

In 1928 when this book was written, most people didn't understand human psychology.

One man who did understand it was Sigmund Freud. You've probably heard his name before. Freud was the creator of modern psychology. His ideas about people's deepest motivations, fears, and desires shook the world and still echo today.

And guess what?

**The author of this book was Sigmund Freud's nephew!** I'm sure this is no coincidence. Edward Bernays took his uncle's deep understanding of human nature and made it practical.

**Edward Bernays is now known as the father of public relations. [Public relations \(or PR\)](#) is about creating understanding between the public and an idea, group or business.**

### **Propaganda PDF Download**

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Today, we all know that large companies have a PR department. We know that politicians fight a war of propaganda every election. And today, you will learn some of the hidden secrets to creating both effective propaganda and public relations.

## **1. What is Propaganda?**

When you hear the word "propaganda," what do you think of?

I bet you think of World War 2 and the posters that were used by Hitler to spread evil ideas.

The [Nazis](#) in Germany wanted to [spread the idea](#) that Jewish people were inferior and parasites on society. So they designed posters that presented Jewish people as sneaky and rat-like or sick-looking fat bankers.

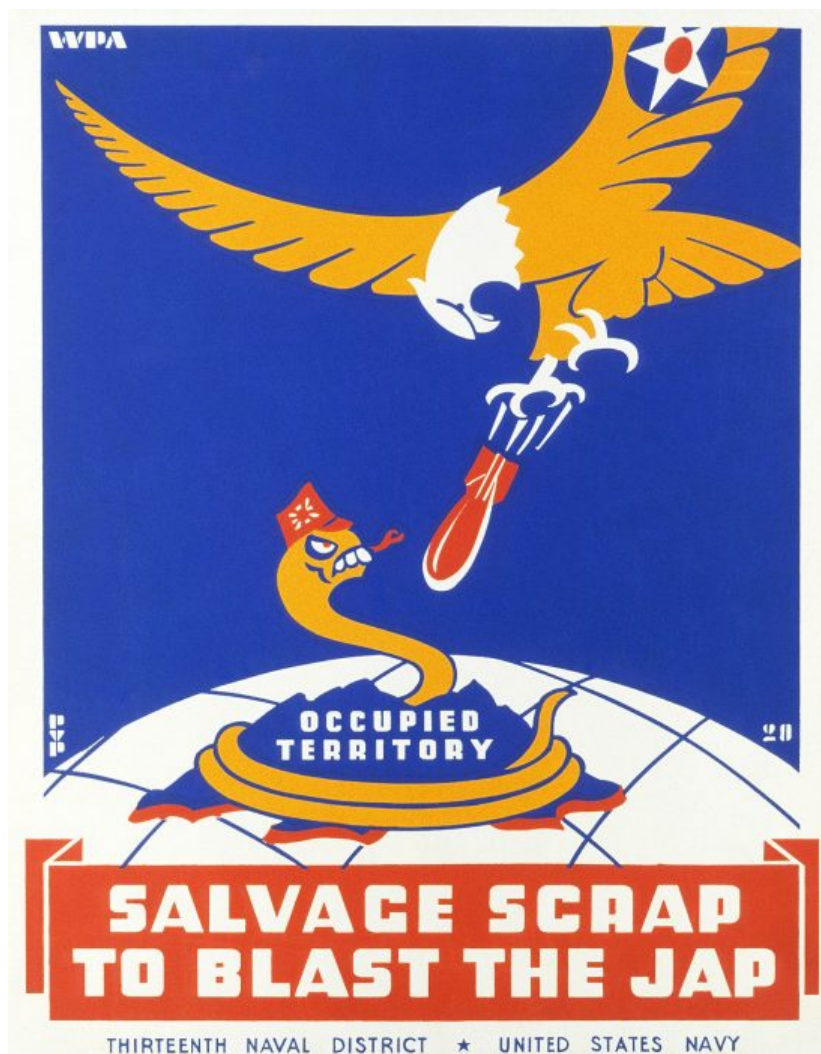


On the other hand, other posters showed an ideal person in the eyes of the Nazis. Someone with blond hair, blue eyes, vibrant, strong and healthy. This is what Hitler called the "Aryans" or the "Master Race." (*It's ironic that Hitler himself did not measure up to this perfect image, seeing as he had black hair and brown eyes.*)

But it wasn't just the Nazis who used propaganda. The communists in Russia and Fascists in Italy were using it, too.

**And across the sea, American posters were also being painted.** These posters sparked patriotic emotions inside American hearts and stirred hatred of the enemy. They painted images of good vs evil, with America as good.

For example, this poster shows an American eagle attacking a snake which represents Japan. We'll talk more about why this is effective propaganda in a moment...



Edward Bernays defines public relations as an organized effort to create understanding between the public and some business, idea or group. And...

SummaryThe mother of public relations is propaganda. Propaganda is about creating images in the minds of millions of people at the same time. How do you do that? Well, first you must deeply understand how people work.

## 2. Mass Reactions: If Human Reactions Can Be Predicted, They Can Be Manipulated



People's reactions and emotions [are often predictable](#). This means if you put the right stimulus in front of millions of people, most of them will have the same reaction.

Here's one simple example...

**People are disgusted by rats and bugs.** They always have been and they probably always

will be. It's just built into our biology. Rats and bugs can carry diseases so we need to stay away from them.

This also means that people will automatically feel disgusted if they see an image of a rat or bug in propaganda. And the Nazis used these images very effectively. They painted Jews beside rats or Jews as rat-like humans so that people would start to associate disgust with Jewish people.

In his speeches, when Hitler was talking about Jewish people, he always used words related to bugs, pests, and parasites to describe them... something that crawls over your skin and infects you from the inside. You can read this excellent article about [Hitler and disgust](#) or watch the short video below from psychology professor Jordan Peterson:

Another example...

People naturally hate snakes. We are afraid of them and want to get rid of them. That's why snakes are used so often to represent the enemy. In the Bible, the ultimate enemy Satan shows up as a snake. That's no accident.

The lesson from all this is clear...

Summary If you want to produce a mass reactions in people's minds, then you must take advantage of their existing emotional habits and mental cliches. If you want people to see someone as powerful, strong and visionary, then use a symbol people already associate with those qualities *like an eagle or a lion*.

### 3. The Invisible Government



Democracy is a strange new invention.

Think about it.

**Anybody and everybody can decide how to manage the country.** Doesn't it seem strange that millions of people who have never opened an economics book will decide how to manage the economy?

The fact is, every country is a machine that is too complicated for the average person to understand. The average person simply doesn't have time to study economic, political and ethical issues in depth.

**So we need someone else to highlight the most important issues for us.** This makes the voting decision much easier. Edward Bernays calls the people who bring issues to the public attention The Invisible Government.

*We have voluntarily agreed to let an invisible government sift the data and high-spot the outstanding issue so that our field of choice shall be narrowed to practical proportions.*

Here's another quote:

*The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country.*

That quote may sound shocking and the idea of an “Invisible Government” may be scary, but Bernays is simply describing how any democracy works. There are a group of people who direct the minds of most of the public. These are the politicians, journalists, religious leaders, and [other influencers](#).

Summary Every election is a free and open competition of ideas. This means the real people in power are those who know how to get public acceptance for their ideas. The invisible government shows people which issues are important and which direction is right.

## 4. How Public Relations Started



Edward Bernays knew the same propaganda techniques used by governments in World War 2 could also be used by businesses. He knew a business with a good public relationship and reputation would be more successful. But the word “propaganda” was way too negative, even back then, so Bernays created the term “public relations.”

**Public relations has grown because life is more and more complex.** When you walk into a store today to buy toothpaste, you have dozens of choices. How do you know which one is good? That's where public relations can help you choose.

So what would be a good public relations strategy for a toothpaste company? Well, it's all about creating understanding. If you sell the best toothpaste, then you have to educate the public as to WHY your toothpaste is the best:

- Maybe you can teach them what toothpaste ingredients are important for healthy teeth.
- Maybe you can share the fact that most dentists recommend a certain brand of toothpaste.

If you do have the product that is best for people, then this type of education will create more customers for you. And this propaganda can be spread not just through advertising, but also through dental clinics, schools, etc.

Summary Public relations is important because life is more complex than ever. Again, by public relations, we mean creating understanding between the public and some business,

group or idea. It's not about deceiving people, but educating them WHY your product is best.

## 5. Sell What You Stand For



**Today, it's not enough to sell your product to the public.** Almost every product has dozens or hundreds of competitors. This is especially true online.

**To stand out from the competition, a business now must also sell *itself* to the public and all the things it stands for.** People are more likely to buy from a company when they see it matches their own values. That's why you now see so many big brands being environmentally friendly and giving back to the community by sponsoring charities and events.

A few years ago, [Nike had a scandal](#) that exposed the bad conditions at some of their factories. People protested and wrote bad articles about Nike in the press. The word "Nike" started to be [connected with the word](#) "sweatshop" in people's minds. Sales dipped because most people don't want to be associated with a company that uses sweatshops. But the scandal had a positive outcome, it caused Nike to make changes to improve the conditions in many of their factories.

*(To learn more about the Nike success story, see my notes on the book [Shoe Dog, written by the founder of Nike.](#))*

SummaryWith hundreds of choices at the store today, customers are becoming more and more selective. They don't just want to buy a quality product, they want to do business with ethical companies who share their values.

## 6. High-Spotting: Focus People's Attention on your Best Product or Feature



Bernays says there are two methods for effective public relations. The first method he calls continuous interpretation, which is trying to control every detail the public sees about your company.

The second method he calls high-spotting and here is how he describes it:

***High-spotting [...] vividly seizes the attention of the public and fixes it upon some detail or aspect which is typical of the entire enterprise. When a real estate corporation which is erecting a tall office building makes it ten feet taller than the highest skyscraper in existence, that is dramatization. (emphasis added)***



Donald Trump experienced the power of high-spotting first-hand when he announced a new development of his in the 1980's that included the world's tallest building. Trump's project included a lot of other impressive buildings and features, but all people wanted to talk about was [the world's tallest building](#). It was a powerful symbol that gave the project a mystique that captivated people.

Here's another example of high-spotting...

**Blendtec makes a very powerful blender.** And to highlight the strength of their blenders, they created a series of Youtube videos called **"Will it Blend?"**

In these videos, they blend everything from iPhones to DVDs to golf balls. People watch the videos because of curiosity, but they leave with the impression that Blendtec makes powerful products. After all, they can blend anything!

And the proof is in the results. Since launching this video series, sales at Blendtec have gone up 700%! You can [read more about Blendtec's marketing story in my note on the great book Contagious](#).

### **The Halo Effect in marketing**

Have you ever heard of the Halo Effect? It means that one good quality about a person can cast a "halo" around the whole person. For example, studies have shown that people usually judge attractive people as more intelligent. Their good looks cast a halo and people assume they have other positive qualities, too.

I'm sure it's clear how "High-Spotting" and "The Halo Effect" are almost the same idea.

### **Here's how the Halo Effect also applies to marketing your products...**

Apple became a huge success because of its breakthrough the iPod. When the iPod became a hit about 10 years ago it captured 73.9% market share. A staggering piece of the digital music pie. Nobody could even remember who was second place.

Well, a surprising thing happened. The incredible success of their iPod also caused Apple's computer sales to increase dramatically. In 2005 alone computer sales jumped 68% from the last year. And Apple had spent almost no money advertising their computers! Their marketing budget was all spent on their iPods.

The marketing expert [Al Ries says this is an example of "The Halo Effect" in action](#). People love Apple's iPods. iPods are cool, new, modern and sexy. So People started to see Apple's computers in a more positive way also. Al Ries says if you have one product that is a big hit, then it makes sense to "put your money on your best horse" so to speak. Spread the message about your best product far and wide, and your other products will benefit as well.

Summary "High Spotting" or "The Halo Effect" is a powerful way to spread a positive

impression of your products. Choose your most popular product and market the hell out of it like Apple. Or find one feature that is really good, and create a dramatic demonstration to fix people's attention on that feature like Blendtec.

## 7. The Age of Followers: To Influence Someone, Find Their Leader



Three hundred years ago, people lived in villages and they exchanged ideas by talking to each other. Communities were local and geographic. The leader of the community may have been the local priest.

Today ideas can be exchanged over any distance. There are magazines, newspapers, and TV shows. Most importantly, the internet now means you can exchange ideas with other people instantly.

**This means today people can be part of the same community or group even if they live far apart.**

Bernays says to create effective propaganda, you must think of society not only as individuals. You have to see it as a collection of overlapping groups.

Each individual is a loyal member or follower of a few social groups. He may belong to a political organization, a religious organization, a professional organization related to his career. His groups can also include the people who share his important hobbies and interests.

*This invisible, intertwining structure of groupings and associations is the mechanism by which democracy has organized its group mind and simplified its mass thinking.*

### **People are similar to fellow group members**

Why is understanding groups important? Because although every person is an individual, they are also very similar to their fellow group members.

For example, people who go to the same church will share many of the same political positions and beliefs about what it means to be a good person and live a good life.

**So when you understand the values, motivations, and feelings of one member of a social group, then you will better understand every member of the group.** You will know where their sensitive spots and hot buttons. You will be able to connect with them on a deep level.



## You will also know who their leader is

**Each social group has a leader at the top. Two psychologists called [Trotter and Le Bon](#) found that when people are in a group, their first impulse is to follow the example of a trusted leader.**

Every country has a president or prime minister. Every state or province has a leader. Every city has a mayor.

The Catholic Church has the Pope. Tibetan Buddhists have the Dalai Lama. And each individual church and temple has their own local leader, too. Christian priests, Jewish Rabbis, Muslim Imams and Hindu Archakas.

Every sports team has a captain. Every office has a boss. Every company has a CEO.

It's almost like people can't create a group without at the same time creating a leader. And this is important because **the leader of a group holds the key to influencing the entire group**. As Bernays puts it:

*If you can influence the leaders, either with or without their conscious cooperation, you automatically influence the group which they sway.*

## “Influencer Marketing”

Have you heard of the term “influencer marketing.” A lot of popular social media experts talk about this as if it is a new idea. But in this 100-year-old book, Edward Bernays is talking about the same idea!

In a nutshell, [influencer marketing](#) is about finding people who have a large audience and getting them to recommend a product to their audience.

For example, Oprah Winfrey has one of the most popular TV talk shows. She also has a book club that her biggest fans join. And when Oprah recommends a book to her book club, it is guaranteed to become a bestseller. That is how strong her influence is with the tens of millions of women who watch her show daily.

**Now with the internet, anyone who can build an audience is an influencer.** The internet has made the cost of building and reaching an audience free. Youtube, Facebook, and blogging are all free.

Some girls who start Youtube channels about makeup tutorials can get millions of views. And a makeup company can pay the girl to try or recommend their product. Here are [a few successful examples](#) of this kind of marketing.

But influencers have existed for a long time before the internet.

For example, there was a popular actress at the time called Irene Castle. And when she suddenly cut her hair short, many women around the world followed because they were admirers and followers of the actress.

Or, if you want to sell more bacon, don't tell people how great bacon is. Instead, ask yourself, "who already influences the eating habits of people?" And you'd probably think of doctors. So the real challenge is how to get doctors to publicly recommend eating bacon.

Summary Edward Bernays said selling is not convincing people your product is the best, but **finding out who already influences the group you want to reach**, then getting that leader to use or recommend your product. 100 years ago he called this "the new salesmanship." Now it is called "influencer marketing."

## 8. How Design, Fashion & Aesthetics Give Modern Companies an Unfair Advantage



A hundred years ago, a product could get national recognition just by getting onto store shelves. The real challenge was convincing retailers to display your products on store shelves, which is why most manufacturers had squads of traveling salesmen.

But today getting recognition is much more difficult. Today a business doesn't just need to get a product on store shelves, it needs to convince people to choose the product instead of a dozen competitors. And there's so much advertising and noise out there.

*To make customers is the new problem. One must understand not only his own business—the manufacture of a particular product—but also the structure, the personality, the prejudices, of a potentially universal public.*

So the real challenge is...

**How can you make people desire your product more than your competitor's product?**

One way to increase demand is by making your product cheaper, but that can soon put you out of business because your profit margins become razor thin.

**Bernays says a better way to stand out is to build aesthetics, style or fashion into your product. Small differences in a product can become very important if it is seen as a matter of style.** A small difference in the cut or color of a dress will decide if it sells well this year.

**Let's take another look at Apple.** They didn't create more powerful computers or cheaper phones. They created devices that win at design. They are beautiful to look at and hold,

which is why I'm writing this on a MacBook Pro right now. These aesthetic qualities of their products set them apart from the competition. Their competition who until recently always created ugly, boxy electronics.

It's the same reason people buy one car brand over another or one pair of shoes over another. Here's a very important quote that you should take a moment to let it sink in:

*A thing may be desired not for its intrinsic worth or usefulness but because (someone) has unconsciously come to see in it a symbol of something else, the desire for which he is ashamed to admit to himself.*

Summary Building style or beauty into your products will help you stand out from the competition. And propaganda can help people understand what is and is not beautiful. That's exactly what fashion critics or taste leaders do.

## 9. How Is Propaganda Spread?



When most of us hear "Propaganda," we probably think of those WW2 posters from the beginning of this article, but Bernays says that any form of communication can be used for propaganda.

*There is no means of human communication which may not also be a means of deliberate propaganda, because propaganda is simply the establishing of reciprocal understanding between an individual and a group.*

He says 100 years ago, the best place to spread propaganda was in a **public meeting**. These were very popular with local communities.

But people stopped going to these meetings after the **automobile, radio, and newspaper** became popular. They would rather get their news from the radio or newspaper.

**Magazines** were, and still are, very effective at spreading ideas because they are focused. Each magazine is dedicated to promoting some idea, whether that is health, women's fashion or philosophy. Magazines deliberately selecting only material that promotes a specific idea.

Bernays also says **movies** are a powerful and sneaky form of propaganda:

*The American motion picture is the greatest unconscious carrier of propaganda in the world today. It is a great distributor for ideas and opinions. The motion picture can standardize the ideas and habits of a nation.*

Movies are powerful because they tell stories. A story has a hero, who is somebody people admire and unconsciously follow. So whenever possible use **storytelling** in your marketing.

Summary Propaganda is always an organized attempt to spread a particular idea or belief. The channels through which it is spread are constantly changing with technology.

## 10. Good Propaganda: Is There Such a Thing?



Edward Bernays makes it clear that propaganda is not just evil brainwashing. He says:

*Propaganda becomes vicious and reprehensive only when its authors consciously and deliberately disseminate what they know to be lies, or when they aim at effects which they know to be prejudicial to the common good.*

**Propaganda is often used to educate people and improve society. There are many examples you will see daily:**

- When kids are learning about healthy eating in school, that's propaganda.
- When a TV ad is raising awareness and acceptance of mental health issues, that's propaganda.
- And long before women got the right to vote, people had to make the idea acceptable. Again, it's a type of propaganda.

Summary [Almost any movement](#) for social progress tries to educate or enlighten the public mind, which is a type of propaganda.

### Conclusion

Edward Bernays was alive when propaganda was born. And he has carefully studied what makes propaganda effective, turning it into the new practice of public relations.

We've shined a light on many of his best ideas, including:

- How propaganda turned into public relations,
- How people's emotional reactions to things like rats and snakes were manipulated by the Nazis,
- How an invisible government truly controls democracies,
- Why you need to sell what you stand for,
- Why influencer marketing is not a new thing and
- How to beat competitors through aesthetics.

Finally, we talked about how propaganda does not have to be evil. Any movement for social progress must educate people somehow and therefore use a type of propaganda.

If you enjoyed this note, then I know you'll also enjoy my note on [the book "Contagious."](#)

That book explains why some ideas become contagious and spread like a virus. It's written by two top professors and I really recommend you check it out next.

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