

ADVERTISE

The buyer needs a thousand eyes, the seller not one. George Herbert

Buying and selling is essentially antisocial. Edward Bellamy

My pen name is Av Madison and as you might gather from my alias, I am in advertising. You may never have heard about me because I have always preferred to remain in the background. Actually, amongst my peers, I am considered the best. My string of successes has not nor will it ever be bested. Also, as you can and most assuredly, will perceive, I am no shrinking violet. Since I have achieved a ridiculous pinnacle of success in this most competitive arena and acquired more money than I can ever spend, or so I thought, I have decided to divulge how I attained this triumph in the following brief narrative. If it elicits much interest I will write a detailed autobiography revealing all.

I come from a rather ordinary middle class background. I was a below average student who barely managed to eke out a pass. I was a poor athlete, socially inept, especially with the opposite sex, and totally non-descript in appearance. In other words I was the invisible one in a crowd. I did have one talent, which I subsequently discovered. I was a natural born salesperson. I could sell just about anything to nearly anyone. The idea that a good salesperson must believe that the product being sold measures up to what is being claimed is totally fallacious. A good hawker is nothing more than a believable liar, able to convince people to buy things they do not need at prices that are ridiculous or ones they cannot afford. Despite my social drawbacks, I was such a person. To this day I do not understand why I have this talent.

I quit school after barely graduating from Junior College. With my parents' blessings, (They were quite happy to see me leave.) I went to the big city to make my fortune. I did not have a clue what I was going to do for living. I started by scouring the want ads and by a stroke of good luck responded to a clerking position being offered by an advertising agency.

This agency quickly became my niche. I had found my natural milieu. It did not take too long before I was able to convince the Head of the Ideas Section to give me a chance. He provided some old accounts that had been relegated as non-resuscitatable. Much to everyone's surprise including mine, they quickly bought our advertising slogans. Somehow I was able to convince these companies to use my advertising suggestions even though they were unbelievably trite. For example, "The month of May is dedicated to Mother's Day. Come out our way to Merl's to buy her some pearls." Another is, "By far, you are the car I wish to drive as long as I'm alive." I spewed this nonsense out for about a year. Then, I started to realize that while I was quite good at selling advertising, there were others, representing the competition, who were either my equal or were better. I came to the stark realization that I needed a new approach, something innovative and dramatically different and one that could not be emulated.

For many months I racked my brains fruitlessly. Then I stumbled upon a book that dealt with subliminal messaging (Hidden Persuaders by Vance Packard), a technique that used various ways to influence purchasing choices. It got me thinking. What if I could find a universal persuader, one that could convince everyone exposed to it to purchase a

specific product whether they wanted or needed it or not? It became clear to me that I needed help from a professional with an appropriate background in psychology. I wanted someone who was unknown but expert in this field. Luckily the various international psychological associations listed their members by specialty. It took very little time to find one. He was a shy and somewhat retiring professor of social psychology in a backward university. I approached him and made him an offer he could not refuse. By sheer coincidence he had been working on a related topic, namely on what drives certain people to become addicted to shopping (Shopaholics).

Contrary to common belief, men are just as preoccupied with purchasing as women. The only difference is what they tend to buy. Men concentrate on their toys and gadgets such as, automobiles, electronics and tools, while women on items they believe enhance their appearance such as cosmetics, clothes and jewelry. Actually, as it turned out the differences between the sexes is totally irrelevant. The need to procure is equally strong in both.

Without going into details, my psychologist friend came up with the universal persuader. He let loose the genie from the bottle. He had learnt that there was a gene responsible for compulsive-acquisitive behavior. He also discovered which one it was and that it could be turned on or off. His most important discovery was how to do this subliminally. We now had every advertiser's dream and every consumer advocate's nightmare.

To test our discovery we decided to start with a relatively unknown brand of soap. Within two weeks it was outselling every other soap in the market. Everyone thought that it was because of a jingle I had composed for that soap. "Don't mope with soap. Ring the bell – with Elle – our Gel." I had trouble refraining from bursting into laughter when I won a series of advertising awards for that opus. I quickly opened my own advertising agency and in record time I surpassed all my competitors. Every product that I promoted quickly became a best-seller. The manufacturers had a great deal of trouble meeting the demand and had to increase their productivity by orders of magnitude.

It hardly took any time for me to become one of the world's richest men. Everything was going along swimmingly. I had bought out most of my rivals leaving me alone on top of the advertising heap. Could anything go wrong? I did not think so. I was categorically mistaken. I am sure that you are all familiar with the old adage, "Man Plans, God Laughs." He/She/It must still be hysterical with hilarity. The first inkling that something was amiss manifested when we started examining sales charts. While the products we had promoted were still at the top, other brands of the same products were also increasing their sales.

Somehow our universal persuader had gotten away from us and was convincing customers to buy the product and not the brand. We quickly realized that what we had wrought was an epidemic of rampant, obsessive, mindless consumerism, which threatened to become deadly. The populace was spending far more than it was earning. They could not pay their bills and as a result many were turning to crime. Personal bankruptcies went out of control, so much so that many banks had to close their doors. All sectors of society had become fanatic consumers. Of course, the wealthy even more so, simply because they had the means.

The local and global economies were becoming so chaotic that horrendous conflicts of a magnitude too terrible to contemplate were becoming a real possibility. All were so busy

with their predilections that no one had taken the time to examine the effects on the environment of over-production that was rapidly depleting non-renewable energy resources and was despoiling the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we devour. It appeared that we were facing a series of calamities that might become the ultimate doomsday.

Something had to be done. Despite some reservations, we decided to turn off the gene responsible for addicted purchasing behavior. Much to our chagrin, nothing happened. If anything, things got worse. Withdrawal symptoms raged in an uncontrollable manner and the well known psychological twist, 'Cognitive Dissonance', played a prominent part since it was a means to justify all the previous obsessive behaviors.

We were at our wits' end. We had not foreseen this mainly because we had never carried out a "Technology Assessment". But worst of all, we had never considered the possibility that we would ourselves become addicts. Actually my confrere never did since he never watched TV, read the newspapers, listened to the radio or surfed the net. He didn't even have a computer. He was an unrepentant recluse. On the other hand, I became a total addict. After all, I was responsible for creating the ads and therefore was obliged to view them.

My addiction soon necessitated a purchase of a larger domicile, which in turn, quickly became too small so that I had to buy another and another and still another, just to have places for all my purchases. It did take too long to run through my personal fortune. I even went so far as to borrow money from nefarious, lending institutions at usurious rates.

I am now broke. I am no longer capable of buying anything. In any case, turning off the gene has just started to take a positive effect. My addiction is lessening as well as the withdrawal symptoms. Using my skills as an advertiser, I am desperately trying to recoup part of my fortune by attempting to sell all those ill-gotten items. The trouble is that all potential customers are in the same quandary as I am. I am now a total failure as a merchandiser. No one is buying. I have no idea of what is in store for all of us, economically and politically although we have achieved the environmentalist's dream, a CONSERVER SOCIETY.

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