

Doc News and Views



Media wizard Tony Schwartz collaborates on a counter ad radio spot with DOC Founder and Chairman Alan Blum, MD, in Schwartz' studio in Brooklyn.

Media Wizard "Makes Waves" on the Air

Tony Schwartz is not a physician, yet he has mastered a technique which in his words "can prevent more disease, illness and accidents than medicine can cure." The tool is media. Tony Schwartz is it's master.

Acknowledged as a genius in the advertising world as well as the political arena, Schwartz' understanding of communication led to his creation of the

first commercial using real children's voices for Johnson & Johnson's and the "daisy" ad against nuclear war for the Johnson presidential campaign.

The powerful reaction to his political commercials led Schwartz to consider the impact his work could have in social service. He volunteered his expertise to assist the NYC fire department, NYC police department and local hospitals.

In 1963 the American Cancer Society asked Schwartz to do some television spots. Until this time the organization's commercials had consisted of pictures of black lungs. Schwartz' commercial put the smoking and cancer issue on a totally different level. He created the first anti-smoking commercial which featured two chil-

dren playing in their parent's clothes. The announcer: "Children love to imitate their parents. Children learn by imitating their parents. Do you smoke?" The commercial is credited with getting cigarette advertising off the air. According to Schwartz, "After that ad appeared on the air, the cigarette companies decided to give up television advertising rather than face counter ads like that."

After learning that his best friend, Brooklyn policeman Ken McFeeley, was dying of lung cancer, Schwartz anti-smoking efforts took on a new dimension. "I decided I had to come out against the cigarette companies. It wasn't just a matter of telling people not to smoke, it was one of actually hitting at the cigarette companies and getting them to feel pressure from the health interests."

Schwartz' inspiration for his commercials often comes from the daily news. One such famous example is a commercial on which Schwartz collaborated with DOC in 1985. The highly controversial, yet extremely effective

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"Until now, communications has been used in a very limited way by people trying to reach doctors and patients through journals, newsletters and seminars; and by some health organizations through public service advertising. But no serious thought has been given to using mass media, both broadcasting and narrow-casting, to improve general health for the people of the world."

On the power of radio:

"We can close our eyes, but we're not born with earlids."

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radio spot used the voice of New York Mayor Ed Koch. Schwartz edited a statement Koch made on local television announcing the city would close a bath house that had been linked to the spread of AIDS in which Koch made the statement, "They are selling death." The following dialogue was created.

Announcer: I wonder, Mayor Koch, did you ever stop to think that you could make the same statement about cigarettes?

Koch: They are selling death.

Announcer: So, why does the city allow cigarettes to be sold on public property?

Koch: They are selling death.

Announcer: So why does the city allow cigarettes to be advertised on the city's subways and buses?

Koch: They are selling death. We don't want that to go on.

Announcer: And so, like you, we don't want that to go on.

The one-minute spot was backed by a \$2,000 DOC campaign on radio station WMCA (the only station in the city to agree to air the *paid* spot). The commercial was criticized in editorials by the *Tobacco Observer* and the *U.S. Tobacco and Candy Journal* for allegedly taking Mayor Koch's comments out of context. However, Koch later told Schwartz that the commercial should have been even stronger and asked Schwartz to head up a committee to back his comprehensive Smoking Pollution Control Act which would limit smoking in the workplace and in public places. Schwartz agreed to set up the committee and started a media campaign which resulted in the first strong anti-smoking laws passed in New York City and New York state.

The "Selling Death" radio spot is just one of many projects Schwartz has collaborated on with DOC. Schwartz refers to DOC Founder and Chairman Alan Blum, MD, as a "co-worker" in the prohealth field. "He's someone who's been in it a long time and I get lots of inspiration from him," Schwartz said.

Schwartz and Blum agree that commercials which appeal to people on an emotional level are the most effective. Unfortunately, most radio and television stations will not accept these commercials which they feel will "disturb" their listeners or offend their sponsors. As an example of this, Schwartz pointed out a recent spot on AIDS involving a young woman who had con-

tracted the disease.

"The stations won't take it. They say we don't want the word 'condoms' and we don't want the words 'I slept with a man one night,' and here these same stations have people sleeping all over the place on their television shows and they won't take an ad to save young people's lives."

According to Schwartz, the media is in conflict with itself and has almost a split personality. For instance, ABC refused to air the spot on AIDS, yet did a very meaningful story on the same girl in a segment of their 20/20 news show. Schwartz has encountered similar conflicts with CBS radio which refuses to air his anti-smoking commercials yet allows their health reporter, Frank Field, to cover story ideas that Schwartz has brought to him such as the Patrick Reynolds story and the David Goerlitz story.

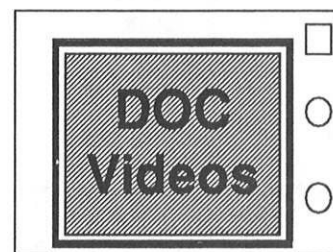
Schwartz does not let these conflicts discourage him in his efforts, "You have to learn to fight guerrilla warfare. You've got to study the process and use all the avenues of it that you can."

And "use all the avenues" he does. When a radio or television station refuses to air a commercial such as the AIDS spot, Schwartz then attempts to get a newspaper to do a story on why they have refused. He also circumvents the airwaves altogether at times and resorts to the telephone. Schwartz places his commercials on answering machines and takes out a paid ad on the bottom of the front page of the newspaper with a statement like, "If you'd like to hear how you can protect your health call..." or "If you'd like to hear how Lincoln Center is selling addictive products call..."

Schwartz, who has been teaching Media and Public Health to physicians at Harvard University via telephone since 1986, says he would like to see more young people interested in media go in to what he calls "Public Health Communications." With the high cost of health care, Schwartz believes using media to prevent disease is the only way our society can afford to deal with health problems.

"Not only our society--nationally and locally--can't afford, but I think the societies of the world can't afford to deal with the ills of the world, and media can be used to prevent much of this illness."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Schwartz has written two highly regarded books, *Media: The Second God* and *The Responsive Chord*, and produced a video released last year entitled *Guerrilla Media: A Citizen's Guide to Using Media for Social Change* (available from Varied Directions Inc., of Camden, Maine, \$299). It is described as "a de-passivication program" and is the first in a series of a dozen proposed tapes.



Alan Blum, MD, DOC Founder and Chairman, and Scott Burch, executive producer of Media Production Resources at the UT M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, have produced two videos on tobacco industry promotion that will now be available from the DOC Tobacco Archive and International Resource Center.

Cigarettes and Sports: Striking Out Against the Tobacco Industry reviews the ways in which the tobacco industry has avoided the advertising ban. Taken from Dr. Blum's keynote address to the American Medical Association's Conference on Tobacco Use in America in January, this video is a definitive, chilling and often humorous overview of just how far the tobacco industry has gone to push their product.

Suigenocide: the Targeting of Minority Groups by the Cigarette Industry is a poignant examination of the exploitation of minorities by the tobacco industry.

Both videos are accompanied by a printed monograph and are available exclusively from DOC.

Cost for the videos is \$75 each. Write and order from the DOC Tobacco Archive and International Resource Center, 5510 Greenbriar, Suite 235, Houston, TX 77005.