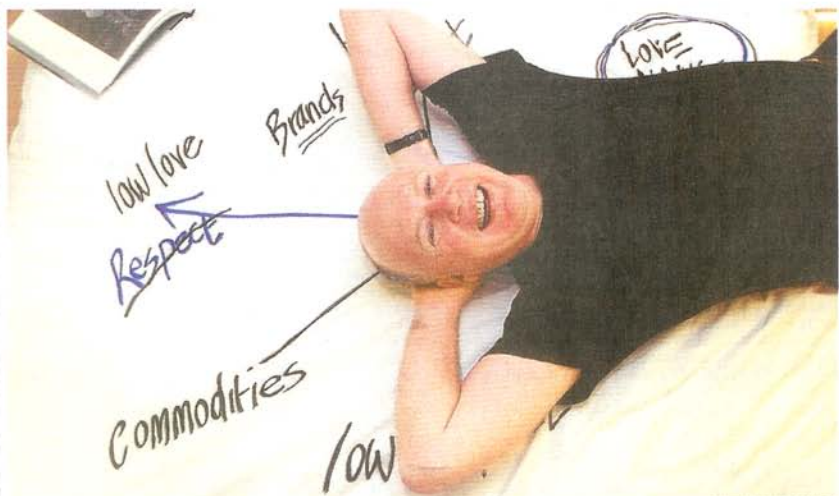


# BUSINESS



GRAHAM BARCLAY/BLOOMBERG

OPRAH WHO? Saatchi & Saatchi CEO Kevin Roberts says that consumers are growing tired of celebrity pitchmen.

## Kiwi Advertising Legend a 'Radical Optimist'



Diane Francis

Kevin Roberts was kicked out of school at age 17 in northwest England, but immediately landed a marketing job in the 1960s with British designer Mary Quant in swinging London.

Years later, he and his family live in remote New Zealand but he globe trots the world as CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi, a giant advertising agency with 134 offices in 84 countries and 7,000 employees.

With far-flung operations and a home "on the edge of the world" as he puts it, he is a denizen of airports and hotels. This is why last week his assistant suggested an e-mail interview be best and he responded to The Sun's questions within mere hours on a myriad of topics.

"I became a brand manager for Mary Quant's cosmetics Make Up to Make Love In and I learned about creativity, connectivity, emotional leadership and collaboration," he e-mailed. "But advertising today is the most fun it's ever been."

Saatchi & Saatchi was launched in 1970 in Britain by two brothers, Charles and Maurice, and became the world's biggest ad agency with more than 600 offices. It pioneered public ownership of an industry that had been characterized by entrepreneurship.

In 1995, the brothers were ousted after a boardroom dust-up, and five years later, in 2000, their namesake firm became part of the Publicis Group hold-

ing company out of Paris.

Mr. Roberts entered the agency business late and at the top. He toiled on the client side of advertising going from Mary Quant to Gillette, Procter & Gamble, and Pepsi. In 1997, he joined Saatchi and believes the industry has a huge upside.

"I'm a radical optimist," he wrote. "We live in the Age of the Idea and the Consumer is Boss. Mass marketing is dead. Creativity rules OK! It's the most exciting it's ever been. Our challenges are two-fold: a) keep attracting the bravest and most innovative, and b) have the courage to unleash and inspire them by getting out of their way."

One of his trademarks is "lovemark" and "lovemark thinking," which he defines as brands that inspire loyalty beyond reason. In other words, the challenge is to create marketing/advertising that gets consumers emotionally attached, or in love with, products or services. To promote "lovemarks" all media must be brought into play and this won't change in future.

"No one medium will replace another. The consumer wants 'and/and' — not 'either/or,'" he writes. "All four media — print, television, radio, web — will be interactive. All will be consumed on-the-go. All will be idea/content driven. All will have some digital component. All will engage, not just inform."

Likewise, he believes that the advertising industry will shift to a new set of paradigms, including becoming predominantly female. "Agencies will be full of connectors not directors, will be fast not slow, will be 70% female, will be full of inspirers not managers, will be partners not servers, will be diverse, will have lots of anthropologists/social-

ogists on staff and will be full of noise, fun, passion and success."

Another shift is that consumers are not only the boss, but they are more skeptical than ever. This means that tried-and-true techniques such as product placement in movies or television as well as celebrity endorsements are no longer always successful in promoting sales.

"Celebrities sell magazines and reality TV shows that's for sure. But products? Consumers are confident in their own judgment. They're more convinced by a friend than a celeb," he said.

Changing consumer attitudes plus a shift in media emphasis has made advertising more challenging, but there are many innovators on top of trends.

"Clients get the advertising they deserve. You see bravery everywhere from Procter & Gamble to Wal-Mart, Toyota to Honda (even from Detroit), Sony to Samsung. Clients are on the move. They get it," he said.

A mix of disciplines, including public relations, is necessary to orchestrate intelligent campaigns these days. "Great ideas come from anywhere. The client, the agency, the media agency, the consumer. It's about getting round the table together at briefing time, developing a holistic consumer-driven idea together, then figuring out how to emotionally engage with the consumer at every touch point in new, exciting ways. As partners," he wrote.

The most innovative advertising nation is New Zealand, in his opinion. "I live there," he said. "Great ideas come from the Edge. Brazil, Argentina, Thailand are very hot right now. America is doing some great stuff — especially in 'new' media — and the best ad in 2006 came from Britain (Fallon's 'Sony Balls')."