Nobody likes or respects Bush. However, Kennedy is a...

SF: Lovemark?

KR: Exactly! Another tool we have is called a lovemarker. We walk you through 10 levels of mystery, 5 levels of establishing intimacy with the consumer and your brand gets its place on the "market of love".

SF: Have you already tried your lovemarker on anyone? KR: Of course, we have. They told me at Pepsi: "We believe that we make the best tasting beverage today, but we want to get closer to the younger generation". We started changing the communication channels, placed the commercials in the video games, recorded tone rings for cell phones, worked with young stars and sponsored David Beckham, who enjoys frantic popularity with the youngsters.

Toyota is another example. They came to see me and said: "Kevin, we want you to turn Toyota into the most loved automobile corporation from the most respected one it is today." So we helped them to modify their advertisement style. We helped them distance themselves from the image of the car on the road to the image of the driver behind the wheel of a Toyota car. We added a human touch to their advertisement.

SF: How did the idea of five senses impact Toyota?

KR: They have changed the design. It used to be functional. Now their cars have developed more rounded shape, and the interior design is different. Large cars are replaced by the compact ones, so that the person can feel more privacy inside of it.

SF: I have an impression that Toyota still has a long way to go before it becomes a lovemark.

KR: We are getting there. Toyota is already the best-selling car in America.

SF: But this doesn't mean that it is the most loved one, does it? KR: That's correct, but this is a solid starting ground. The brand enjoys respect. We can now add some love to it.

SF: What do you think, why is the concept of lovemark hasn't yet become as popular as branding?

KR: That's because lovemark is something new, while branding is familiar. However, lovemark holds the future and will survive the brand. We are talking about the future today.

SF: When is it going to begin at last?

KR: Actually, the future is now.