

HUBBARD COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
Saint Hill Manor, East Grinstead, Sussex

HCO POLICY LETTER OF 21 NOVEMBER 1972

Remimeo
All PR Packs

PR Series 18

HOW TO HANDLE BLACK PROPAGANDA

RUMORS AND WHISPERING CAMPAIGNS

“Black propaganda” (black = bad or derogatory, propaganda = pushing out statements or ideas) is the term used to destroy reputation or public belief in persons, companies or nations.

It is a common tool of agencies who are seeking to destroy real or fancied enemies or seek dominance in some field.

The technique seeks to bring a reputation so low that the person, company or nation is denied any rights whatever by “general agreement.” It is then possible to destroy the person, company or nation with a minor attack if the black propaganda itself has not already accomplished this.

Vicious and lying gossip by old women was the earlier form of this tactic and was so bad that some areas put them in public stocks (neck yokes) or drove them out of town.

In modern times there is no such check on black propaganda. Difficulties and costs of libel and slander suits, abuse of press privilege, lay anyone open to such a campaign.

All one needs is an enemy. And there are few men in history who have been without enemies.

There are random individuals in the society who do not understand very much.

This is expressed as a sort of malicious glee about things. Such pass on slanderous rumors very easily. In an illiterate society such people abound. Since they cannot read, the bulk of knowledge is denied to them. Since they do not know very many words, much of what is said to them is not understood.

This is not isolated to the illiterate only.

What they do not understand they substitute for with imaginary things.

Thus such persons not only listen to slander but also corrupt and twist even it.

Thus a rumor can go through a society that has no basis in truth.

When numbers of such rumors exist and are persistent, one suspects a “whispering campaign.” This is not because people whisper these things but because like an evil wind it *seems* to have no source.

Black propaganda makes use of such a willingness to pass on and amplify falsehoods.

Much black propaganda is of course more bold and appears blatantly in irresponsible (or covertly controlled) newspapers and radio and television.

But even after a bad press story has appeared or a bad radio or TV broadcast has been given, the “whispering campaign” is counted upon by black propagandists to carry the slander through the society.

Thus any person, any being, is at risk.

No person, company or nation has totally clean hands. That is left to the saints. In childhood one stole a few apples, broke a window or two, dented a fender, went joy riding in a “borrowed” vehicle or took pennies or candy bars that weren’t his own.

Childhood is quite lawless and the teenage period is often a revolt against the closer and closer fitting straitjacket of “proper social conduct.” One marries the wrong spouse or goes astray with another in some incautious moment, or commits various large and small sins of which society disapproves.

Any of these things tend to make one vulnerable to attack, upon his past or repute.

A person comes to fear bad things being said about him. In the face of a whispering campaign, real or imagined, one tends to withdraw, tends to become less active and reach less.

This is equally true of companies and even nations.

Thus, unless one knows how to handle such an attack, one can in fact be made quite miserable and ill.

THE ATTACKER

The world is full of madmen.

The basic characteristic of extreme madness is perpetual attack, attacks on anything, attacks on persons or things which contain no menace.

Extreme, not petty, crime is at the root of such an impulse.

The attacker has an evil purpose in life. He is a thing of death, not life. And his harvest is a death harvest.

Such a person feels he cannot be safe unless everything else is dead.

His evil purpose takes many forms and expressions. The end product is the same—death.

Where an attacker has gone too far he is himself then attacked. Long, bitter quarrels and national wars are alike the to and fro exchange of violence.

Where an attacker lacks the physical means of destroying others and where his own purpose would fail if disclosed, the attacks become covert.

He uses word of mouth, press media, any communication channel to spit his venom. He hides himself as the source; he makes the verbal attack seem logical or real or proven.

He counts on the utterances being picked up or distorted and passed on by the more base people in the society.

This is black propaganda. It is intended to reduce a real or imagined enemy, hurt his income and deny him friends and support.

Companies or associations do this to competitors. The American Medical Association maintains its multibillion dollar monopoly over sickness by continuing a long, well-financed black propaganda campaign against anyone it *thinks* might threaten their income. The head of their “Department of Investigation” (as they call their black propaganda department) once said they just kept it up and kept it up against any rival and one day WHAM! They use press releases, their own members, paid ads, displays, government connections and speakers, any channel, to release endless streams of *imaginary* tales against any *imaginary* rival. While this does bring them government support it has brought them deep hatred not only from rivals but the public at large.

They get back what they put out. They were once wealthy. They are no longer. Their members dislike them and increasingly doctors belong only to state medical societies, not the AMA. The individual doctor most often has good public

relations. His main society benefits from this and betrays it. One day, no AMA. WHAM!

So black propaganda is not something one lightly instigates. For it recoils on the person who uses it.

Let us see how it recoils.

Too much venom put out stains one with venom.

Too much black propaganda gets attacks in return.

Black propaganda is essentially a fabric of lies. The AMA simply imagines stories to put out or have put out.

Sooner or later such stories are found not to be true. ONE false story can destroy the credit of the teller. Now who listens?

Thus a black propaganda campaign is vulnerable. The attacker sooner or later is attacked- often by many.

But those who have to counter such a campaign need the technology of how it is handled.

ANY NEWS

There is a natural law at work that unfortunately favors black propaganda.

WHERE THERE IS NO DATA AVAILABLE PEOPLE WILL INVENT IT.

This is the Law of the Omitted Data.

A vacuum tends to fill itself. Old philosophers said that “nature abhors a vacuum.” Actually the surrounding pressure flows into an area of no pressure.

It is this way with a person, company or nation.

Hit by lies the person tends to withdraw. This already tends to pull things in.

The person does not then wish to put out data. He becomes to some degree a mystery.

To fill that mystery people will invent data.

This is true of persons, companies or nations.

This is where *public relations is a necessity*.

Essentially public relations is the art of making good works well known.

It is a fatal error to think good works speak for themselves. They do not.

They must be publicized.

Essentially this is what public relations is. And this is *why* it is—to fill that vacuum of omitted data.

In the midst of a black propaganda campaign one is denied normal communication channels. The press media along which the campaign is being conducted will *not* run favorable comment. One is mad if he thinks it will as it is serving other masters that mean to destroy the reputé of the target.

“Authoritative” utterances push plain truth out of sight.

Thus public relations people have to be very expert in their technology when they confront black propaganda.

THE TECH

When one is not fighting a battle against black propaganda, public relations is easy.

One hires a reporter who gets to work thinking up ideas and turning out releases. That’s why reporters are often thought of as public relations people which they are not.

In the face of a black propaganda campaign, such releases are twisted, refused and that is the end of it.

There is far more to the art than this.

These are some of the rules that apply:

1. Fill the vacuum of omitted data with factual data.

2. Prove all false utterances heard are lies.
3. Discredit every rumor encountered.
4. Handle the interest level with any utterance.
5. Carefully study out the scene until the exact source is located.
6. Use the knowledge of source to impede or destroy the source of black propaganda by noncriminal means.
7. Continue to fill the vacuum of no data with good data using any channels available.

Each one of these points could well take a book. But understanding them and using one's initiative one can fill in a lot of the tech himself.

The variations of each one are endless.

APPLICATION

1. Fill the Vacuum

First of all, cease to withdraw. It is proven conclusively that in public relations handling of black propaganda, only outflow pays off. Saying nothing may be noble in a character but it is fatal in public relations. Yet even "experts" advise it (when they are doing their clients in).

Blunt denial is crude and can be used against one as a sort of confirmation.

You don't have to announce or spread a flap and never should. PR men often *make* the flap.

But don't interpret this as "silence is necessary." Get in a safe place and speak up.

Use any channel to speak up. But don't seek channels that will corrupt what you say in repeating it.

Don't stay on the same subject that you are being attacked on.

An example of speaking up without denying and thus confirming might be:

STATEMENT: "I read your company went broke last month."

REBUTTAL: "My God. You're telling me! If we hadn't got out of that contract we really would have gone broke. There was a hell of a row in the boardroom. But McLinty won. Scotch to the core. He said, 'I won't sign it!' Like to have tore the president's head off. Hell of a row. Seems like we got 80 million buried somewhere and McLinty is in charge of it and he won't *move an inch* on it."

The interrogator's conclusion is you're not broke. He's got data. The vacuum is filled with a story of board rows and 80 million mysterious reserves.

2. Disprove False Data

The technique of proving utterances false is called “DEAD AGENTING.”

It’s in the first book of Chinese espionage. When the enemy agent gives false data, those who believed him but now find it false kill him—or at least cease to believe him.

So the PR slang for it is “dead agenting.”

This consists of disproving utterly the false statement with documents or demonstration or display. One has to have a kit (a collection of documents) or the ability to demonstrate or something to display.

STATEMENT: “I’ve been told you are in trouble with income tax people.”

REBUTTAL: “Here’s a document of fully paid taxes and a letter of commendation from the tax authorities.” Displays same.

Result? Whoever told him that is now dead with him as an accurate informer.

The best way to dead agent is when the person makes some disprovable statement, find WHO to fix his mind on it and then produce the rebuttal.

STATEMENT: “I hear you aren’t married to the man you’re living with.”

REBUTTAL: “*WHO* told you that?”

STATER: “I forget.”

REBUTTER: “Well you remember and I’ll show you some proof.”

STATER: “Well, it was a man.

REBUTTER: “WHO?”

STATER: “Joe Schmo.”

REBUTTER: “Okay. Here’s my marriage certificate. Who’s the Joe Schmo nut anyway?”

Now it’s Joe Schmo who’s the mystery. How come he lies? What’s in it for him?

When one hasn’t got the document but can get it, one can say, “You tell me the name of whoever said that and next time I see you I’ll show you something *very* interesting about it.”

And be sure to get the document and see him again.

Dead agenting has a billion variations. “It won’t fly.” Fly it. “Place is empty.”

Show him it’s full.

The subject matter of dead agenting is PROOF in whatever form.

You only challenge statements you *can* prove are false and in any conversation let the rest slide.

EVERY FRIEND, EVERY OPINION LEADER, EVERY STAFF MEMBER YOU HAVE, SHOULD BE SUPPLIED WITH A DEAD AGENT PACK CONTAINING PROOFS AGAINST COMMON RUMORS (AND BROCHURES AND COACHING TO FILL THE VACUUM).

3. Disprove Every Rumor

Proving negatives is almost impossible. “How do I know you aren’t a CIA man?” Well, how can one prove that? One can’t whip out a KGB badge as that would be just as bad. No one ever wrote a document, “Bill Till is not a member of the CIA.” Useless. It is a denial. Who’d believe it?

Sometimes “You don’t” works.

But the right answer to a negative (no proof) is a “fill the vacuum.”

STATEMENT: “How do I know you’re not a CIA man?”

REBUTTAL: “Christ, please don’t insult me! The CIA tried to hire me once. Said they’d shoot me if I didn’t join up. Cuba it was. I was a sugar salesman.

And Batista was trying to ... etc., etc. See this scar on my leg? (Pulls up pants.) Batista cop shot me because he thought I was CIA. So don’t bring up painful subjects. (Rubs scar.) (Laugh.)”

But once in a while you *can* prove a negative. Accused of drug smuggling one can show he’s a member of the antidrug league. The counter in a negative proof must be *credible*.

A million million variations exist in dead agenting.

The basis of it is NOT to be the thing rumored and to be able to prove it fast.

4. Handle the Level

Handling interest level is basically an exercise in the Tone Scale. (See Tone Scale Charts of Human Emotion.)

Agreement occurs at the same emotional tone level as the person making the statement. He buys his facts at that level.

To go half a tone up from his level is to command him within his zone of reality.

STATEMENT: “It’s hopeless trying to believe in anyone. I thought you people were all right but now I hear you are all hippies. (In a dull apathy.)”

REBUTTAL: “Oh, oh, oh, who could have told you such a sad lie. (Sob)”

STATER: “Wouldn’t be any use to say.”

REBUTTER: “(Sob) But you’ve got to say. Oh, I feel so awful.”

STATER: “Well, he wouldn’t care if I told. It’s the local minister.”

REBUTTER: “(Sob) (Kleenex) What an awful thing to say. Just because we found him dead drunk and took him home to sleep it off, and he said if we ever told he’d say we’re hippies.”

STATER: “What a sad story. Oh, it’s a bad world. How ungrateful.”

You go half a tone up. Give him a story, on the subject or not. Like “(Sob) That’s because we lost our instruments. We once were a band and this nightclub owner wouldn’t pay us and we had to sleep in the barn (sob).”

Another one.

STATEMENT: “I hear some bad things about you people. (Covert hostility.)”

REBUTTAL: “(Anger) Who would DARE say such things?” Etc.

And story type can be matched in tone.

STATEMENT: “I hear those people stole some rowboats.”

REBUTTAL: “Who said so?”

STATER: “The dockmaster’s son.”

REBUTTAL: “Oh, him. Gets things wrong. *Our* rowboat was stolen! With all the gear in it. We were out fishing and . . . say, you don’t suppose HE stole it do you? Did you ever hear of him stealing anything? Has he got a record?”

Well, this dockmaster’s son will now “have a record” in the stater’s tales. As *theft* is of interest to him, crime will also be.

5. Carefully Study Out the Scene

The technology of finding who is shooting is very vast. But the core of it is FILING.

All PR is expensive in time or money or both. And nowhere is it more time -consuming than in locating the source of a black propaganda campaign.

But, to live at all, one has to engage in this search at some time or other.

One just keeps running down these tales until one locates the source.

There can be more than one *apparent* source and these can be handled. But they will at last lead to the real instigator.

One just keeps locating names and filing them, with dates.

At length one name file is very thick. That’s your boy-or association or company or nation.

6. Impede or Destroy

As you have been dead agenting as you looked, the attacks get handled. The campaign ebbs and flows but actually lessens.

There are thousands of variations on finding the real WHO.

But essentially it is just looking, dead agenting, filing, looking on and on.

You are, in this whole period, *handling*.

Once in a while it happens fast.

Now and then the black propagandist packs up and fades away before he is fully spotted. He becomes aware of the counteraction.

The usual action is a counterpropaganda campaign *based on truth*.

It is a long-to-find and hard-learned fact that people who engage in black propaganda have big bursting crimes to hide.

They do not have *little* crimes. They have BIG ones.

One's own ability to confront evil may be too low to really grasp the black propagandist's crimes or believe they exist.

Such people are often SANCTIMONIOUS hypocrites. They are usually arrogant and will not parley (have conferences with a foe). They appear so terribly sure they are RIGHT that it fairly shakes one's confidence that they could ever do anything wrong.

Thus the black propagandist is not detectable as such in many cases. The lordly institution, the lofty society, the glittering country are far, far above such a nasty psychotic trick as a studied, financed, expertly run campaign of vicious lies.

Thus they are believed. Or their servants are believed. And their campaigns can be *very* effective.

But this makes them hard to suspect or detect. And it makes it hard to get anything bad about *them* believed.

But under all this are *real* crimes. Not stealing apples or pinching pennies as a child. *Real* crimes like extortion, blackmail, embezzlement and mass murder are sitting in their closets. Believe that. For in the course of your counterattack you may despair of ever finding anything.

But you will find it.

A lofty railroad-but secretly murdering anyone who opposed their land grabs. A minister of high renown-but a secret member of and taking orders from a murder mob. The biggest and "most respected" union leader in the country- but a numbered agent of a foreign intelligence service dedicated to destroying the country's fuel capacity and defeating its president!

And each of these engaged in and never were suspected of black propaganda campaigns that ruined many lives.

Bad guys tend to get rid of good guys. Sometimes for what they consider good reasons, sometimes for imagined reasons, sometimes because the bad guy just can't *stand* a decent, bright person.

But there is no real truth in the bad guys always cause their own downfall. It may come, but it may be far too late to save the reputation or even life of the person being attacked by hidden campaigns.

Therefore it is *vital* to handle the matter. One can't just hope it will all go away. It won't. It will get disastrous to the degree that it is not handled.

The less handling, the more disastrous.

There is another hard-won truth.

ONLY COUNTERATTACK HANDLES.

The fact is that just going on PRing oneself does not remove the effects of the campaign, and all too soon one no longer has communication lines left in order to handle anything since reputation is so destroyed no one will listen and no lines remain.

One has to fill the vacuum of the counterpropagandist's evil deeds. As these are never exposed to view, there is a vacuum there.

Another strange thing is that press *will* print attacks. Maybe this will no longer be true in some enlightened age. But in this era, good attacks or fights between things will get print space.

But press is *very* far from the only channel of communication. Governments do believe the press and think it is public opinion. A newspaper can be a fortress of some black propagandist. But a people often believes little it reads.

There are opinion leaders, there are letters, there is word of mouth. These are also channels of communication and really far more powerful than the press.

There is also friendly press. But a friendly-talking reporter is often the most suspect. He was so nice in the interview, so vicious in his article.

Statements one makes can be curved. "She had a birthday party" becomes "The delinquents in her circle gathered yesterday for a sex orgy and pretended to the police it was a birthday party. No one was jailed."

The brand of black propaganda is very easy to see in writing twists.

So it takes time and work to reverse an attack because normal channels have to be reopened and reversed.

It is done by attacks.

But attacks which are not true earn suits. So one must attack only on proven ground.

This requires a lot of hard search.

However, a black propagandist often has *many* other enemies. These have sometimes gathered data.

The principles are that when the subterminals are located, they are investigated and counterattacked. Then further investigation reveals closer terminals to the propagandist and these are attacked. In short, one investigates and attacks.

Always be ready to parley—that is, have a conference and settle it. The arrogance of the black propagandist often forbids this. And when it does, it means longer and harder work and, if well done, his downfall.

In any event, the attack is a long cycle, a complex cycle and often an expensive cycle. It consists of investigate and attack.

But remember, one *must* attack once he has any idea of the identity of the black propagandist or even his subterminals.

There is no other way out.

Any other course is death.

7. Continue to Fill the Vacuum

Continuous good works and effective release of material about one's good works is vital especially in a black propaganda war.

One cannot just fight.

You are in effect advertising the other fellow when you expose him repeatedly.

This gives you a new sort of vacuum. One becomes known as the fellow or company or nation that attacks _____. But who really is this fellow or company or nation?

Pamphlets, brochures, press releases, one's own newspaper and magazine, one's own contacts with opinion leaders, these and many more, must be supplied with A COMPREHENSIBLE IDENTITY OF SELF.

Distributing or using these, one publicizes one's own good works.

And one must also *do* good works. One can't just dedicate his life to eradicating the enemy, even when that is tempting.

On the other hand, within the dictates of safety, one cannot hide continuously.

One must, through his good works and actions at least, be visible.

So a continual, truthful and artful torrent of public relations pieces must occur.

Then one day there is no enemy.

And one's reputation is high.

There may be other attacks but now one can handle them as small fires and not as a whole burning forest.

WHAT IS BLACK PROPAGANDA?

You can see that black propaganda is a covert attack on the reputation of a person, company or nation, using slander and lies in order to weaken or destroy.

Defense presupposes that the target is not that bad.

One does not have to be perfect to withstand such an attack, but it helps.

But even if one *were* perfect it would be no defense. Almost all the saints in history have been subjected to such attacks. And most of them died of it.

The answer is PR TECHNOLOGY SKILLFULLY APPLIED.

To be skillful in anything, one has to know it and be experienced in it and DO it.

As weary a task as it may seem to some, as heartbreaking as it can be, one still has to *fight*. And fight with tools and technology and dedication superior to that of the enemy.

But progressing and getting small gains, small penetrations, small little skirmishes and battles, one at length comes up to victory after victory and at last wins the whole war.

One is saved.

L. RON HUBBARD
Founder