

A Simple Selling Situation (by Benjamin Defensor)

Contributed by Administrator
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FROM his experience working with an international advertising and public relations firm and a global consumer products manufacturer, Manoling de Leon found early the crucial role of mass media in marketing. In his book, *Pinoy Pilgrim: In Search of Filipino Identity*, de Leon relates how Shell's Formula 7 gasoline stole the thunder from Caltex's Boron in the Philippines after sweeping the opposition in other parts of the world. He did this by launching Formula 7 ahead of Boron instead of coming out after as what happened in other countries.

It was here that Manoling found the value of contacts with mass media. For mass media is crucial in both marketing and selling, particularly in the marketing of a candidate. A candidate is offered to meet a need; not sold because of his qualities and skills.

The declaration of martial law appears to be a marketing move from de Leon's point of view as he relates its genesis in his book. He was then a consultant for President Ferdinand E. Marcos. Here's why he took the job:

"Marcos was someone... whom we would be honoring now as the greatest President our country ever had, if not for his sickness and the way he lost control over those around him who ended messing up everything he did.

"He had two defects he failed to control and that led to his downfall. One was his love for women. The other was his loyalty to his friends. Both clouded his judgment and led to mistakes that were fatal for him as a person and as a President.

"Deep in his heart, like every Pinoy I know, Marcos was a noble person. A very intimate friend of the Marcoses told me a story. Over dinner one night in Malacañang, she observed that as friends of Imelda and the cronies of Marcos talked about politics and projects, Marcos shook his head and interrupted the talk with the following words: "But what can we do to help our people, especially the poor? That's what you should talk about." And then he stood up and left the room."

Marcos was Manoling's second client after Eugenio "Geny" Lopez, Jr. He was called in to help the re-election campaign in 1969. Executive Secretary Alex Melchor "contracted his friend Chuchie, then an EBP consultant, who brought us in. Aside from Chuchie and me, we also had Tony Mercado, and George Burwell.

"Secretary Melchor briefed us and we got to work, sharing all the data they had on Marcos and his campaign. Some weeks later, we had a finished package selling Marcos as someone who would bring progress to everyone's doorstep through infrastructure projects that will help Filipinos realize their dreams.

"It was a simple enough campaign that was captured in a half-hour video. We also advised him not to engage in the same bad-mouthing campaign as his opponent Osmeña did. He should stick to his reelec-tion message and, in the last few weeks just before the elections, saturate the media with his advertisements showing Marcos as a good family man, surrounded by his mother, a beautiful wife and cute, innocent children.

“It was my theory that selling the president is like a one-day purchase. You have to erase all doubts about the candidate on or just before Election Day, and the voters will buy him. We showed his video on nationwide TV, did a live interview of him and his family, and presented a perfect image of Marcos as an ideal statesman, leader of the nation, a good husband, doting father and loyal son and brother.”

Marcos won but soon the peace and order situation deteriorated. Eugenio Lopez Sr. called a meeting of “media moguls” like Chino Roces of The Manila Times. In that meeting they hatched a plan to mount a widespread media campaign to ask Marcos to resign. For the next few months, they would plaster the front pages of their papers and repeated every hour in all TV and radio stations the words, “Marcos resign.”

“As the late Chino Roces told my friend Chuchie and me sometime later, a few days after that meeting, he and the other media moguls like him received a serious offer they never could refused: their lives in exchange for not pushing through with the plan. So the best they could do was to come out with a common front-page editorial criticizing Marcos and requesting him to do what was best for the country.

“A few months later, Marcos declared martial law.”

This article was written by Benjamin Defensor for the Manila times:

<http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2007/sept/09/yehey/opinion/20070909opi6.html>