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THE PR PRACTITIONERS AND THE FAIRY TALES

It is said that in their life people have something to do with the fairy tales at least three times. The first time is when they are read fairy tales by their parents, the second time is when they read them to their children, and the third time – when they read them to their grandchildren. It could also happen that they read fairy tales to their grandchildren, but this is not that important.

It is more important what we find out in the fairy tales when we read them over and over again. Personally I, when reading them for the second time, found out a lot interesting things. To start with, I would like to point out that the marriage of convenience is the hero in many of the fairy tales, and in some of the translations it sounds so imperative that one could logically ask themselves if there is a marriage of love at all. I found this sentence in the new edition of the Puss-in-Boots: „ when he saw his immense richness, he gave

him with desire his daughter”. But this is a matter of another article too, which I will write sometimes.

In most of the books about creativity which I have read, a thought is repeated over and over again: a person is as creative as younger he or she feels. So, if we could perceive the fairy as if we hear them for the first time, it is much more probable that we will get more and better ideas. But is this possible? And isn't it better at every next reading to find something new? And do we actually know how children perceive the fairy tales?

What made me tell you about my findings in the fairy tales is that most of the heroes in the fairy tales apply in their lives the principles of the modern marketing and PR and many of them have the qualities of the good journalism.

As the dispute about which one is first – the PR or the journalism is still unsolved, I will start with the journalism.

Personally I had never thought about the word “thing-finder”, before reading it in “Pippi Longstocking”. According to the world-famous Pippi the „thing-finder” is “somebody who looks for some things”. It is the same with the journalists – they look for things, out of which they produce news. And as Pippi says “if you look for something for enough time, you find something” The



marketing professionals also search for things, which to offer to their target audiences. So all of us without realizing it and even without expecting it, become “”. It is good to learn from Pippilotta. If she lived today, she would definitely have a successful career in the field of communication. Why am I so sure? Just because she has something very important – she has creativity. This feature is getting more and more vital these days as the products and the services are of relatively similar quality and only the creativity is capable of making a product or a service preferable to the others. The whole story about Pippi is full of examples for successful brainstorming. My favorite case is how she and her friends try to find application of a box. The brainstorming starts with the question: “A box for what?” But the abilities of Pippi could be applied not only in the field of PR and journalism. She very successfully plays the part of a marketing specialist, when she goes around the store trying to buy a “spunk”, She looks for her “spunk”, without knowing what exactly it looks like, but she is sure that

when she sees it, she will recognize it. A major part of the women (why not men too) do exactly the same when they go shopping. They want to buy something, but don’t know what exactly. They are certain though that they will recognize it when they see it. As the historians would say – there is nothing new under the sun. But when you think of Pippilotta Delicatessa Windowshade Mackrelmint Efraim as somebody you could learn from how to work better, a lot of thoughts come up to mind. If you haven’t read the book lately, do it now and you would be surprised how many things you have not noticed before. From a practical point of view this is a very good exercise in creativity – to do something which is not part of your daily routine. This is a good way to supply yourself with energy and thus become a better “thing-finder”.

Another of my favorite heroes, who would also have a very successful career today, is the friendly Winnie the Pooh. He knows very well that “with the bees one could never know what is about to happen”. In fact no matter what



we substitute “bees” with in this sentence, it will be true. We do the same as him when trying to find a thousand of ways to mislead the bees in order to take their honey, but a few of us succeed. I say this, using the word “mislead’ in a positive sense. Because all of us try to tell the others that we have something they need even if the need is not inevitable. If this were not true, a lot of

industries would perish. So in the modern marketing, not in his best manifestations, many are those who similarly to Winnie the Pooh try to fly with a blue balloon and hope that the bees would consider them a small blue cloud in the sky. As Winnie the Pooh himself realizes later. Not all the animals in the forest love honey. And it is not that easy to mislead the bees.

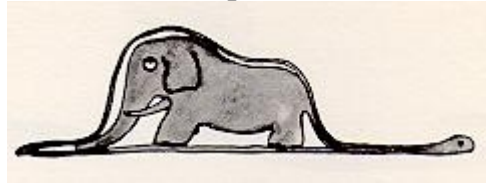
The truth is that the fairy tales are part of the history of the world and we could find a connection with the modern life in each of them. An indisputable leader in the communication skills, in branding and positioning and in a lot of more fields is Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's hero - the Little Prince.



Firstly, he is an excellent communicator, because he manages to speak the language of everybody whose planet he visits. But this is not the most important. He succeeds to get what he wants and he perceives the people from the different planets the way they are – “a little strange”. The wonderful fairy tale which is both for children and adults starts with an excellent example of defining key publics. The Little Prince very precisely defines to which key public the people belong showing them his picture Number 1. He says “Should I meet an adult, who seemed to be a little more clear-sighted, I tested him with my picture Number 1... But he always answered me: This is a hat... I adapted to him.” One of the most difficult tasks for everybody who should define the key publics for a company is to find exactly that picture Number 1,



which would help him to divide the people in groups with common interests. And to consider as their most faithful public those who would see how the boa digests an elephant. For the others there should be drawn another picture Number 2

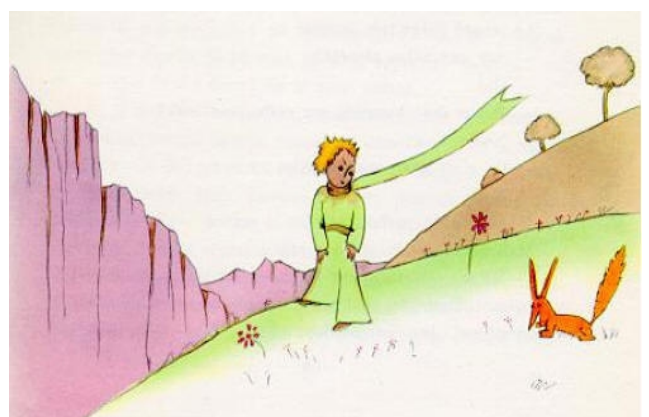


which shows the inside of the snake boa, so that the others could realize it too.

But the abilities of The Little Prince extend further. He could teach a lot of people what is positioning about, because his rose, even if it looks like all the roses, is unique in the world.

When I teach branding to my students, I always ask them to read again The Little Prince. The story of The Little Prince and the fox, the whole process of taming is the best example of the sense of PR and branding. The efforts of all the PR practitioners are directed towards taming the publics and towards creating a relationship between them and the products/services. In fact the goal of PR is to achieve exactly what the fox wants to achieve between herself and the Little Prince: “But if you tame me, we will feel dependent on each other”

It is not only PR which aims at taming. All the brands try to tame us and to make



us dependent on them. How would we otherwise express our attitude to the one we prefer, to the one which is unique for us?

But in *The Little Prince* there is something which is very close to what Walter Lippmann writes about the public opinion in the beginning of the twentieth century. According to him and as time passing proves, people believe in what they want to believe rather than in what is real. This is exactly what the Little Prince does when he sees in the drawn chest the sheep, which wants to own so much. In practice in the picture there is only a chest and only his imagination and desire to believe that there is a sheep inside make him happy about his only sheep. The power of the media lies upon the same power of the imagination, as these days people need something to believe in and they do believe it when they see sheep in chests, in which nobody is sure whether there are sheep or not.

After my favorite hero, *The Little Prince*, we are going to discuss another of my loved fairy tales – *Alice in Wonderland*. A few PR books quote Alice's conversation with The Cheshire Cat. For those who don't remember it, let me remind it:



“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?” “— Alice asked “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to”, said the Cat.

“I don't much care where”, said Alice.

“Then it doesn't matter which way you go,” the Cheshire Cat smiled mysteriously.

In the modern communication defining the goal – “where you want to go” is the most important thing. Otherwise you will get to a place, without knowing where. And you may not like it. A lot of practitioners say that the most important thing is to know your aims so that you can achieve them. This is what The Cheshire Cat tries to explain to Alice.

After reading some of the most well-known fairy tales for children (why not for grown children, too) in the light of the modern communication, I do not want to deprive you of the pleasure to play the part of thing-finders and to start looking for things which will help you to do your work better in the fairy tales which you remember from your childhood. And why not reading a fairy tale, which you don't remember that well?

All of them are full of wisdom, which does not lose their value during the years.

In fact all of those pictures have tamed us and have become things which we cannot do without. This makes us realize that the modern marketing, PR and the media are driven not only by the business rules, but also by the eternal human's rules, which are described best in the fairy tales.

Have a nice thing-finding! And don't forget that with the bees one never knows what is about to happen! And that a simple box may be a box for...