

My campaign: Saatchi on Saatchi

Maurice Saatchi, co-founder; Moray MacLennan, worldwide chief executive, M&C Saatchi

MAURICE SAATCHI:

DO I REALLY HAVE TO DO THIS?

MORAY MACLENNAN:

YES YOU DO.

MAURICE:

WHY?

I REALLY DON'T WANT TO.

MORAY:

**BECAUSE YOU'RE A SELFISH,
SELF-OBSSESSED, EGOCENTRIC
NARCISSIST, SO WILL ENJOY
IT. IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU.**

MAURICE:

OK, IF I MUST.

SHALL WE GET STARTED?

MORAY:

**WE ALREADY HAVE.
WE'RE RECORDING.**



Let's go back to where it all started, 50 years ago.

MAURICE: Yes, I'm very happy to start at that point. I left LSE with my first-class honours degree in economics. They did say to me that I possessed what they called "effortless superiority", and that has always worked very well for me, Moray – with everyone except you. In your case, I get no deference.

MORAY: That's because I know you. Your first job was at Haymarket?

MAURICE: Yes, I was given a cupboard and a title that was something like research assistant to the chairman, who was then Michael Heseltine. I was nothing, a nobody. The job he gave me was to research potential acquisitions. Michael's method, which I later copied, was to mass-mail business publications. It always started with the same opening: "I'm sure this will be the last thing on your mind, but I wonder if you would be at all interested in selling your company?"

I remember saying to Michael: "Shouldn't we do some research before we do the mailing to 100 publications?" He said: "No, that would be a waste of time. Let's just research the ones that say yes."

One of them was called *World Press News*. It was an A4 publication and at the time was the leading business magazine for the advertising industry, and led directly to the launch of *Campaign*.

MORAY: You are now taking credit for inventing *Campaign*?

MAURICE: Yes, obviously. I was only in Haymarket for two years. As you constantly point out, Moray, unlike me, who has worked for another company, you have never worked for anyone other than Saatchi. You have more authority to speak on the subject of Saatchi than I do.

MORAY: True. Now let's talk Saatchi. You were a child, in your early twenties, when Saatchi & Saatchi started. Did you have a plan, or did you make it up as you went along?

MAURICE: There was a plan from the very start – world domination. How can you have a plan for world domination, you may ask, when you are only 11 people in Golden Square? I have absolutely no idea. But that was definitely the plan.

I was the "boy wonder", as far as I was concerned. When I arrived you'd unfold the banners, sound the

trumpets; when I walked into a room all would rise. That's what I thought.

MORAY: So is that the message, self-delusion?

MAURICE: In your journey through life you are going to come across two kinds of people, and you will see these people in action when you come to the inevitable brick walls across your path. One kind of person will say: "It's too high, turn back." The other will say: "Let's climb over it." This is the difference between those who make great changes and have an effect on the world, and those who don't.

If you are lucky enough to meet the right people, you will do very well. It's impossible to overestimate the importance of this. We were a group of people who had the right approach to the brick wall.

MORAY: A highlight of that time must have been in 1983, when you met me. I'm sure you remember it well.

MAURICE: It's burned into my memory.

MORAY: You have no recollection at all, do you?

MAURICE: None whatsoever.

MORAY: I was an undergraduate and you agreed to meet me, thinking I was the son of the chairman of BP. After about five minutes you thought: "This is an undergraduate who has absolutely no revenue attached to him at all."

You said: "Nice to meet you..."

MAURICE: That's a lie!

MORAY: You said: "Nice to meet you, but what you need to do is go downstairs and see this man called...", and you wrote on the back of your card, "Len Barkey".

And so I went downstairs and I said: "Hello, my name is Moray MacLennan and Maurice Saatchi said I should come to see you."

He replied: "What, Maurice Saatchi said that?" And I said: "Yes." He said: "OK, right. Maurice Saatchi?" "Yes."

MAURICE: You've made the whole thing up.

MORAY: So then he said to me: "What's he like?" And I said: "He seemed very nice." He thought I was your nephew and gave me a job. Let's move on...

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MAURICE: Just before you do, in relation to the brick wall, without a doubt three of the biggest changes in advertising were put in place during that time. The first was globalisation. We were told that this was just a new-business trick, that it couldn't possibly work, that the differences between cultures were so great it was doomed to failure, and us with it. That was the view. Well, we see what happened to that.

Second, the centralisation of media. At the time, media departments were in agencies. We said no, this is no good. When buying media, wheat or oil, the man who has the biggest order is going to get the best price. The reaction at the time was: "This can never work!" Well, you can see what happened to that.

And the third was the one-stop shop, which is now known as integration. People said clients won't want to put all their eggs into one basket and buy all the services from one place. Well, see what happened to that as well!

These are the biggest revolutions to have happened in advertising over the past century, and we made them happen.

MORAY: OK, that's sufficiently grand. Fast-forward to 1995, the split, and the creation of M&C Saatchi. Memories and feelings?

MAURICE: The end of the Saatchi & Saatchi story and the beginning of M&C Saatchi are very similar, in that how can it be possible for 10 people to leave a company of 13,000 people and get anywhere? I mean, that would be defying gravity. And yet it happened, Moray. And I think we are all rightly proud of this achievement.

MORAY: I have two defining memories of the M&C Saatchi start-up, both of which involve you. One was when I was at Saatchi & Saatchi – there was no-one above me and I quite liked the view. You asked: "Are you coming to join us?" I replied: "Well, this evening I'm due to stand up in front of the agency and tell them everything is fine, and if I do that then I am going to stay."

And you said: "I completely understand, which is why when I put down the phone, you need to walk out of your office and never go back." And then you put down the phone.

MAURICE: I do remember it. It really is true, and you did say that. And at this point it's time for me to play a violin for you and Tim Duffy. You were in very high positions with good salaries, with absolutely rock-solid prospects for your careers. But you both quit and came to join Jeremy [Sinclair], Bill [Muirhead], David [Kershaw] and me. That was an act of incredible courage. You didn't have to do it.

MORAY: One of the reasons why I did leave, incidentally, was because you lied to me. I turned up at your door, and you said: "It's not quite how I explained it to you over the phone." At which point you told me we didn't have any clients at all!

I thought we had Dixons, Gallaher, the Mirror Group and British Airways. We had nothing!

My second memory is when we pitched for British Airways and Qantas Worldwide. We needed offices all around the globe, but we had only 15 employees and were up against the biggest networks. You went to the client in Berkeley Square and got the results. We were all waiting and watching from an upstairs window as you walked down the street towards us. You walked up the stairs, opened the door and said: "BA and Qantas have awarded all of their

business globally to... M&C Saatchi." That was a defining moment.

MAURICE: It's a fabulous memory and, unusually for you, Moray, it's completely accurate. Those clients, and all the others that came, displayed something that is so vital and so rare, which is loyalty. What more do you want?

Probably contrary to all expectations and probably all logical advice, they did what they did and that changed history. All I can say is that we must have done something right over these years. Along with all the terrible mistakes and all the unbelievable encyclopaedia of errors, we must have done something right.

MORAY: One thing we did right, from the start, at M&C Saatchi was to give all our managers in all the countries and businesses equity in their company.

That created a completely new culture, a federation of entrepreneurs.

MAURICE: To be your own boss is such a powerful human instinct, and the whole of this 50-year adventure is related to that, the desire to be an independent person. What we have done is turn that philosophy into a corporate structure. And it's become more and more relevant over time.

There are those who would say companies don't need philosophies, it's just a lot of claptrap, that the only thing that matters for a company is making profit and delivering on stock-market expectations. Well, I agree, that's what companies have to do, but our position is if you want to do that, and be successful in terms of growth and profit, it's a prerequisite that you do have an actual purpose for the company, "a consistent strategic focus and a distinct reason for being", as P&G would say.

To have a reason for being as a company is really quite something, and the whole of this story is governed by that. It's expressed, as it has been for decades, in terms of "Nothing is impossible", "Miracles can happen", "An individual acting alone, or almost single-handedly, makes what seems highly improbable, in fact happen".

The means to that end, the weapon to achieve it, is simplicity. *Brutal simplicity of thought*. The original phraseology was stolen from Bertrand Russell. He concluded that in order to conquer happiness, the painful necessity of thought was required. Jeremy adapted his phrase into *Brutal simplicity of thought*. This is terribly important. This is a company that doesn't like waffle, vagueness, platitudes, flimflam, clichés – we like to get to the point.

MORAY: We're running out of room. Is there anything else you would like to say?

MAURICE: No, I don't think there is. I think this is a fabulous story. I am so proud of it all, I can't tell you. From the very beginning, those years at Haymarket that were formative, through to today, as we sit here in Golden Square.

MORAY: And finally, is there anything else you want to achieve in the few years left to you?

MAURICE: Fight against inequality! Unfairness! Injustice! Heal the sick! Save the righteous! Punish the wicked! Be known the world over for courage and heroism! Will that do?

MORAY: Nicely.

MORAY:

A HIGHLIGHT OF THAT TIME FOR YOU MUST HAVE BEEN IN 1983, WHEN YOU MET ME. I'M SURE YOU REMEMBER IT WELL.

MAURICE:

IT'S BURNED INTO MY MEMORY.

MORAY:

YOU HAVE NO RECOLLECTION AT ALL, DO YOU?

MAURICE:

NONE WHATSOEVER.