



Friday, January 30th, 2004

A comment from “alibhai” ...

Don't be very surprised as this is a text book PR stunt from the tobacco industry. They were doing all these things in the USA for a long time before the recent wave of lawsuits. Now they have taken the game to a new level. The industry is running two lines of ads. On the tele they run ads advising against juvenile smoking and warning about the cancerous effects of smoking. Going even as far as admitting that light smokes are just as bad as regular 100s. In print, they run ads in young adult publications depicting smoking as glamorous, sexy, and adventurous. Vile as it may seem to some it does work. Just a couple of days ago a female friend commented how some guys looked so sexy when smoking. Well go ahead and kiss the smoke stack ... well there is an ad for the anti smoking establishment.

But lets be rational just as lawyers have to protect their client and doctors have to save all bodies. You have to do your job. You can not make value judgements about your clients if you really want to be successful. Just spin it and sell.

My response ...

Rage is not a synonym for surprise and I don't walk around with blinkers on. After BigTobacco came BigFood and now, Walmart runs a parallel government. Of course all of this works. The American public has been a victim of the SuperBowl, Friends, and the local editions of CNN and Fox News for so long now that everything flies. Your female friend probably walks around in army fatigues cause they're “oh so cool”.

Your understanding and vision of success is extremely limited ... profit and growth at any cost. If the world was made up only of people who toed the line, women all over the world would have still been in kitchens and African

Americans would have still been sitting in the back of the bus. Caring about things other than success is not harmful for your health. Watch “In the Time of the Butterflies” for a powerful example of how a tiny group of rebels sacrificed everything to free the Dominican Republic from the grip of the tyrannical dictator, General Rafael Trujillo.

Today, people everywhere seem to have lost the will to make a difference. No one believes in the power of one. No one desires change so badly that they are willing to make a sacrifice. In Pakistan, our little elite group has access to US education, generators when there’s no electricity, tankers when there’s no water, corrupt officials when papers need to be signed, Pepsi when they want “more”, gold sponsored by ARY, sushi at Fujiyama, Havana Cigars at Boat Basin ... A job at Citibank, lunch at Okra, beer at the Korean, Nike shoes for weekends at the Yacht Club ... Why give a damn about all that’s wrong in the world? It’s so much easier to consume, stay quiet and do one’s job.

I’m no saint and am certainly not willing to give up my sexy Apple laptop. But taking a stand is as important as doing my job.

Monday, March 8th, 2004

Mobilink recently flushed several million down the toilet with its new “Reshaping Communication” campaign. The brushed steel look has been shamelessly stolen from Apple Computer, dunno where the purple beveled thing has been appropriated from.

Cannot comprehend how a company that has caused endless financial, emotional, and mental trauma to its “loyal” customers can have the audacity to roll out such a massively meaningless campaign. Every day for the last several days, we’ve been waiting for a service/package/pricing/whatever announcement to back up the tall claims, but after 3 weeks, ZILCH.

What kind of bozos head up “marketing” in these companies? What, in their opinion, constitutes brand loyalty? WHEN WILL WE GET GPRS, YOU SCHMUCKS? At 17 bucks per minute + airtime, your so called data services are a NOT FUNNY joke.

Mobilink: your old logo was hideous but you know what, we weren’t thinking about it. Your new logo is “different” from your old logo but then you already know that. Perhaps another thing you need to know is that we don’t give a rat’s

ass about the new logo either. It seems that the obvious needs to be spelled out, so here's a quick list of what we expect from our "favorite" cellular operator:

1. The ability to speak to people using our Mobilink-enabled cell phones
2. We'd like our text messages to be delivered to intended recipients
3. GPRS - the Ufone way - or better

Wish you had spent the millions on us instead of reinventing your logo. Can't even refer to it as your brand because a brand is so much more than superficial packaging. But then, that's b-school 101 and you know all about that kind of stuff.

Thursday, March 11th, 2004

The PASHA forum is host, once again, to a dramatic battle of wits. Round 237 began with a trip to India, paid for by individuals, not the organisation or the government. While everyone has a viewpoint about whether this trip was useful or not, these discussions always degenerate into mud-slinging and a really peculiar brand of politics.

If people paid for the trip from their own resources, what difference does it make to anyone else? They came back and shared their experiences with PASHA members, across Pakistan and people are free to reach their own conclusions. Why politicize things to a point where everyone loses sight of the core issue.

Maybe people went to India for inspiration. ULTRA BORING call-centre and BPO businesses aside, India is vibrant and dynamic. People there have minds, they're excited about stuff, passionate about their work, not at all lazy, pretty darn down to earth ... qualities that most Pakistanis lack. Yes, yes, I know I am generalizing but since this is my space ...

From a work perspective, I wouldn't have gone with the PASHA delegation because whatever inspiration and resources I need from India, I can get by e-mail and other online sources. However, if I had spare cash lying around, I would have gone, on any other pretext. I sometimes feel like an Indian soul trapped in a Pakistani body and wish Partition had never happened. A simplistic view perhaps but I am shamelessly enamoured of the Indians. Tehelka is a case in point. More on this later ...

Monday, March 15th, 2004

Vilayat Khan died yesterday.

:-(

Following a discussion with a friend, I want to revise my opinion regarding PASHA's trip to India. I had said earlier that if people paid for the trip from their own resources, what difference does it make to anyone else? However, PASHA was representing Pakistan's software industry, rather than a bunch of individuals going there to check out the scene. So, perceptions and views do matter as they reflect on the industry and its goals and directions.

Anyhow, the central issue I was trying to raise about PASHA is that the association is very dodgy, lacks credibility and there is just no common vision. Certainly, there are some well-intentioned people who hold important positions but I seriously doubt whether they will be "allowed" to get very far.

Saturday, May 29th, 2004

Have not updated my blog in ages and feel terribly guilty for some inexplicable reason. I can't get Ejaz Asi's "not amused" look out of my mind.

Am sitting in Dubai at Unilever's office in Jebel Ali - feeling surreally like I did sitting in Unilever's Karachi office in May 2003 - discussing wireframes for the first time! I love it when the "lightbulb moment" occurs, when people actually figure out the magic of wireframes.

Anyway, it's fun to be blogging again. Yesterday, we went to City Centre - pretty close to the Sheraton. Our cab driver was Pathan and has been in Dubai for 7 years. The bill came to 11 dirhams and he didn't charge us a penny.

Had to change 2 pairs of shoes from Aldo for someone - did that. The mall is HUGE and as with all big places, the Floor Plan was absolutely useless. Kept going in circles.

Have never been into IKEA before, in my life. I was blown away completely. Even if I speak hyperbolically, I cannot express what that store did to me. Every single item, literally, was a marvel of beauty, simplicity, and value for money. By the end (the store was massive) I was experiencing heartburn. Wanted everything.

Video-conference with Jeddah about to begin - more later ...

Sunday, May 30th, 2004

Another day in sandy, hot Dubai. Have come to terms with this place - it's rich, multi-cultural, and in the process of constructing 500 hotels over the next 3 years!

Am reading *Bombardiers* by Po Bronson. Edgy satire of Wall Street and the bonds trading world told through the lens of a manic group of salespeople forced to push peculiar financial products. Po is such a gifted writer - even though I cannot grasp the intricacies of investment banking, it is an easy read and great fun. Frantic pace!

Today's video conference with Jeddah is much clearer as we are hogging all the bandwidth. We're watching a demo of Uniflow and trying to figure out how to integrate it into our application.

Found a Barista cafe very close to the hotel last night. It sits right next to Starbucks. Hmmm. Will go in and compare prices today.

Tuesday, June 1st, 2004

It's getting more and more like June 2003. Sitting at Unilever Dubai, in Jebel Ali. It's 10:30 p.m., everyone's gone home except the security guards - we're sustaining ourselves with Digestive biscuits and crunchy red apples.

Kudos to the folks who have developed eMessenger - it's a web-based hack of MSN Messenger and works without plug-ins and Java. The MSN port appears to be blocked at Unilever Arabia and this little gem, eMessenger has given us back our connectivity to the mothership. XTREME joy.

Had a divine Cafe Borgia at Barista two nights ago - gorgeous orange flavour and exotic whipped cream. Reminded me of all the trips to Barista espresso bars in Delhi. The Barista franchise has been sold to some Italian company.

Monday, June 21st, 2004

Turned 30
Watched Monster.
Marvelled at Blast!
Wished Po Bronson would write another book

Thought about DeathRow, killing in self-defence, and “justice.
Slept, but not very peacefully.

Tuesday, June 29th, 2004

Hmmmmm ...



Wednesday, June 30th, 2004

Someone said, on the 21st of June 2004:
“Not exactly a marketing merchant of inspiration like Po, but Steven Levy may interest you...”

Very curious to know who you are, especially since it appears that you read Po Bronson AND Steven Levy. Steven Levy reports and writes quite a lot on Apple and the Macintosh, so have been reading his stuff for a long time. Haven’t read “Hackers: Heroes of the Computer Revolution” though. Will try to get hold of it. Am reading “Weaving the Web” by Tim Berners Lee these days. Doug Coupland is fun also - coined the phrase “Generation X” way back in 1992 ...

Anyway, hope you’ll come back again and talk about what you’re reading.

Saturday, July 3rd, 2004

All Pakistan Music Conference Event tonight (3rd July 2004) at Arts Council Karachi. Ustad Zafar Ali Khan and Tina Sani. Starts at 9:30 p.m. Tickets: Rs. 250

Monday, August 2nd, 2004

Got broadband at home. What a rush. WiFi fantasies have now kicked in, full throttle and am plotting and scheming about how to get hold of an Airport Extreme base station before I lose my mind.

Limewire works like a dream but iTunes Radio chokes constantly. No idea why cause I don't choose stations with higher than 64K streams.

Am dreading Worldcall's customer service though. Have heard nothing but bad things - unfortunately, there's no other service provider to give them a run for their money - and corporates only improve when there is competition. I did experience considerable pain during their installation process. It's too tedious to recount but they tried to blame everything on my Mac. Finally, they realized that there was a physical cable fault. Duh! When they figured that out, it took 0.3 seconds to get online.

Sadrudin Hashwani organized a qavvali over the weekend in memory of Munshi Raziuddin. It's been a year since he passed away

The qavvali was awesome except for Piya Ghar Aaya - which was performed well but have always found it too frivolous. Naseeruddin Saami also performed for about 40 minutes. Good!!

RSS rocks! I just LOVE NetNewsWire. Another killer MacOS X application is OmniOutliner. You can just tell how much developers like OmniGroup, Unsanity, and Panic love the Mac and how committed they are to the fundamental principles of interface design.

To date, I have only liked one Windows application - Setup Factory, produced by a company called Indigo Rose. By PC standards, it's revolutionary.

CityFM 89 has been playing some pretty good stuff ... heard Boys of Summer, Def Leppard, INXS, Buddha Bar, Ray Charles, James Brown ...

Saturday, August 21st, 2004

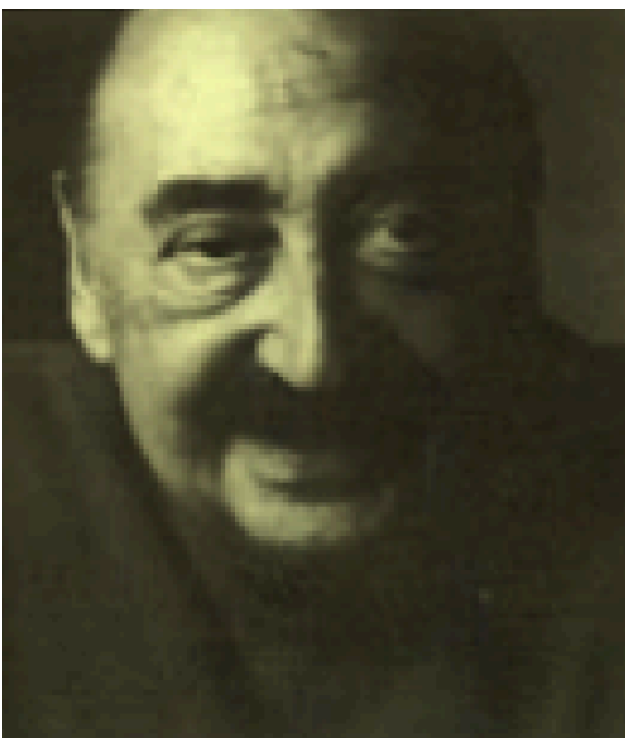
Airport Express with AirTunes and wireless USB printing. Aaaaaah!! Another phenomenal, beautifully designed masterpiece from Cupertino. Lost the shrinkwrap, plugged it in, and it worked - right out of the box. The geek in me was slightly disappointed, being entirely denied the pleasure of tweaking the gadget through the Airport Admin Utility. What sublime bliss - being untethered and able to read the latest headlines via NetNewsWire, in the loo!

Came to London last week and am now in Scotland. Had to suffer horrible dialup in London but have a rocking broadband connection in Glasgow.

Went to the Design Museum in London - in a word: WOW! There was a Saul Bass (more on him below - as usual, I can't be bothered with effective hyperlinking) exhibition on and it was mind-boggling. All the Apple products were also on display, along with a commentary by Apple's wunderkid industrial designer, Jonathan Ive.

The Scots are wonderful - funny, warm, and really easy to get along with. Yes, yes, I have met exactly 15 Scots!! Am here for my uncle's wedding - it's a Scottish/Asian fusion wedding and fun beyond belief, so far. All the coolness of a desi shaadi sans the pretentious bullshit.

SAUL BASS



One of the great graphic designers of the 20th century, Saul Bass is the undisputed master of film title design. The haunting elegance of the titles he created for Alfred Hitchcock, Otto Preminger, Billy Wilder and Stanley Kubrick in the 1950s and 1960s and, later, for Martin Scorsese transformed a banal medium into an art form. Before Bass, titles were simple lists of the cast and crew projected on to cinema curtains which were only drawn when the film began. As this landmark exhibition will show, Saul Bass turned the film title into a visual spectacle. From his stark cut-out's for Preminger's *The Man with the Golden Arm*, and the spiralling circles of Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, to the frenzied neons of Scorsese's *Casino*, Saul Bass created some of the most enduring images in design and cinema history.



Monday, September 20th, 2004

Have had Worldcall for 2 months now and have to own up to the fact that the service has been phenomenal. No complaints so far.

There's an Ustad Rais Khan concert on the 10th of October, 2004. It's an APMC fundraiser and details can be found on the News & Events page of the APMC Website ...

Monday, October 11th, 2004

Superman is dead:

Rais Khan is overrated and arrogant.

I miss Munshi Raziuddin. Listened to Ba Har Soo Jalva-e-Dildar Deedum this morning and wept buckets. Munshi Jee, thank you for introducing us to Farsi and some of the finest inspirational music imaginable.

Work has gotten beyond manic. Have pretty much become a full-time graphic designer and have to do my COO stuff in between churning out one design after another.

My Spider article is overdue and Zunaira will be mad at me AGAIN.

Went to Lahore last weekend and was delighted to find that the Salt n Pepper Fried Chicken Breast Sandwich is as awesome as it used to be in 1994.

Just beat two boys at table tennis. Didn't know I had a competitive streak. It's not good for my knee but I really don't give a @\$#! cause it's just so cool to be able to play again.

Am ODing on Talking Heads - And She Was, Psycho Killer, Burning Down the House! Brings back memories of school - the 80s were the best! Met Shamza Kazim, my Urdu teacher from Class 8 - KGS. We were such menaces that none of the prefects wanted to be responsible for our class - hehe - we made Shamza Kazim's life hell. Poor woman. She was at the Rais Khan fund-raiser last night and I was extra "nice and sweet" to her - guilt syndrome, of course.

Can't think of anything to end with so "whatever" will just have to do!

Cheers!

Monday, October 18th, 2004

Musharaf Hai, Chairman Unilever Pakistan, has made it to Fortune's Power 50! WoW, WoW, WoW! At the risk of being utterly hyperbolic, she's totally awesome. After Meg Whitman, who has genuinely done wonders for eBay, Musharaf Hai is simply stellar. I would rather have her running the country than you-know-who ... It's so bloody difficult for women to get ahead in this severely chauvanistic, intellect-challenged society, so her achievement is really special.

No one under 40 made it to that list - well, other than a couple of women who belong to ruling families, so am giving myself another 10 years!

Jo Rahee So Baykhabaree Rahee ...

Peace!

Thursday, October 21st, 2004

What is it about IT Departments at corporations? Do they emerge from a generic mould of stupidity, insecurity, and incompetence? These characters are usually hangovers from the mainframe days, completely out of touch with reality, suffer from delusions of grandeur, and seem to get off on making "vendors" lives miserable. AAAAAAGH!

The other thing I just don't GET is clients who go to sleep for 7 months after receiving a proposal - then they wake up suddenly and expect you to drop everything and design their website for them in 3.5 days stating that it's a matter of life and death. Jee Surr, of course, we've just been sitting around waiting for you to call. While we wait, we pray to Allah, and that takes care of the bills!

Excuse me while I kiss the sky.

Friday, October 22nd, 2004

UFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF!!!!!!!

“Pakistan’s Heritage and Culture

Islam was introduced in the 8th century and quickly spread throughout the region. The Turkish rulers of Afghanistan invaded Pakistan as they began their conquest of India. Pakistan then passed under the control of the Muslim sultans of Delhi.

Early in the 16th century, Pakistan became part of the Mughal Empire. Under the emperors Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, art and architecture flourished. By the early 19th century, the Sikhs had consolidated their power and declared Lahore their capital. Within a few decades, however, the Sikhs were defeated in battle by the English, and Pakistan became part of the British Raj. When India prepared for independence from the British in the 1940s, Muslim Indians pushed for their own independent state, and the Republic of Pakistan came into being on August 14, 1947 as a Muslim homeland. Unfortunately, the birth of both Pakistan and India was marked by massive bloodshed, when violence broke out between Muslims and Hindus migrating from one country to the other. About 500,000 people are believed to have died.

Pakistan’s population of 128 million is one of the fastest-growing in Asia. The two largest ethnic groups are the Punjabis, an Indo-Aryan people who dominate political and business life, and the Pashtuns, who work mainly as herders and farmers. The northern areas are home to many distinct ethnic groups, whose eclectic heritage is the result of intermarriage between local peoples and invaders from elsewhere in Europe and Asia. The official language is Urdu, and English is used extensively in business.

The Role of Women in Pakistan

Life in Pakistan is very different for women and men. Women are seen as being subordinate to men and have the duty of maintaining the honor of their family and/or husband’s family. They are hidden away from society, either behind doors or behind veils, and rarely socialize with anyone of the opposite sex. Some women fully cover their bodies and heads with veils while others divert their eyes from anyone they come in contact with. The custom of covering oneself is called “purdah”, Persian for “curtain”. The amount of purdah that a woman follows, from covering the face to the extreme of never leaving the home, depends on her

and her family's religious beliefs. Punishments for failing to observe the rules can be very harsh. Women are rarely educated and rarely work. The media teaches 'proper' behavior and expectations for women and shows the evils of modernization in female television characters."

Thursday, October 28th, 2004

Damnit! Can't sleep. It's 1:40 a.m. Got home early for a change and should have been relaxed enough to dose off at a decent hour. How I wish I had some laxotonils.

Have found a very cool application called AdiumX - an IM client for Mac OS X that totally rocks. Also delighted to be able to trash MSN Messenger - one less Microsoft application makes for a happier hard disk.

If only brains had an on/off switch. When will I learn to stop taking life so seriously? Why can't I be like 99.9% of the Paki population and not give a flying fuck about deadlines, commitments, innovation, civil society and its responsibilities, making a difference, aaaaaaaaaaarrrrrrgh!

I really need to listen to Farid Ayaz and Abu Mohammad. If there is a qavvali this weekend, I will request Munnum Mehvay Jamal-e-Oo, Khabar-e-Tahaiyyur-e-Ishq, Naseema Janib-e-Bathaa, Laagi Najar Bharpoor, Qasida Burda Shareef, Tanum Farsooda Jaan Paara, and Sakhi Kaa Say Kagoon. Spiritual elevation needed BADLY.

If I didn't give a shit about consequences, I would do the following:

1. Remind a certain lady that slavery has been abolished and that people work much better when they are treated like human beings and not like pieces of shit.
2. Tell a certain gentleman that it is truly sad for a behemoth of a corporation to haggle over piddling sums of money with tiny companies that are struggling to survive only because they believe in doing the right thing.
3. Turn off my cell phone
4. Take a day off.

I still can't sleep. This is awful. It's 2:00 a.m. I have work in the morning. Meetings, deadlines, decisions, conflicts, bills ... what is the fucking point of all of this?

Monday, December 6th, 2004

Dreadful to not have blogged for so long.

Left for Hong Kong at 3:30 a.m. on the 6th. Have finally arrived at 7:00 p.m. Hong Kong time, after an excruciating 5 hour stop-over at Bangkok airport. YUCK.

Got beyond pissed off with customs at Jinnah Terminal, Karachi. Am attending the Asia Pacific ICT Awards here in Hong Kong and the Pakistani contingent also has a joint stall at some bigass convention. So, had about 200 CDs with me (b.i.t.s. Portfolio and PSO Educational Games). Entered the terminal and was interrogated about the CDs. They were refusing to let me through and kept saying that "how do we know you're going where you say you are going". They ripped the carton open and then sent my business card and 5 CDs to some senior officials sitting in a glass enclosure, smoking away and watching the tamasha. Some jackass then said, "barray ufsur kay paas chalay jaen". I told him that the burra ufsur could come to me. I finally lost it and said that it was ridiculous that I was being treated like a criminal in my own city. Was unable to get the carton back in the bag, and they watched me struggling with it for 5 minutes and then decided to help. Then, the security people stopped me and said open the bag. I said, you've just watched me being harrassed for 20 mins, wtf? She said, that was customs, we have to do our duty! So, I let her struggle with the carton, which was destroyed by this time. She said, nikaalein iss ko. I was like, lady - you do your duty, like you said. Then she struggled with it for 10 minutes. AAAAAAAARGH. It was so damn annoying.

Met Shoaib Siddiqui of National Foods with his wife - who turned out to be Saba Saleem, ex Unilever/Lux Style Awards. Most bizarre.

Anyway, Hong Kong, whatever I have seen of it in the last 2 hours, ROCKS. My hotel is slap bang in the middle of all this action and it's exhilarating to be surrounded by so much energy.

The hotel has WiFi, which is a relief. Having no luck connecting to Paki numbers through Skype. Called my mother in London, which was a snap. Such a shame cause no one from Khi is online.

My presentation is on the 9th of December. Still have to figure out how to deliver an hour's worth of content in 20 minutes. No point stressing about it, will just wing it and hope for the best.