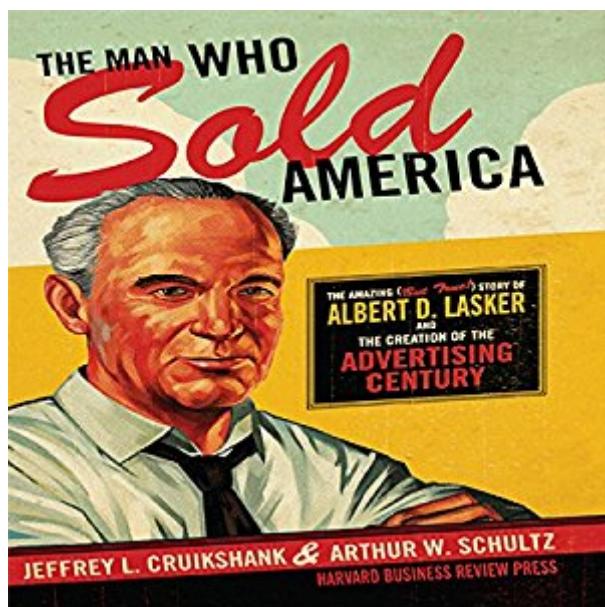


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The Man Who Sold America: The Amazing But True Story Of Albert D. Lasker And The Creation Of The Advertising Century



Synopsis

We live in an age of mass persuasion. Leaders and institutions of every kind - public and private, large and small - must compete in a rowdy marketplace of images and messages seeming to come at us from all directions - in print, on radio and television, and on the Web. It wasn't always so. In the early and middle 20th century, a handful of creative geniuses in advertising and public relations - J. Walter Thompson, Edward Bernays, David Ogilvy, Ray Rubicam, and others - launched their once-sleepy industries into the very center of American life. And most of them point to one individual as the man who started it all: Albert D. Lasker. But Lasker - who resolutely hid from the spotlight - has remained an enigma. Now, Jeffrey Cruikshank and Arthur Schultz, drawing on a treasure trove of previously unknown papers, have written a fascinating biography of one of the 20th century's most intriguing figures. Lasker helped invent "reason why" advertising, market research based on direct-mail advertising, premium coupons, and a host of other industry innovations. He invented and promoted powerful brands that are still with us today: Sunkist and Sun-Maid, Kotex and Kleenex, Puffed Wheat and Puffed Rice, and many others. But his impact went far beyond traditional advertising. Lasker was a crusader against anti-Semitism. A public-relations master, he engineered Warren G. Harding's presidential campaign, and designed the strategy that ended Upton Sinclair's bid for governor of California. And the Lasker Awards, for contributions to medical science, are sometimes referred to as "America's Nobels." His personal life was no less dramatic. The Man Who Sold America recounts the powerful influence of his background, his deep friendships - and the debilitating depression he struggled with even as he forged his remarkable achievements. This is the story of a man who shaped an industry - and changed the way we look at our world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a vivid, colorful history of a man of great importance to the advertising industry. But it's also the story of a man who was important in business in general and his legacy lives on. This is a well written book. There are some typos but in the publishing business today, that's common and sad. This is mostly a flattering biography but the authors can be excused for that in that one of them has a personal interest in the agency of which Lasker was the head. As a member of the advertising industry, a professional copywriter, I enjoyed the before untold stories of numerous important characters in our industry. For example, Claude Hopkins was a genius copywriter on whose shoulders I stand. He worked with and for Lasker for awhile. His writing style is still a great learning tool and one few copywriters use. But the story I remember in the book about Hopkins is that he wrote his most famous ads in minutes or days. Lasker felt the client would feel the agency didn't work hard enough on the ads so he would set on them for a few weeks. It reminds me of my late, great associate, Bill Steinhardt. He would say the same thing about my own writing. "Set on it a couple weeks. Let the client think you worked on it long, hard hours, weeks and even months," he would say. But, alas, Picasso painted some of his greatest work in minutes. Lasker had style. He had an abundance of energy --- all his life into old age. He was indeed a great salesman. He knew how to put a deal together. And in the book, you'll learn some of his methods. He also knew his own weaknesses. So he would hire the best people and pay them good money to do a great job. His career in advertising started before copywriting had any value. Only after he was in it awhile did he discover the monetary value of great copywriting. When he discovered it, his agency grew fast and he became a millionaire many times over. Before that time, an ad agency basically just placed ads. I enjoyed this book very much. It's a classic in my opinion. The basic element of any business is selling. Until a sale happens, you have no business. Mastering salesmanship is so critical to a businessperson. Lasker was a master seller. As one of his great copywriters, John E. Kennedy told Lasker, "Copywriting is salesmanship in print." Lasker was not a copywriter. But he was a great salesman and his life is well worth reading about. Highly recommended. -- Susanna K. Hutcheson

An engaging read. It covers many aspects of Lasker's life (as a book that strives to be a comprehensive biography should) from his time in advertising, involvement with politics and social causes, to his philanthropic and personal life. I initially started reading it only to learn about his work in the advertising industry and found myself reading the whole book within a couple of days. I

strongly disagree with those who found the work boring. It was very well written, interesting, and based on deep research into the source material. Beyond answering questions that I had about the subject (which the authors did exceptionally well) I also judge a book on whether it was worth the time and money I spent on it. In this case the answer is a resounding yes. If you have any interest in the history of advertising, politics, and social causes in the pre-WWII and immediate postwar years, pick it up.

If you:
a) enjoy reading about the innovative thought process you will like this book. Advertising as we now know it didn't come into being out of the ether. It didn't always exist. It was created.
b). are cynical about the intentions of advertising and that it is only about products competing with other products for "market share" - it wasn't always so (and it isn't necessarily so today). This is the story of how advertising "created" markets and in doing so spurred economic growth of the nation;
c) read books about business development and strategy this one is full of insight AND not told in the often pedantic way that you are used to reading;
d) enjoy biographical accounts of "game changers" you will like the story of Albert Lasker. I thoroughly enjoyed and highly recommend this book.

"The Man Who Sold America" recounts Albert Davis Lasker, one of America's most accomplished and successful creative geniuses who founded modern advertising, a concept that was new at that time, but a given today in every day life. The book not only presents the story of Lasker's success, but it also deals frankly with psychological facets that often plague brilliant and creative people. Lasker's success included many episodes of depression and however challenging and painful these episodes were, he accomplished a great deal. Jeff and Art do the reader a favor in bringing this issue to the forefront. The book also illustrates that along with the success, advantages and privileges that accompany great wealth, no one goes through life without challenges, sadness and tragedy. Yes, this is a book about one of America's great industrialists who involved himself with many significant happenings in American history. However, there are many of life's lessons to be learned and appreciated in this well written story.

A fascinating look at a multi-dimensional man. Albert Lasker, on the business side, and Claude Hopkins, the fantastically productive workaholic on the creative/copywriting side, practically invented modern advertising (along with John E. Kennedy) and had an immense influence on American society. The well organized book is also thoroughly researched and documented. Lasker's amazing career deserves ten volumes, but this is the best one volume book I've seen. I hope that in future

editions there are far more reprints of Hopkins/Lasker's groundbreaking ads, but then I'm an advertising copywriter and advertising buff...There's a lot of interesting personal information here. Mr. Lasker's accomplishments are even more amazing when one considers that he suffered from a manic-depressive disorder, drinking, may have been dyslectic, and was burdened with a wife who was rendered an invalid by typhoid fever only weeks after their honeymoon. Another obstacle for him was anti-Semitism, although this is glossed over in the book, with only passing references.

Great story of important man in marketing history

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