



Brand Espionage: Inside the Consumer Mind

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Hi. Thanks so much for having me here today. This is actually the second experience that RGD has provided me this week. A couple of weeks ago they called and they said, "Listen, a morning television show is interested in doing a little piece on the conference. Would you be a willing victim, I mean participant?" And I said, "Sure." And so I did that yesterday morning. Live television. Very nerve-wracking. I was sandwiched between a traffic report and two men growing zucchinis that are over 6 feet tall. So today's lineup is a bit more prestigious and I'm very happy to be a part of it. So thank you.

Brand espionage. What does that mean really? Somebody said well why did you call it that? And the truth is, I called it that because I thought if I called it consumer insights or consumer research, none of you would show up. And research does have a bad reputation and oftentimes a well-deserved bad reputation among creative people. But, I also know that good research can be really helpful in informing brands and informing design. And I'll go a step further and I'll say great research can even inspire it. I want you to do me a favour and suspend your disbelief about research just for an hour. You don't have to believe it after an hour, but just work with me in this hour. Because everything you do, everything, from the kind of typeface you choose to the paper to whatever it is you're designing, it influences how people think and how they believe. So let's talk about those people, those consumers.

Now let's first get it out on the table though. There are a lot of things wrong with research. There are two things in particular that I have seen that are just murder to a creative process. The first one is the beauty contest. You design a package. It goes into testing and people are asked, "Do you like it? Do you not like it?" And there's this show of hands. I totally reject that kind of research. If it's happened to you I apologize on behalf of all researchers. There's also the other kind of research which is helpful, but it's not the whole story. And that's the quantitative research. The ones, the studies conducted by people who are white lab coat wearing number crunchers who take the surveys and they find out how many people are buying shampoo and conditioner all in one. Or what percent of the target audience of a certain automobile is attracting African Americans. But that is not the whole story. And in fact, I could probably sum up this room right now. I could say, from a demographic standpoint, you're graphic designers, you're educated, you're mostly white, you're probably upper income or medium income. But that

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doesn't tell me who you are as people.

So let's redefine research. In fact what I'd like to do today is recast your notion of research, show you some examples of good research and tell you a little bit about how to do it. I'll also explain, for those of you who are interested in practising it or if it's being practised on a project that you're working on, how you can influence it in a more intelligent way. Perhaps to your benefit.

Redefining research. Well if I were designing a piece for this audience right now, I would not only want to know the things that I just said, you're graphic designers and all that stuff, I would want to know why you are graphic designers. What do you worry about? What do you love about your job? What do you hate about your job? What are the relationships that you have throughout your day with clients, with co-workers, with production managers? And what is your role in these relationships? And if I could give you that information, I would have a much fuller, more dimensional sense of who you are as people.

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It's almost like method acting. If you were trying to embody what a consumer is, you almost have to method act to figure out what they are. It's their back story. We describe it to clients this way because we do provide that back story, that method acting technique. A few years back, I was reading the newspaper and a lawyer, of all people, gave me the greatest quote I've ever read about what it is we do. He said, “When you represent a criminal you've got to shoot him up in your blood. You become him. You walk in his shoes. You see with his eyes. You hear with his ears. You know him completely. You can translate his feelings, his meaning, his intellect. You take the play of this person's behaviour and you embellish it. You make it a piece of art.” And that is the lawyer's creativity. Well when you're dealing with good research that's what you should expect of it. You should be able to shoot the consumer - your audience - up into your blood. You understand them so well. Now you might ask, “Well why bother?” Well, if you think about it, great brands - all brands, even bad brands - are conversations that we're having with people. Every part of that conversation is an influence. So it's great to know your consumer. If I know you, I'm more able to influence you.

My background is mostly advertising and I come out of an agency called Goodby, Silverstein & Partners based in San Francisco. They did 'Got Milk' and the E-Trade advertising among other things. The guy who runs it is Jeff Goodby. He said something to me that I think is applicable to everyone who is involved in the creative process and creative products. He said - now remember he's from an advertising agency - “Our product is not what you see in a magazine, see on television, see on billboards, hear on the radio or anywhere else. Our product is that thing, that thing that happens in the consumers mind when they interact with our advertising.” As designers that thing is your product too. It's not the thing you see or hold or touch. It's the thing that happens in someone's mind. So if you think about it then, the goal of design is this influence. And it can be divided up into three different bits. You can influence how someone thinks, how someone feels or how they behave. There is rational thought. It's left brain oriented. This is the masculine side of the brain. It's where logic lives. It's rational. We can make people think it's for them. We can make them feel it's practical. That they're smart for buying it. It's kind of a linear place where

linear thought lives.

Now I'm going to talk about the right brain for a second, but I want to do a little experiment. It actually works best if you close your eyes. I want you to imagine for a second that you're sitting down, but you're in a living room. And I want you to imagine that a six month old baby. Can six month old babies crawl? Let's imagine six month old babies crawl. A six month old baby crawls up to you and nudges you on the leg and you lean over and scoop that baby up into your arms. I want you to imagine this, even to the point where you hold your arms up in mid-air. I want you to imagine you're cradling your baby and you've got its head to one side. How many of you put the baby's head on the left hand side? How many put it on the right? More left than right. Well it's funny because the left side of the body is ruled by the right side of the brain, which is the nurturing side. So even though most of us are right handed, the majority of us will carry the weight of the baby in our left arm. That is the nurturing side. This is where we also experience our emotion. It's where we appreciate visuals. This is where we can appeal to people on an emotional level. We can make them feel safe. We can make them feel powerful, sexy, included in a group.

We can influence how people behave or interact with a brand or a product. We can make them feel like it's something for daily use, for evenings only, for bedtime, for special occasions. The influence is really endless. But what it takes is understanding this kind of situation. A lot of times when I work on a project my clients know exactly what their goals are. They know how

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You have got to know what you stand for and what you want to achieve.”*

they want someone to feel or act or behave. But they don't know what the reality is. So if you don't know your starting point, I don't know how you build a strategy to your goal. This is a real problem. This is where consumer insights come in. Good consumer insights can help build that bridge. Can help make a great strategy. This however is not a great role for consumer insights. If you know your exact situation, consumers can't necessarily tell you what your goals are. I've worked with clients in this dynamic and really that's where a consumer can't set your compass for you. You have to know what you stand for and what you want to achieve. What they can tell you is the reality. Sometimes I've had clients who are in this situation. But so often when we're building brands, we have the agency or creative people, and we have the client. What I'm talking about is bringing in a third party to do research and that's the consumer voice. I think all these points of view are absolutely valid. One of the things that Dan Boyarski and I were talking about earlier is sometimes when you're in this situation, it's just your opinion versus the client. And it gets very subjective. I like it. I don't like it. But if you bring in this third party, and we're talking about the people we're trying to influence, It raises the bar of this conversation. It makes it less subjective.

Let's talk about some actual examples. First of all, Johnson & Murphy. Do you guys know Johnson & Murphy? A lot of the men do I bet. Men's shoe brand. Business suit shoe. This is an old brand that does very well among older men. What they wanted to do was make the brand more relevant to young men. Great. Nice goal, but they had no sense for how young men were interacting with the brand. How they felt about it. What they thought about it. So we set out to do some research to understand what the reality was. What were their thoughts and feelings surrounding the brand and what were they relative to the competition. The competition was Allan Edmonds, Cole Hahn and Kenneth Cole. So we did a couple different things. I always like to approach consumers from a couple different angles because it's more interesting. They'll reveal different little bits of themselves if you give them different opportunities to talk to you.

First we did mailer exercises. We sent men around the country a bunch of creative exercises to get them to express their feelings about brands and fashion in general. Then we did closet checks. We had guys who didn't know that we were going to end up in their closets. All they knew was we were coming over to interview them in their homes. They were terrified when they found out what we really wanted to do was sit on the floor of their closets and talk about their shoes. Last we did focus groups. Now you can imagine, focus groups. We weren't recruiting for straight men, but that's the majority of the population. And, you know, heterosexual men are a little handicapped. They don't speak fashion. They aren't going to say, "I just love this blue shirt and how it brings out my eyes." We knew this was going to be a disadvantage, so we had some techniques to get over that.

One of the creative exercises that we used is we sent out a cartoon depicting the following: "You're sitting on an airplane and you happen to notice that the fellow sitting next to you is wearing a pair of (put the brand name in), in this case, Allan Edmonds shoes. Now, just for fun, stereotype like mad. Describe what this guy is like based solely on the pair of shoes he's wearing?" Bo-o-o-ring! Those woven shoes are pure cheese. You probably have Allan Edmonds golf shoes too. Form over function. You've never stepped in a puddle in your life, but at least the shoes match your tartan tie. Let me know if you find anything interesting as you peruse that useless, luxury catalogue. Oh, I'd say that Allan Edmonds shoes have a point of view.

Now we sent the same cartoon to a group of men but some of them had Kenneth Cole as the brand of shoes. Very different. This person is a little more hip than me on the style scene. He probably works in a less conservative work environment. A job that involves creativity. Oh, he's using his cell phone to call his buddy to make plans for the evening. I would say this is a very different point of view. Now we're talking about all things being equal. This cartoon drawing does not change except for the brand name.

Another way we did it. We designed a beautiful print ad. It was a beauty shot of a pair of men's shoes and the headline was *Step Out on the Right Foot* and it had two paragraphs of copy. And in some cases this ad was from Johnson and Murphy. In other cases it wasn't. We rotated the brand name. But again, all things being equal, we asked a series of questions about the shoes. Who would wear these shoes? How proud would you be to wear them? What would you pay for

them?

One response for the ad with Cole Hahn was the man who wears these shoes has a very stressful job and not many extra-curricular activities. He probably drives a BMW and listens to classical music, or he's young, ambitious and parties a lot. I was like what? What's going on here? We saw a lot of this with Cole Hahn. And, if you remember, about a year ago, what did they do? They started to change their brand. And it's incredible how perceptive consumers are. They identified this brand change as a split personality, or mid life crisis. That's how it started to come out. Now Johnson & Murphy. This is basically a guy who's worked hard to get where he is. Definitely has a law degree or MBA. He is middle to upper class. Went to a top tier college and lives in a suburb. Ultimately he wants to run the company he works for. We really started to see these brand characters coming through. This is coming out of the mailer research. All anonymous, so guys are free to express themselves.

When we got to the focus groups, (Remember guys are handicapped; they don't speak fashion.), we used an improv acting technique. And we made it a little competitive. The lady who ran the group was Mary Carol Jorgenson who works for The Curious Company. She said, "OK fellas, let's personify these different brands. If Allan Edmonds walked into the room what would he be like?" Oh he's this, he's that. Great. Kenneth Cole. We went through the different brands and had them characterized. Now that's not terribly unique. What was unique is she said, "Now I want everyone to leave the room and someone outside is going to give you a brand name. You may get Allan Edmonds, Kenneth Cole or Johnson & Murphy. We're just going to give you each one and when you walk back in that door, I want you to become that character who would wear that brand of shoe." They were doing improv acting. Mary Carol played like she was having a cocktail party and the guys were her guests and it was a competition because whoever's brand was figured out first won. But the guys couldn't use these words that we just came up with for personification.

So they come out and I give them each the brands that they have to be, and Mary Carol is sitting there getting ready for her cocktail party. And the first guy walks in the door. These guys are total strangers. They're not actors, but we've just given them a competitive exercise which is great for men. The first guy walks in and he says, "Oh your apartment is so Wallpaper." And she was knows, "Oh Kenneth Cole welcome to my party." Then there is the guy who kind of marches in and stands broadly and he says, "I want a drink. Where's my goddamn drink. I just got off the golf course. I'm very thirsty." Well we knew he had Allan Edmonds. Then we had other guys. Two guys got the same name and the Cole Hahn guys, as you can imagine, were really confused. They didn't know if they were older or in college. Old or college. They were a mess. They were hitting on her then apologizing. They were a wreck.

Then there were two other guys. The Johnson & Murphy guys. The whole time I'm watching with the client. So there are these two guys, wallflowers standing in the back of the room. Now they're being very respectful, but they're so quiet. And they're saying nothing. Nothing. And the client is behind the glass with me reacting, "Say something! Anything!" This, if nothing

else, really illustrated what the problem was. After we did this improv exercise, we talked about what was right and wrong with the Johnson & Murphy brand. It's got integrity and solid values. It's authentic. But men are completely indifferent to it. And part of it is because the brand just whispers. It has no strong point of view and we tend to gravitate and love those brands that have a strong point of view. So this was great help educating the client on what needs to happen, what needs to have a strong point of view. And when we did develop a point of view for them, it influenced everything. From shoe design to the kinds of people they hire to the kinds of wardrobe those men wore and how they presented the shoes in the store.

Another case study. Unilever. Unilever is a great company. It's been around for a long, long time. And when they came to us and said, "What we'd like to do is to capitalize on this body wash." You know it's that liquid soap that women are loving in Europe. (Because it's big in Europe, they thought it's going to be huge here.) And we want to create a brand from scratch."

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That's a good goal. So we said, "Let's look at some of the research you've already done. Let's start there because surely some of the research you've done on soap products is relevant."

What was shocking is, this a company that's been in business forever, had never gone into people's homes to talk to them about soap products. They'd kind of done mall intercepts, "Hey lady, can I talk to you about your soap products?" And they'd called people on the phone and they'd done focus groups. But they'd never gone into the home and done more ethnographic studies. So they didn't know their reality. They didn't really know their goals. Our job was to find out how women relate to girly products as well as soap products. And what are the usage occasions. Are there different kinds of soaps that you use at different occasions? That was sort of a theory that we had going in.

Again we did mailer exercises. We sent these exercises to women across the country. We also did tubside interviews. These women didn't know that we were going to be there. They knew we were coming into their homes, but they didn't know we were going to ask to sit in their bathrooms. The greatest part about this was the designer came with me. She sat on the toilet and I sat on the side of the tub and we talked to these women about the products that were in their bathrooms. One of the interesting things that we found is that there is a hierarchy. There were the products that she kept in the bathtub area that she used a lot. There were the products that she had under the sink that she didn't want anybody to see. And then there were products that were out on display. And they all had different personalities. What was so great was, after this research, the designer knew exactly where she wanted the product to live.

In addition to one on one ethnographies, we did in-home girlfriend groups. A lot of people

pooh pooh focus groups and I agree that, in large part, they're done badly. But you don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. In the case of Unilever, we recruited women who fit the profile and said, "Invite seven of your friends over and we'll pay an extra \$50, if you buy some wine." Well they got very honest as the evening went on. Each woman was asked to bring a bucket of all the products she had in her bathroom.

What you never know when you're doing research is what's going to be the killer question. You've got all these questions you want to ask. The killer question, in this case was, we said we're taking a leap of faith here and we're guessing you take different kinds of showers. Maybe that's true, maybe it's not. But let's say it is. If it is in your case what we want you to do is list the different kinds of showers that you take. We want you to give each one a name. Tell us what the objective is. What's the setting like? What kind of products are you using? What's the thought running through your head and could you give it a theme song?

Probably the most important thing you can do with research findings is identify common themes. What we found is that there were three different types of showers that women take. First there's daily preparation, also known as the quickie, power shower or PTA. Women, do you get that one? It's a little bit naughty. The objectives were to wake up, plan your day, think about work. You're in a frenzy here. The theme songs were Wake Up Little Suzie, Working 9 to 5, Rocky. You're using all in one products. This is quick. Give me the shampoo and conditioner in one. Give me the basics. I gotta go. The mood is stressful, hurried, tired, crabby. And we said well what's it like? It's like a cup of coffee, the shower. It wakes me up.

The next type of shower was special preparation. This is the "gimme some" shower. On the town shower, hot date. The objectives were to prepare for something. Sex came up a lot. They want to smell really nice. This is Love Boat. I Love Myself. Honky Tonk Woman. The products...this is fussy stuff. You use the stuff your girlfriends have given you or you spent a lot of money on. The mood is romantic. It's also purposeful. I'm going to do something after the shower that's important. And it feels like I'm getting feminine ready. It's very feminine, but I'm also getting ready.

And the last type of shower was called personal time. It's the stress buster. It's quiet time. It's escape. It's about unwinding and soothing your muscles. The songs were Swan Lake, Margueritaville. The products varied and it wasn't just about bath products. Candles and music came into play. The mood is very peaceful and dreamy. And they said it feels like a standing bath.

Now I'm guessing, as a designer, that it would be helpful to know which one of these situations you want to complement with a product you're designing. From what you call the product, to what the packaging looks like, to what the colours are. To the scent and how powerful the scent is. So that's exactly what we did. We built a brand based on this information.

Now I want to talk to you about some other examples. Probably my favourite assignment was with Nike. They said they wanted us to understand girls who play league level high school basketball. These are girls who live and breathe the game. They just love basketball. So how are we going to understand them... You might think it easy for me. I'm 6 feet tall. I played basketball

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in college and high school. But I’m not in high school anymore and I didn’t just play one sport. And these girls are at the elite level and I was never there. I think sometimes it’s easy for us to try to interject ourselves into the target audience and say I either was that or I am that. But if you pretend that you don’t know it at all and dive in, it’s kind of amazing what you’ll find.

We assumed that women, girls in particular, when they play sports it’s so much about the team that we wanted to always meet them with their teammates. We met them in the locker rooms and we met them going to practice. We met them on bus rides to games. We learned their cheers. We learned their plays. We got on the inside. We started to shoot them up in our blood. This was really important because it was for an advertising campaign and, although the art director was terrific, she was from Norway and had never seen a basketball game in her life and wasn’t an athlete. And the copywriter had been a basketball player, but he had never played girl’s basketball. So we really wanted to help them understand their audience.

On another project we did for Nike, they asked, “Could you tell us about women and their relationship with exercise.” An assumption we made in that case was that this is a very private topic. It is related to body issues and sexuality. Feelings of femininity and competition. So we decided we would deal with this one entirely through the mail and allow women to talk to us anonymously. Later we did some focus groups and we looked at some third party research. We looked at surveys that were done on similar topics by Conde Naste Sport and Sports Illustrated for Women. I don’t know if either one of those are still in business. But that way we could see how someone would answer in a survey that’s completely anonymous. Get it through the mail from us to them and then also in a focus group situation.

What was interesting.. Nike always wants to know the most radical position. Not radical, controversial. They like controversy. Let’s kind of rub up against the target audience and see what happens. What we found that was interesting was how the issue of competition was addressed very differently depending on the different way we talked to women. In the focus group situation, we were told, “Oh competition isn’t very ladylike. No, I don’t do that. No that’s not good.” In the mail, we were told, “Yes I’m a little competitive. I mean it’s not *GRRR-R-R* but it comes out every once in awhile.” In a survey done by a magazine, the results were, “*GRRRR-R-R-RR*, I am competitive and I’m proud of it. I’m very competitive. At work, at sports.” So we knew we had found an issue where there was some tension. So that was an opportunity.

Ah Jimboree. Do you guys have Jimboree here? It’s a clothing store for kids. Do you also have their Play Centres? Ok, I saw some women nodding. Must be mothers. So Jimboree Play and Music is a place where you can pay to take your child and it’s kind of educational fun. We found, or they found, that there were tons of women who fit the demographic just perfectly. They made the right amount of money. They had kids of the right age. They themselves were the right age. They didn’t work full time. They lived near Jimboree. But they weren’t coming to Jimboree. In fact they were using other paid sources of entertainment for their children. So they weren’t discounting all places to go play with their children for pay, they just didn’t like Jimboree

for some reason.

So we got them into a focus group situation. What was shocking is how much fun a focus group is for a new mom because it's the first time she's been out of the house without her kids for a while. Oh my god they were so happy to be there. Showing up for duty. It was so cute. We got them in a room and we talked to them about being a mom and the kinds of things they did to entertain their kids and what's fun and what's not. And what kind of paid activities they did. And of course we got to Jimboree and they pissed all over it. About a half an hour about the types of mothers that go there. They are a piece of work let me tell you. Have you ever been? Let tell me what you think this woman is like. She's driving there in a Range Rover, if she can get through her manicure on time. Where did this come from? And all this stuff about how these women weren't like them and how the experience wasn't really what they were looking for.

We're about an hour and 15 minutes into it and I said, "Ok ladies. Right now we're in a focus group facility but we've got a van waiting downstairs and we're going to take you to Jimboree right now." And we scheduled it so that the classes that were happening when we arrived were with children of the same age as the women we were talking to. So we get to the Jimboree and we ask the women to keep their opinions to themselves. Here's a little notepad. Don't talk to each other. Just observe what's going on and write it down on the notepad. How do you feel about it? Is this what you thought it was going to be? What are these women like? Are they really driving Range Rovers. Even check out the parking lot if you want to.

We spent about 30 minutes there then we got back in the van and came back to the focus group facility. The reality was so different from their perceptions. They actually liked it very much. If they hadn't, I don't know, we would have been in big trouble. But we realized that every piece of communication needed to hit some of these points. We need to re-educate women on what Jimboree was. Whether it was a direct mail piece that they received or going on the web site, or seeing a piece of advertising. Everything needed to overcome these hurdles that women had and to present to them the reality.

Another example. Invisaline are invisible braces. Have you guys seen those? They're pretty amazing. I couldn't believe it. I went to be briefed by the client and he showed me the factory. We were going all over the place. I'd been there three hours and I said, "This is great. I love what you guys are doing. Straightening teeth, neat thing. But I'm just not buying that they're invisible. I'm sitting right here and I'm sure I could see it if you were wearing them." And he say, "Huh, ok." And he took the braces out of his mouth. He was wearing them. Such an amazing product! You can imagine, there are believers and there are non-believers about this product. There are people who sign up for it and, by the way it's very expensive, the people who make a lot of phone calls, respond to a direct mail piece or actually call a dentist, but don't go all the way, don't sign up for it.

So we did focus groups with these two kinds of people. People that had signed up for the product and we talked to them about what was their thought process along the way. What got

them over some potential hurdles and actually got them to sign up for the product. What was the 800 number experience like? The web site, going to the doctor, the direct mail piece, all that. How did these experience feel? Then we talked to the people who hadn't signed up. The non-believers. They had gotten pretty far in some cases. But some had a terrible experience with the phone, or the direct mail piece was insulting or whatever.

First we talked to these people in two separate rooms at the same time. We found that the non-believers were pointing to the people that did sign up and calling them vain. "They're probably decent people, but they are a lot more vain than I am." Well you called the 800 number too for crying out loud. How vain are you? At the end, we put the two groups in a room together for the last 30 minutes. And we said, "Let's debate this issue of who actually signs up for this product and why. And, you know, if you could do that for all the non-believers, you'd probably convert about 90%. Obviously that's not going to happen. But it did give us a sense for what the dialogue needed to be. So, what does the dialogue need to be with these people who are interested but just haven't made that commitment? What does that dialogue need to be on the phone, at the dentist office and in a direct mail piece?"

Point Path. Stenovis is a big bank based in Georgia that came up with a fabulous idea of developing a bank for newlyweds. Why don't they do one for left-handed golfers? I don't know. They hired us to find out what sort of financial issues exist between men and women who are newly married and how they develop a bank to serve them. We had a lot of fun with this one. We recruited newlyweds who thought they were coming to a focus group to sit there together, which they did for the first 15 minutes or so. We had all these couples sitting around the table. After 15 minutes, we told the men to get up and go in that room and have a conversation with this lady and we kept the women and sat there and talked to the women. We asked them a series of questions. The same questions. Who really holds the purse strings in your household? What's your spending personality? What's your spouse's? Got the truth out. All the women said, "those guys are so irresponsible." He just bought a DVD and a wide-screen television and all this stuff. Now the men were in the other room moaning about their wives' spending habits. If she buys another pair of shoes, our house will explode. And of course everybody said, "I'm really in charge".

In the last 30 minutes, we brought them back together. And we played The Newlywed Game. OK let's talk about that question of who's really in charge. Janet show us your answer. "I am". Bill let's show us your answer. "I am". We started to see that we were manufacturing the conflicts that men and women were going to have in their marriage. We just accelerated the process by which they had them. What we didn't do was offer free marriage counseling afterwards. But there were people in the back room taking bets on who was going to get divorced in the next couple years. Just awful.

In the case of Nine West, you can imagine talking to women about shoes is so different than talking to men about shoes. They can go on, and on and on. So we did these girlfriend gab groups. We had women in their homes. They were supposed to bring three things out of their closets that they thought were terrific. That started the conversation and we talked to them about

their relationship with fashion. We assumed that each woman lives several different fashion personalities. The killer question for Nine West was, if that's true, what are those fashion personalities? You can give them a theme song. Tell us their purpose. The name, the whole nine yards.

We found that women typically have five different fashion personalities. That sounds like they're schizophrenic. They're not. You could imagine that a woman who shows up for work on Monday for a big meeting has a different fashion personality than a woman who has a hot date on a Friday night. We got these five fashion personalities lined up and we could look at the personalities in relation to the competition. So how many of those personalities did they address. Kenneth Cole, Nine West. It gave us an opportunity to see where Nine West's strengths were and where their weaknesses were so that the brand - we're going to present this on Monday - can consciously decide either to concentrate on a few fashion personalities, or try to deliver them all.

The last example I'll talk about was for Porsche. This was done at Goodby, Silverstein & Partners with a guy named John Steel, who worked on it with me. He's incredible. If you're interested in account planning or qualitative research, John wrote a fabulous book called *Truth, Lies and Advertising: The Art of Account Planning*. In the case of Porsche, we were trying to figure out what's unique about Porsche. Why would somebody buy a Porsche over a BMW, or a Mercedes or some other luxury car that has great performance or is known for great performance? We recruited drivers of these lovely cars. They all own these super-expensive beautiful cars, and some of them are Porsche owners and some of them aren't and they're all mixed up in groups together. And they don't know what the groups are for. Again you never know what that killer question is going to be. In the case of this research, the killer question was, and it sounds so naïve. "Draw what you think of when you think of your car." The people who are driving other luxury cars, the non-Porsche owners, were drawing things like their hood ornaments. Their medallions. Or they were showing the detail of the interior right down to the leather stitching around the steering wheel. They were talking about the great CD player and the surround sound. And also the quietness of the drive. They were drawing items obviously outside of their cars.

The very big difference was what the Porsche drivers were drawing. They were drawing where they love to drive. The cars were never still. In fact there were very few images of cars. But we asked them to draw what you think of when you think of your car. If we did see a car it was always speeding by and it was this blur. Or you'd see the lines coming out from the tires and things like that. So what we found out, the big insight here was that for other car owners it was about owning the car. For Porsche drivers, it was about driving the car. The implications for advertising and design were that we weren't allowed to ever show the car still. So even in collateral pieces it always had to be in motion. It was terribly, terribly important because this was not about owning something that was going to sit in your parking place, it was about driving it.

I wanted to talk a little bit about how this is done because it's not rocket science. If you're at all interested in participating in something that you're working on, I highly recommend it. Or if you've got a client who has hired a researcher and you want to know how to keep him in line. When involving consumers in the process, the goal is we want people to think, feel or behave a

certain way. But what's the reality. If a client can't answer both these questions, then you're going to be in trouble. And your strategy is not going to make sense. The strategy needs to be the bridge from the reality to what the goal is.

So a couple of questions for clients. What is the reality? How do people think and feel and behave about you right now? And what about that do you want to change? How do you want people to think and feel differently about you? How do you want them to act differently? Or is it about reinforcing current behaviour? Maybe it's not about change. Maybe what you want to do is

“Test what’s known. We make a lot of assumptions going in, but we always test them to see if we’re right or if we’re wrong.”

to reinforce or have them feel it a little more intensely. You may want them to feel more passionately about Nike or whatever it is. And what's the strategy, obviously.

A few other questions. Does the client have strong consumer insights? And if it's just flat data that lives in charts and graphs on a page, that's probably not going to be as helpful as the kind of data that I'm talking about here. Do they have that kind of information? And if they don't, what would it take for you to be able to shoot these consumers up into your blood? This is more art than science. There are a lot of people who pooh pooh this kind of research. I think it's valid. It's more a social science than a hard science. And you'll have clients who push back on it. But again, if you don't bring consumers to the table, you're having a dialogue that is subjective between the client's opinion and your opinion. Bringing in a third party elevates that conversation.

It doesn't always require a lot of money. You can imagine the mailer research that we did was the cost of postage. We got friends to do it around the country. You can involve friends and family. That's not unreasonable as long as they fit the profile of people you want to talk to. It doesn't always have to take a lot of time either.

One important thing about research. It's very tempting to ask people how they feel about money. But you have to back away. Remember that money lives in the context of their entire lives. We're doing research with American Express right now. And we want to talk to consumers about their life stage. We're talking to people who have been through divorce in the last couple of years who are approaching retirement, or sending a kid to college. We want to know how that feels, that particular life stage. And how it's different from 10 years ago. We want to put money in the context of their life situation.

Test what's known. We make a lot of assumptions going in, but we always test them to see if we're right or if we're wrong. I'm sure you know a lot and pretend that you don't. Test that stuff. There's no one right way to do this. There are a million ways to crack a nut with qualitative re-

search. The more creative ways of approaching consumers are sometimes the best. Because you're creative people you probably have better ideas on that than I do.

Craft your questions. Don't just list them. Think about what would make someone express something. I'm not looking for a yes or no answer here. I'm looking for deep meaningful information. Leave room for surprises. If I really wanted to get to know you and I met you at a cocktail party and I arrived with my script and I said, "What do you do for a living? How do you feel about that? That's great. Ok, next question." I'm not going to get to know you as much as if I allow for some interaction in the conversation. If I let go of control, you're going to take me places that I wouldn't have imagined. A lot of times, in research, we think we have a sense for what we're going to know, but, oh my gosh, people will take us places where we didn't realize. Just shut up, put our discussion guide to the side and let them carry the conversation. It's a real trick to know when to let go of control and when to take it back. Think about these things. Think about who you're going to be talking to and who would they be comfortable telling the truth to.

When we were doing the Nine West research with women in their homes, I'm not taking a guy. I'm not taking a guy cameraman and I'm not taking a guy to ask the questions. In fact I didn't want a guy asking the questions with Johnson & Murphy either because guys can only talk about fashion - if they do at all - to women, to their girlfriends, to their wives. So we wanted a woman moderator. So who will make them comfortable? We're doing some research with a company that wants to understand consumers who are people of colour. Well I'm not going to go into their homes and talk to them about this. We've got someone of colour who's going to go and do that research. So think about the "who". That's very important.

The "where". Focus groups are typically done in sterile environments. The big round wooden table. The one-way mirror. Everyone knows there's a bunch of people eating M 'n M's making fun of them behind it. It's not supercomfortable. And you're with a bunch of strangers. Sometimes that works. Certainly we've had it work and it's great because clients can attend and that's neat. Everybody gets to see it. But are there better places to do it? Should you go into people's homes. One great thing to do, and it's so easy to do, is get people in exit interviews. So if you're doing something that has to do with a retail space, a restaurant or something like that, catch people as they're walking out and talk to them about their experience. You get a very spontaneous reaction.

Another example: for Nike skateboarding. We wanted to talk to people about how they felt about skateboarding. These are skate punks. They're dedicated to the sport. We wanted to get them. You can imagine if you just had some recruiter calling them up and trying to find skateboarders and get them into this corporate environment, it wouldn't work. So what did we do? There's a street called the Embarcadero in San Francisco. It's a main drag and all the little skate punks hang out there and do their tricks and ruin all the public sights. We went there in cabs and we said "hey, for a slice of pizza, would you come talk to us?" It was amazing. For the price of 5 pizzas we got to know these people so well. And because they had just been skateboarding, we

didn't say, hey meet us here next week. We said come and talk to us right now. We got them right after they had been on the sidewalk. They talked to us about how persecuted they were. One guy had just been spat upon. One guy almost got hit by a car and he thought it was intentional. One kid had just gotten a ticket for \$157. These things were so close to them, their experiences, because it had just happened. And that was really helpful for us. That sort of addresses "when". And also "how". What technique are you going to use to get inside. Focus group facilities aren't always the way to go.

Analyzing research. Sometimes it's mind boggling. You get all this information and you've heard reams and reams of tapes or gone to these interviews. Ah, where do you start? The most important thing is to look for themes. What are the themes in what people are saying? What are the commonalities that you see? It's not only important to listen to what's being said, but what's not being said. Where are people uncomfortable and watch what they say then. There are a couple little tricks. It's so easy when someone is answering a question to know if they are telling the truth. If they look down to find the answer, they're typically lying. If they look up they are being truthful. Little things like that will give you clues.

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You start to see it also when people are looking directly at you when they talk, they are probably being more truthful than if they're not. Unless it's something that's uncomfortable. Use your intuition. I mean we're all people. We communicate with other people every day. If you feel like someone is not telling the truth, or that they're not giving you the whole story, use that intuition. Go a little bit further. One of the things we love to do is creatively bring our insights to life. So we don't do icky reports. We do these beautiful imagery exercises to bring this to life for our clients. I won't say any more about that because certainly you're capable of doing that.

So that's basically it. That's my story on consumer insights. I hope it didn't turn you off of research. I'm trying to turn people on to it because I think it can be done really well. And you as creative people can use the consumer as your muse.

Q: Most of your research, you seem to put some distance between Mars and Venus. Has there been a successful campaign where the research is used with both sexes? Was the Porsche research for both?

PS: That was directed towards men. When we did that research we had one poor woman who showed up and she was surrounded by all these guys with their big old muscle cars. And I really thought they were going to have a fight over her. It was ugly. Yes, there are some campaigns that transcend sex and they appeal to both. The Volkswagen campaign is a lovely example of that. That appeals to the young at heart spirit that lives in not all of us, but some of us and that's why we gravitate to it. I think Apple is a brand that transcends sex and talks to people who want to be more creative .

Q: How is it that you knew that women would take different kinds of showers?

PS: You know it's sheer luck sometimes, to be perfectly honest. It's not a hard science and it

takes some practice. In that case I was thinking about myself. I thought I go on different kinds of runs. I go on the kind of run where I just want to get rid of the stress of the day. I go on the kind of run where I want to enjoy the environment. I was big into running at the time we did that research, and I tried to take that information and translate it to showers. It's a wacky idea, but it worked. Oftentimes the questions don't work. I'm not talking to you about those. One out of five works. And if it does that's great. You can discount what you heard for the other four. It wasn't truthful. It wasn't relevant. It wasn't interesting. But that fifth question, thank God for it.

Q: How do you involve the client? Seeing the consumers is so different than seeing a report.

PS: That's absolutely true. We do involve clients. Sometimes we give them homework assignments. We're about to work for a rent-to-own company. As you can imagine, rent-to-own consumers are low income. They're under-educated. They're not privileged people. Yet the folks working at the company are white and upper middle class. The whole nine yards. So they are going to have phone buddies. Each one of them has to call at least five customers. We are giving them a script and asking them get to know these people. We're also going to go with the truck drivers to deliver the product and also go with the truck drivers who have to take that stuff away when someone can't pay anymore. I doubt they will have the same perspective after they experience this.

Q: What's the hardest part about your job?

PS: The hardest thing for me is finding the commonalities. Polaroid was one of my global clients and they wanted to find a global messaging campaign for the pocket cam that was designed for teenagers. It was hard because I didn't do the moderating in all the different cities. The most important thing was to look for the theme. If you have to create a global campaign that works across all countries, look for that golden thread that is wound through these people no matter where they live. It's usually a psychographic and not a demographic.

Q: Did they follow your advice?

PS: They did for pocket cam and it did really well. It exceeded expectations.