



# Business Brain Trust – Brian Kurtz and Steve Dworman

Here is a manuscript of when Jay Abraham met Brian Kurtz and Steve Dworman

**BRIAN KURTZ:** I think the people that have followed a lot of direct marketing principles on the Internet, using the Internet as an example for a moment, have done pretty well. Those are the most successful entrepreneurs today online who I think have respected the principles of direct marketing that go back to Sears Roebuck.

**JAY ABRAHAM:** Yup, me too.

**BRIAN KURTZ:** Also, I think that I continue to get --- I mean, as a good direct marketer, I continue to get hives on a regular basis from “the three P’s” --- promotion, publicity and public relations, basically the non-memorable forms of marketing. And I think that if there’s an umbrella above everything that I would say about these principles, lessons and factors that translate everywhere, it’s probably to be a slave to measurability, a slave to measurable advertising.

A couple of quickies, though... I would say that the principle that Dick Benson taught me, one of the great direct mail geniuses of all times, of do what you do best, and buy everything else around the corner, and the importance of outsourcing, translates everywhere to everything I’ve ever done in 27 years. To start figuring out all the things that you’d like to do on your own, as opposed to buying it around the corner, is in and of itself the way to throw away millions of dollars.





Second, I think, is a premise that I learned from Gordon Grossman, another direct mail genius who actually is responsible for building The Reader's Digest back in the 1950s and early 60s, and he has a quote that says, "First find out if you have a business." Now, while that sounds very simple, it's the biggest mistake I see in business over the last 27 years, in any business regarding marketing, and that is, somebody gets a great idea, and they try to do too much, too soon, or they try to test too many elements, or too many different concepts at the outset. Where, all you want to do at the outset of any project in any medium is to find out if you have a business... to find out what's the basic business here, and then we'll figure out how it's scalable later.

And then a third one (I said, "a quickie") the third one is another quote from a great consultant named Adel Auerbacher, who was the Executive Vice President of Meredith Magazines, and was responsible for, if not the launching of Better Homes and Gardens and Ladies Home Journal, he certainly built those magazines. And his quote is, "Follow the anecdotal evidence." And what that means is that, that's exactly how we got into the infomercial business. I started seeing that there were people that could sell books on TV. I started seeing that there was a format that seems to be working, and you keep following the anecdotal evidence, and believe it or not, that seeing other people doing good things can make --- can sometimes be applicable to your own business, with your own style. So that's one that permeates all media.

A fourth thing, I would say, is always ask in any meeting that you're ever in, discussing any marketing, sales --- anything --- somebody in that room must stand up at some point and ask the question, "Where does the money flow?" And if you don't ask that question, you're going to end up in many, many projects, in many, many different media that people are talking you into that are never going to get any kind of a return on investment.





So think about very quickly at the outset of doing any marketing project in any medium, where is the money going to flow?

Number five is a saying that we live by here at Boardroom, and that is, “Nothing is turn- key.” So that when you put a bunch of ideas on the wall at a brainstorming meeting, thinking that something is low-hanging fruit, make sure you look at it very, very closely before you make that assessment for sure, because nothing is turnkey. There’s always going to be details.

Number six is all don’t have to be home runs. What do they call the guy or gal who graduated last at Harvard Medical School? Doctor, is the answer to that question. So they don’t all have to be home runs, and a lot of doubles add up to a very nice business.

So again, these are just basic principles, and I think --- the last one I’ll just mention, is something that is sort of part of my makeup as a businessman, and not just in terms of marketing, is don’t live in 50/50. Don’t live in a world that says, “If I’m going to make a deal, or I’m going to try to negotiate better media, or I’m going to do this, or I’m going to do that,” and it always has to be not just win-win, but it’s got to be 50/50 all the time, I think you’re going to be barking up the wrong tree. I think to do some 60/40s not in your favor, to do some 70/30s, not in your favor to get into a business, to get some results, to see what the real profit pie looks like, and then negotiate a little bit later down the road... as opposed to being stubborn in a 50/50 mentality in marketing deals I think can hold you back in any medium, at any time.

JAY: Those are great, Brian. Stevie, you want to add your two cents’ worth?

STEVE DWORMAN: Well, I mean, the one thing that I found over and over again that really is applicable to all of these are that there’s really two very different sides





involved in success in any of these arenas, and they require very different brain functions. One of them is you need somebody who is extremely anal to look over the numbers like it's the best thing in the whole world for them, the first thing they like doing when they get out of bed. They understand the big picture, and yet they will look over every dime being spent, and every dime going out.

On the other hand, you need somebody who is very creative, who can come up with the marketing idea, come up with different ways of testing something, and then in accord with their partner, really accurately analyze what is really working, and why. And I think that bears in all those different arenas, that those two functions, which are left brain and right brain, are really needed to make anything successful.

BRIAN: And you know, it's funny that Steve mentioned that. You know, Steve and I of course are partners, very close partners, in the infomercial business now. And one of the things that I said to Steve, (and I didn't say this to put him down or to be critical, but...) Steve used to write THE newsletter on the infomercial business. Basically anybody who's in the infomercial business read Steve's newsletter. He was considered to be the expert of all experts. And yet, he never had, I'll call it, a "home run success," and I don't think it's because of a lack of talent.

So when Steve and I started having successes together, I think we started, you know, looking at all the things that Steve just said about being a slave to the numbers... having somebody who's incredibly anal about the back end analysis... having somebody --- I mean, Steve actually is the creative guy, and I'll list that part of it.

So all of a sudden, you know, Steve having been on his own and not having the Boardroom power behind him, and Boardroom not have the creative muscle of Steve Dworman, it was --- I hate to say  $1 + 1 = 3$ , it was  $1 + 1 = 16$ . And so I can't --- I think what Steve said is just so right on the money in terms of making sure you have





the right personnel in place. And that permeates every media. I couldn't agree with Steve more on that.

STEVE: And I was just going to add... I mean, being an entrepreneur most of my life, it really hit home for me, because I had started my own skin care company and was lucky enough to get Nicolette Sheridan right before "Desperate Housewives" to be the spokesperson. And we did a very innovative form of marketing with it where I basically produced a 15-minute infomercial and put it on DVD, and then target marketed who that DVD went to, which was in most cases, women who purchased cosmetics from department stores. And you can... That's Brian's expertise, but you can really target who you send a DVD to much more so than you can an infomercial.

But what I found out... And the older you get, hopefully, if you're open-minded, the more you realize what you're good at, and what you're not so interested in, is that the creative stuff I absolutely loved, and I was good at, and I enjoyed, which was coming up with a concept, and then seeing it through to fruition, and then doing everything you could creatively to make it work.

What I really found that I hated was the day-to-day operations side of it, but the day-to-day operations side makes the difference between whether you have a business or not. And so it really brought it home to me.

