



By Richard D. Czerniawski

POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING - OPPOSITIONING AND FUD

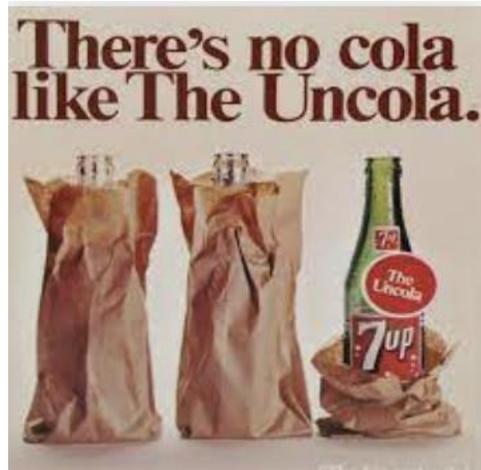


Tomorrow is election day in the United States. Thank goodness! I'm tired of the relentless barrage of ads by politicians engaged in *oppositioning* to discredit their opponents. You know oppositioning as *negative* advertising.

Competitive positioning is how we want our target customers to perceive, think and feel about OUR brand (or, in the case of politicians, their political party, and personal brand) relative to their competition. It is about your brand's distinctive raison d'être.

Oppositioning is identifying weaknesses and faults of competitors to create negative perceptions of THEIR brand while leading to favorable perceptions of the oppositoner. It's reframing your opponent's positioning so the oppositoner represents itself in a more favorable light in comparison.

Harken back to the vintage 7UP uncola oppositioning strategy and messaging. Colas are made from dark, dry cola nuts. Whereas 7UP is made from uncola nuts—larger, juicy, colorful lemons and limes. So, the taste of 7Up is “absolutely marvelous”—“fresh, clean taste, no aftertaste, wet and wild ...”



The democratic party, through their oppositioning, is positioning the republicans as the party that will destroy democracy, eliminate social security, despoil the environment, suppress voting, abolish individual freedoms, and inflame racism—among other unsavory policies and actions.

On the other hand, republicans are oppositioning democrats as undermining and destroying democracy, eliminating individual and state rights and privileges, opposing the constitution, ignoring and inciting crime, inflaming racism, fueling inflation, and ruining the economy through the dems despicable policies and actions.

Where's the truth? It's in the eye of the beholder. The message isn't intended for everyone. It's for those who believe their party's beliefs and independents (voters not affiliated with any party).

What's clear is that the positions taken by both parties are extreme and many of the claims lack evidence. Both parties claim that if you vote for their opponent it will bring about the end of American democracy.



Moreover, the oppositioning we've witnessed has been brutally direct. You'd think there would be a case for libel. Each side is lambasting the other for real, perceived, and fabricated offenses.

What's also clear is that both sides are engaged in FUD in their oppositioning. FUD stands for fear, uncertainty, and doubt, and both parties want to fuel FUD to get out the vote and win votes for their candidates. Incumbents use FUD to frightening supporters from straying into the unknown. Challengers employ the same practice to claim that everything will get worse unless people *switch*

parties by casting their vote for change.

Yes, oppositioning and employing FUD can be an effective strategy. However, while it works for those who believe what the party believes, it can turn off those whose party is being oppositioned. It's a direct assault against the beliefs of their competitor's supporters. It's akin to calling those who vote (or buy) the competitor stupid, despicable, or un-American.

There's another approach to oppositioning that works more effectively among those that believe what your party or brand believes (i.e., the Brand Idea). It's the "tip of the hat" approach. This approach acknowledges something positive that competitors think about their party, candidate, or brand but doesn't satisfy some critical needs. You don't see this approach employed by politicians. However, you can find examples in our world—the world of commerce.

Excedrin employed the "tip of the hat" approach against Tylenol years ago. A presumed consumer is asked whether she uses Tylenol. The consumer admits that she uses Tylenol for minor aches and pains. However, when it comes to headaches, Tylenol doesn't work well for her. Instead, she uses Excedrin. Why? It's not because of all those Excedrin clinical studies. It's because she found Excedrin works to relieve her headaches, whereas Tylenol does not. As she claims, "It (Excedrin) just works." See one of these ads here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hr58_UscNxc

No, oppositioning isn't limited to politics. It occurs in all industries. In addition to the 7Up and Excedrin campaigns, we see it going on nearly every day in the pharmaceutical sector. For example, while a pharmaceutical product is undergoing clinical studies before launch, competitors' sales personnel are out there oppositioning it to create FUD. The smart ones use the "tip of the hat" approach.

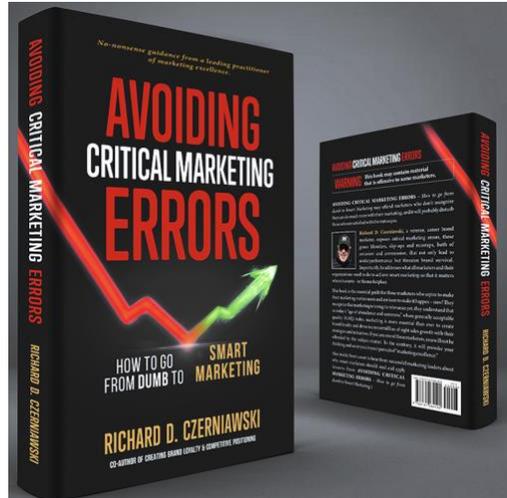
Thank goodness this election comes to an end tomorrow. While it won't rid oppositioning, it will rid us of all the negative ads—estimated at 10 billion dollars for the 2022 midterms alone.

To *make your marketing matter more*, if you employ oppositioning, be smart and take "the tip of the hat" approach in creating FUD.

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Also, consider following me on LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/in/richarddczerniawski/> where I share my perspectives from 50 years of successful worldwide brand marketing experience in my blog THINK ABOUT IT each week.

Are you interested in making your marketing matter even more? Please read my most recent book, **AVOIDING CRITICAL MARKETING ERRORS: How to Go from Dumb to Smart Marketing**. Learn more here: <http://bdn-intl.com/avoiding-critical-marketing-errors>. It will help you avoid critical marketing errors and suggest actions you can take to make your marketing matter even more.



Peace and best wishes,

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