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# Mind games

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YOUNG GUN: Mark Joyner launched the highly successful Aesop.com while working in U.S. Army intelligence.

marketing

Young millionaire Mark Joyner was once recruited by the FBI because of his intelligence work for the Army. He politely declined, opting instead to use his knowledge of the human mind in a different way: as a marketer

In 1994, at the age of 25 Mark Joyner launched Aesop.com. an umbrella company for several Internet marketing businesses. He would become one of a handful of Internet entrepreneurs to survive the bubble burst. and he puts credit for that squarely on his marketing savvy and Aesop's then-innovative services, such as remotely hosted ad tracking, which Joyner claims he pioneered. In 2000, when dot-coms were dropping like flies, Aesop.com was still growing at a steady clip. No small feat, considering Joyner was also working full time in U.S. Army intelligence.

Today he is a millionaire, with several subscription-based, online marketing education and coaching business. Joyner, now 33, used what he calls, "mind-control psychology," as well as military tactics, to make those millions, and he's written a book that will enable others to do the same thing. MindControlMarketing.com went to the number-one spot on Amazon.com just two days after its appearance online.

We found Joyner in his Hollywood office, musing about matters of the mind.

Sales & Marketing Management: How did you get started in marketing?

Mark Joyner: I didn't have any formal marketing training, but I had some knowledge of marketing just because I was interested in it, and I educated myself. I also has a lot of interest in psychology and military tactics. I was in the military-I joined up at 21-and I started a marketing business. At the same time I was working in intelligence, dealing with Korea. Then I got commissioned as an artillery officer and stayed in that position until I left after 10 years. After that I was accepted into the FBI training program, but, Aesop.com was doing so well I decided to stick with that instead.

SMM: How did Asep.com survive the Internet bubble burst and subsequent dot-com meltdown?

MJ: I started the business in 1994, and by the time things started going sour we were well-established. We had good marketing, and the success of any business-no matter what the climate-comes down to good marketing and offering quality products and services. My perspective on it was that the stock market crashed, but the Internet didn't. The bottom line is you can make a lot of money over the Interent, it's forever changed the way the world does business, and I don't think people really understand that. What happened in 2000 was that people lost faith in the Internet, but the Internet didn't change one iota. Perception changed, and it was an erroneous change. The people determining this

perception for the rest of us didn't have a clue how to make the Internet work to begin with, and I recognized that. So I never panicked and we just kept moving. The crash didn't slow us down a bit.

UPSIDE -DOWN THINKING: Joyner's hobbies include hanging out in gravity boots and playing guitar.

SMM: Your book is about using psychology to develop powerful marketing strategies. Do you have any training in psychology?

MJ: I have a bachelor's degree in psychology, but most of what is in this book I learned through independent research outside of my degree work. I really believe people learn significant things in their lives because of their own natural curiosity; for me at least, very little was learned in the university environment. My important conclusions came from my own intellectual desires. That's what guided my research.

SMM: The term mind control is in the title of your book. Are you implying that marketers should toy with people's minds?

MJ: People see the words mind control and think the book is unethical, but it's not. Unethical marketing is convincing someone to buy something they don't need, at any cost. That's not what this book is about. It looks at individual psychological phenomena and analyzes it. In the book I break down important principles that can influence a consumer's behavior. Once you know what the principles are, you can develop some extremely powerful marketing tactics based on them.

SMM: Give us examples of these principles.

MJ: One principle I talk about is obedience to authority. If someone walks up to you on the street and recommends a product, are you going to listen? Probably not. But if Arnold Schwarzenegger is on television saying, 'The single most important factor in my success as a bodybuilder is X,' you want to know more about X. People always listen to an authority figure if that figure is credible. For my own business, I try to present myself as an expert in what I'm selling and I back it up with third-party, expert testimonials-other authority figures.

I also talk a lot about the herd mentality. This is about conformity to group norms. Everyone likes to be part of the group. That's why customer testimonials work. If everyone else likes it, maybe I should try it, too. And people don't like to go against the group; they fear derision. If a customer will let you use his testimonial statements, you need to include as much information as possible about who they are, what they do, and where they live. This way the consumer sees it's the real deal.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow developed a theory decades ago about human motivation called The Hierarchy of Needs. He argued that all human action is spent pursuing satisfaction of these needs. Once we satisfy a lower need, we move on to the next, more sophisticated need. The bottom of the pyramid is hunger, shelter, and other basic human needs. After that, it's safety and security. Here's how you use this in marketing: If someone works at a job and they feel insecure, or they are an entrepreneur constantly worried about money, you appeal to them by asking, 'Are you worried about the future? If you want to ensure success in your business...' You've appealed to that consumer's need for safety and security, which usually means money.

The Zeigarnick Effect is what happens when a thought or a sentence is left incomplete. People need to know how something ends up. If you start your ad copy with a compelling question or unfinished thought, it forces the reader to continue to read your copy to find out the answer or the ending. Let's say you're selling a book about child safety. The first page of your Web site might read: 'There are five common household items that could kill your child in an instant. Click here to find out what they are.' People will click-you've forced them to read the copy. Keeping them enticed like this is a Zeigarnick play all the way.

You don't use one tactic alone. You use Zeigarnick to get them reading, but your ad copy might employ some of Maslow's principles, an expert testimonial, customer testimonials, things like that.

SMM: Your book is divided into two sections: psychology and warfare. Some of the topics addressed in the warfare section are Heavy Ground, Deception, and Continuous Operation, and all of them tie into marketing. For example, deception is really about finding and removing the cues that cause automatic rejection of your advertising by customers. Why did you choose war analogies?

MJ: I've spent a lot of time studying military tactics and I think it's exciting for people to think about marketing in those terms. You're not learning about war, but you are learning principles you can apply to any type of human interaction.

SMM: Is it true that to relax you play guitar while hanging upside down in gravity boots?

MJ: I do hang upside down in gravity boots. It improves circulation to the brain. It sounds strange, but it really clears my head. I play guitar too, but I've never tried to do it upside down.

Writer Eilene Zimmerman can be reached at [edit@salesandmarketing.com](mailto:edit@salesandmarketing.com)



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