

# Think Smart

INTEGRATING PSYCHOLOGY AND MARKETING

## Every MP Deserves a Halo

Horse manure, Man Ray styling chairs, teddy bears, sweets, flexible fridge magnets, non-existent mortgages...the list is as endless as it is entertaining. Whether we are offended, amused or just curious, MPs Expenses is the best show in town. What were they thinking of? Did they not see that it all had to come to an end? 'A bit daft' says Gerald Kaufman about his claim for an £8000 television, 'absolutely unrepentant' says Tam Dalyell about his claim for a £7800 bookcase, 'an oversight', 'a clerical error', 'within the rules and approved by the fees office' says pretty much everyone. And that's where we get to haloes and devils.

The 'halo effect' is well known in marketing and explains why the iPod could spread 'cool' across the entire Apple brand. The trouble is the 'halo effect' can change: what you love today you might hate tomorrow. In the digital age, this creates a kind of arms race between brands and their consumers with companies continually monitoring the web to check who's saying what about them to make sure they keep that shiny halo above their reputation. Sometimes, however, your best efforts just aren't good enough and the halo slips. When this happens the negative reaction can be extreme, creating a 'devil effect' and MPs are feeling the full force of this change in attitude. Of course, they were never our favourite group of people but the fact that the majority of us bother to vote for them shows that we have some reason to believe in their trustworthiness.

The problem, however, is not with them. It is with us. How could we have been so gullible as to imagine that MPs were somehow devoid of naked self-interest?

The answer is that we are credulous creatures who can be persuaded of pretty much anything as long as it's well branded. Neuroscientists have discovered that pleasure and reward centres of the brain light up when exposed to well known brands, which is why when you tell people enough times that your product or service is exceptional and associate it with other exceptional brands, they will believe you. So you can take a moat, connect it to a well branded institution like the Houses of Parliament, walk across it and hey presto, you get free porn! It is never the brands themselves but what your brain makes of them that is crucial.

So what of our MPs? They are right, of course, when they say they were 'only following the rules'. They say this because the biggest halo of all is the one that shines above their egos. The brain is vain and will do whatever it can to keep hold of its positive self-image. And what gives us the right to judge? Are we so much better than them? Of course, we are not. We're all compulsive believers in our own right to wear a halo and there is only one thing more important in business than being sceptical of what we are told. It is being sceptical of the lies we tell ourselves.

### NEW BUSINESS



#### Cognition Wins New Heavyweight Client

Cognition has added yet another global client to its expanding roster. Record-breaking company Abnormal Load Engineering (ALE) transports, lifts and installs some of the heaviest engineering loads in the world. One of the fastest growing firms in its field, ALE has engaged Cognition to conduct a comprehensive brand audit and create a fully integrated strategy designed to help strengthen its position in the market and raise awareness of its full range of services and world-leading capabilities.

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#### The Sky's the Limit with Cloud Net

Cloud Net is another new and exciting client for Cognition. Cloud Net is an IT and communications provider which specializes in "cloud" or "grid" based services on demand.





Cloud Net has developed the brand new and revolutionary iTelephony platform – the highly flexible and infinitely scalable telephone system in the sky. Cognition will proactively promote iTelephony through a mix of marketing, digital and PR.

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### VISIT OUR WEBSITE



Our brand new website includes useful guides on a range of marketing topics, video testimonials from our clients, examples of our recent work and further information on the services we offer. Take a moment to look around to find out what we could do for you.

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### DIARY DATE

#### 17th June 2009 – 'People to People' Switched On business event – New Binley Hall, Birmingham, 9am to 5pm

Dr Peter Hughes from Cognition is one of four high-profile motivational speakers at this charity event, he will be giving an inspirational seminar between 2 and 3pm. Drawing on sales, marketing, evolutionary psychology and real-world commercial experience, this presentation will change the way you think. Dr Hughes will show why we don't understand the risks we are taking, how our brains let us down, why we keep making the same mistakes without learning from them and what practical things we can do as individuals and businesses to get through these difficult times.

More than thirty businesses are exhibiting. Find out more about the event, log on to [www.switched-on.biz/switched-on-events](http://www.switched-on.biz/switched-on-events)