

Drayton Bird - 30th Anniversary Interview

Ken McCarthy 00:07

The 30th anniversary of, I'm declaring it the 30th anniversary of the of the of the commercialization of the internet. You have to, there has to be a date to it. You can't, can't just be this vague period in which it happens. So we're making this the celebration date, and it corresponds with a seminar I put on that day. And so we're, I'm having all my my favorite people pay homage to me, actually, I want to talk, as always, with in mind, with people who are just beginning, because there's always people tuning into us who are just beginning, and they're My favorite people, because hopefully they haven't been completely poisoned. Right? And then, then the advanced people. And if they're not smart enough to know they need to review the fundamentals daily, they won't be advanced people for very long. So I always like to talk about basic, basic things. So you started out as a writer as it was, that was your first profession.

Drayton Bird 01:26

It was, yes. What happened was, I got a scholarship to university, and I was put on the wrong course. I was put on the wrong course because the day after my 18th, first day, I was hit by a car, and I am the first person in the north of England to recover from a ruptured liver. I was expected to die. I was a medical curiosity via people, medical people came to look at me and marvel at the fact I was still there. Wow. And that was after the first operation. And when that operation, To everyone's surprise, didn't kill me, they they gave me another one which was bound to kill me, didn't. And and when I went to university and found I was on the wrong course, I spent my time drinking, and perhaps I may have been old enough to fornicate.

I think I was. I know that I had so little money that I lived in a little apartment, not an apartment, a room so damp that in the corner, there were fungi growing. And I I remember there were lots of mice there, and I can remember mice running over me in the middle of the night. And one of the I've had some very happy days, I must say, one way or another, one of my happiest days was when some years later, I was invited to speak to the assembled crowd at Manchester University. And I said, I started by saying, I'm extraordinarily pleased to be here, because I'm unsurprised, because I'm one of the few people around, or maybe there are quite a few, I don't know, but one of those who can say with pride ba Manchester honors, failed because, because I walked out and I walked I was doing Spanish and French, and I was being interviewed by the Spanish lady in Spanish, and she said, [spanish]. And I said, No me gusta mucho. And she said, por quoi? And I then explained that I was on the wrong course. I hated it, and it had nothing to do with what I wanted to do in life. And she said, What do you want to do? I said, I'm going to be a writer. She said, she said, when? And I said, now.

Ken McCarthy 04:23

Okay, yeah, why wait?

Drayton Bird 04:25

I walked out. I said, I'm never coming back. And I got my first job as a writer. About two months later, working for a small business magazine, and the man that was my boss, changed my life because I said to him, What degree did you do? You'd been to degree. Where did you get your degree? He told me. I said, What was your degree in? And he said, philosophy. I said, I know nothing about philosophy. Then he said, Well, go and read Bertrand Russell's History of Western philosophy. And that changed my life, really, yeah. It taught me to think, okay. And I think it gave me a tremendous advantage in an industry which, then and I suspect now, was full of fakes, slows, bullshitters,

Ken McCarthy 05:35

And not many deep thinkers.

Drayton Bird 05:37

No, I wouldn't claim to be a deep thinker on myself, I would say that one of the first I realized one of the my great advantage was being ignorant. And so even before I got my first job, which took two or three months of groveling front of England, like I read every book I could find on advertising. Oh, really. Okay. And so when I got this first job, I knew more about the subject than most of us, than my employers. And I always think, I don't think I'm particularly clever, but I do think that I'm very well informed. I think I was very well informed at that time, unlucky, unlucky.

Ken McCarthy 06:29

Well, I wonder if those, if those two things sometimes correspond, not always, of course, but the better informed you are, and I like the way you put that, because no matter who you are, you have the capacity to be better informed, even if you know, even if you have no education, the worst upbringing possible, no money, you can still inform yourself. And that's a personal decision to do or not do.

Drayton Bird 06:55

Oh, yeah, I think, well, I mean, one of the great things about what you've done is you have given a lot of people, people who've done very, very well, the priceless gift of knowledge. And somebody I don't know it was an American, I'm pretty sure, who said the more I know, the lucky I luckier I get. So I was lucky. I knew nearly more than almost anybody who employed me. I remember I got my first really good job, but from a guy who said, Why should I hire you? I said, Well, I know a lot about advertising, which is an advertising agency. It was the biggest advertising agency outside London, actually.

And, and he asked me, So tell me what you know. And, and I started talking. I couldn't stop a bullshitter, then a bullshitter now and afterwards, a man came in who became a great friend of mine, very interesting man who'd been a senior member of the Communist Party. Very funny, a very interesting the clever man. And the guy who'd interviewed me, his name was Keith ride. He said I just had a young man engineer. He said he knows more about advertising than I do, and he said to me, said, Look, we don't really have room. We don't really have room for anyone, but I'm going to give you a job. And that's how I got my first job, all those years ago, 50 years ago, probably at least

Ken McCarthy 08:40

so an intelligent employer, and they are out there, so he knew enough to grab a good one, and he saw that you were a good one. When did you discover the idea of direct response, that there was a difference between just putting up an image and putting up something where you could measure response and temper response over time,

Drayton Bird 09:02

right from the start, because nearly all the books that I read in those early days were written by people whose advertising called for a response. I mean, in the 1900s most of the advertising, apart from very repetitive advertising called for a response, and the people who wrote good books about the subject, nearly all did direct response.

Ken McCarthy 09:34

Gotcha. So that period of madness which we're still in of just flowery language and beautiful images that are related to nothing hadn't, hadn't taken root yet. I guess in those days, people had to make a living. There wasn't all this free, borrowed money floating around where people could be careless.

Drayton Bird 09:57

I don't think that's true. I think I remember. You know, I became, as you know, I worked with David Ogilvy, his right hand man, for quite a while. And he once made a speech in France. And I remember he sent the draft of the speech to me and said, what you think about this? And I remember the speeches, our world is divided into two camps. And he contrasted the people who knew to a penny. And he said, they know it to a penny. They know what their advertising produced, and the others of them, he said, Look. And he was, I was very lucky to sell my agency to him and become a friend of his. And he was very kind to me.

Ken McCarthy 10:51

Hey, let's go back a little bit and then, and I do want to talk about Ogilvy, because you knew him, you worked with him. You spent tremendous amounts of time with him. Tell about, tell us about that agency that you and your partners developed. It actually was one of the most forceful direct response agencies in the country, wasn't it? It was the biggest, biggest There you go. That's a force. We

Drayton Bird 11:15

started out. What happened was, I'd gone into advertising, and then I'd seen all about mail order, and I went into the mail order business with a partner, and we did incredibly well, until an article appeared in a newspaper, which was a pack of lies, but which meant that everybody who's been sending us money. Was asking for it, but he went broke.

Ken McCarthy 11:44

Oh, my goodness.

Drayton Bird 11:45

Yeah, I remember my partner was frightened of the creditors meeting, because people, I remember one guy said, I'm going to come to that me, I'm going to break your legs, because he's made invested

money versus, Oh, wow. And so I saw, you can do what you like, Martin, but I'm going to, I'm going to sit this through, and not because I'm brave. It's just that I couldn't think of any alternative. And so I stood up and I didn't know what I was going to say, and I was looking at them there

Ken McCarthy 12:21

And let me just get this set to stage. So these were investors in the company.

Drayton Bird 12:25

They were suppliers.

Ken McCarthy 12:29

Okay. And someone had run a false article that maybe you were on the verge of bankruptcy, or what was, what was the claim?

Drayton Bird 12:38

They said, they said they read an article that said, something we were selling was was no good. Okay, there was nothing wrong with it. It was one of the very first fire extinguishers that was run from an aerosol, oh, okay, which we found I'd seen in America, because I was always interested in what was going on in America. And these were people who'd invested in the business. And when this article appeared, the business went broke. They lost money. And this man said, I'm going to come and break your legs. And after I just stood up and I said, I'm looking at all of you off to do you all seem to be growing up? So yeah, I assume you all know that sometimes you go into business and you lose money, and I'm very upset about it, as it has been very painful for me, and I'm sure it's been painful for you. And the guy who said he was going to come and break my legs came up to me afterwards and said, I'd like to shake your hand. You're an honest man.

Ken McCarthy 13:37

Okay, interesting, yeah.

Drayton Bird 13:40

And another man who was a very famous figure in British advertising, whom I knew little, came up to me, and he shook my hand, and he said, you will undoubtedly be a millionaire one day. That made me feel good.

Ken McCarthy 14:00

Especially in the condition you were in at the moment. So it's possible the reason this one fellow was so angry was he he assumed that you guys were going to disappear in the night and leave them holding the bag, and here you were standing up and saying, Hey, here's what the situation is.

Drayton Bird 14:18

Well, it was. I mean, they did lose money. I don't look back, but I did a number of things then all sorts of the minute I saw a business, I wanted to go into it. So we're involved in all kinds of businesses in several countries, we didn't have a clue.

Ken McCarthy 14:36

Or, let me ask you, you were, you were taking clients, or you were actually involved in in the businesses directly.

Drayton Bird 14:44

No, I was selling things, various things, to people, yeah.

Ken McCarthy 14:50

So you were the you were the client. Even you were a mail order company, not a mail order we were a mail order company. Okay, okay, you were, you were in a writing copy for mail order company. You were a mail order company, yeah?

Drayton Bird 15:01

And under the retail company, I mean, we have a recording studio. Would come and make your own hit record. Oh, God,

Ken McCarthy 15:11

I never knew about these things. So tell me about some of the products you guys were selling. So one of these is, come and make your own recording and be a star. Yeah, we have that now. It's called Facebook and Tiktok.

Drayton Bird 15:27

There's a French expression, blue cellar name shows. The more it changes, the more it's the same thing. I look at what's happening now and I think, well, here we go again, right?

Ken McCarthy 15:39

It must be I'm getting to get I'm getting to that place myself. Young people come to me. They think the world's coming to an end, and it might, who knows, but I've seen, I've seen variations of the story before. So you had your recording studio come in and record. What other things were you guys up to?

Drayton Bird 15:56

We were in selling records in Sweden. We were in you name it, we were involved. I

Ken McCarthy 16:06

just have to ask you were based in England. They speak Swedish in Sweden. What were you doing? Selling records in Sweden.

Drayton Bird 16:14

Because we noticed that the the hit parade in Sweden was about 80% similar to the English it parade, but it was a bit later. Wow. So what we did was we made records of the topics, but not by the people who've done the top it's, you know, copies, yeah. And we put them in racks, in shops, when I think of it, you know, the number of ways we thought of making money and failed, quite remarkable. I was just two things I think are very always well worth remembering in business. Number one, nothing fails like success, because you start thinking You're wonderful. And number two, nothing succeeds like failure,

interesting, because if you fail, you have to think, why did we fail? And I think when I eventually went into the agency business, I had the advantage that, unlike hardly anybody in the agency, was I hadn't done what they had to do. I have had to sell things. And so what happened was, I lived for seven years under a false name to avoid the tax man. I can't believe my life.

Ken McCarthy 17:35

And then, by the way, I just want to warn. I want to warn people, at least in the United States. I don't know how it is. In the UK, they will throw you in state prison for doing that. Now it's not the the loose and forgiving world that Drayton grew up in. You misrepresent your identity, and it's it's a serious crime. Now they treat because of, you know, yeah,

Drayton Bird 17:59

you could be called. I had a bank account under a different name. I had a penthouse flat in Harley Street, one of the most expensive streets in England, yeah, and but not under my name. It was under my second wife's ex husband's name.

Ken McCarthy 18:21

Did he know you were using that name?

Drayton Bird 18:23

He knew nothing about it.

Ken McCarthy 18:25

Okay, I want to repeat, guys, do not try this at home.

Drayton Bird 18:29

He was, he was a crook. He was a brilliant salesman. He was the top salesman for Encyclopedia Britannica.

Ken McCarthy 18:38

Well, yeah, wow, that's a good salesman, because those guys were quite good at what they did,

Drayton Bird 18:44

I think is such a powerful weapon. So I talked. I said, How did you sell so many of these damn things? And he said, Well, I'm not going to go through the whole fish. He said, I'll just give you the clothes. And the clothes is all about the extra benefits you got if you signed up. Now, very interesting, man.

Ken McCarthy 19:11

I spent a little time, very little time, a week, going door to door with encyclopedias with a very experienced guy, and he would sell two or three sets every night, and other people were lucky to sell one a week, and he just assumed he was going to sell them. And he was an older fellow. He wasn't. We were all young, and, you know, he was, he was an experienced person, and everybody whose door he was knocking on was younger, and he just had this ability to project authority. I got to tell you a funny story. I think I sent you this, if I didn't there was a door to door salesman. I learned this from Michael

serenov, um, who's a great publisher of of good, great material. Everybody should look him up. Yeah, there was a guy who went door to door selling things in the Bronx pots, where everybody spoke Spanish. So. He didn't speak a word of Spanish. I think he said hello, and he knew how to say hello, thank you, and payments, and he was knocking it out of the park. I guess he had the pots with him or a brochure, and he could show them, and he could point to the price, and he could show them, and he could point to the price, and he could say payments in Spanish, and this is, I guess, come to think of it, this is a great lesson. If you go to a neglected marketplace where nobody wants to bother to talk to the people, you don't have to be the world's most greatest salesman ever. You just have to get in front of the people and make it available. Hey, I'd like to talk about one of your greatest hits and where this actually fit into your career. Was the solar flex, sorry, is that the thing?

Drayton Bird 20:53

The bull worker.

Ken McCarthy 20:54

I'm sorry. Oh, excuse me, sorry, sorry. I'm glad we're doing this clarification. So first of all, describe what the bull worker is.

Drayton Bird 21:02

The bull worker is a and there are still people using them, by the way.

Ken McCarthy 21:08

You still use yours.

Drayton Bird 21:09

I've never used it. I never used it, because I discovered how it worked, and it works by pressing, yeah,

Ken McCarthy 21:19

Isometrics, right, it's isometrics.

Drayton Bird 21:25

And the guy who my model was the guy who played the star of Darth Vader. He was the guy who did the body?

Ken McCarthy 21:42

James Earl Jones?

Drayton Bird 21:46

He didn't have a bloody body. He did the voice.

Ken McCarthy

Oh, okay.

Drayton Bird 21:51

Dave Proust, Dave Proust, oh,

Ken McCarthy 21:54

So there was the actor. Dave Proust.

Drayton Bird 21:59

He was a world-class bodybuilder.

Ken McCarthy 22:01

Oh, I didn't know. Okay.

Drayton Bird 22:02

So I wrote an ad which still runs that I've seen. It's still running something strange places. These seven exercises will give you a power-packed body in exactly 42 seconds a day, or all your money back without question.

Ken McCarthy 22:20

That'll work today.

Drayton Bird 22:21

Britain's heavyweight weightlifting champion, 1960, 1962, 1963, 1964, reveals how these seven exercises.

Ken McCarthy 22:29

Oh, wow. Let's break this down, because there's, there's 1000 lessons in this thing. So let's first of all, you found a spokesperson, a model who people instantly recognized.

Drayton Bird 22:44

Oh, they didn't. Well, who know? Can you tell me who the heavy weight lifting champion of America is?

Ken McCarthy 22:50

I actually can't.

Drayton Bird

22:53

hardly anyone can.

Ken McCarthy 22:55

However, we do know that if somebody is the champion of that, they know something. Now, interestingly, I bet this fellow was not expensive to get.

Drayton Bird 23:04

I've no idea. I can't remember now, we became great friends. He was from, I live in Bristol, in the West of England, and he was also from Bristol, okay, and he could never understand why they preferred James Earl Jones to him with his Bristol accent.

Ken McCarthy 23:32

So you found a credible model spokesman, front Man. This is something our Dan Kennedy talks about a lot. There's a lot of celebrities who are actually quite ready to take small amounts of money, because they don't make as much money as we think they make, especially athletes, by the way. I mean, unless they're with a big sports league, and they seem to get all the money, the rest of them get nothing. So you had you started with immediately. Even if the man wasn't recognizable, his position was recognizable. So that's step one. Let's break let's go through that headline again. You said it very quickly, and I want people to hear because it's a it's a work of beauty.

Drayton Bird 24:15

There goes. Bruise. Heavyweight weightlifter, okay? 1962 slash three, slash four reveals how these seven exercises will build a power-packed body in exactly 42 seconds. I think it's 47 seconds a day or 40 all your money back, instantly, without question.

Ken McCarthy 24:41

Oh, my goodness,

Drayton Bird 24:43

Because I'm a sad person, because, anyway, I can describe myself. I look at the ads today, and I can see what they're missing, and nearly all the advertising of any kind, except for the long, direct response stuff. Now the pros do lacks the important element, the essential element of credibility. I mean, there's always been this mnemonic, a idea, attention, interest is our action. And when I started my agency later on, I just added once, one initial into it. So I wanted attention, interest, desire, and then I put a C in there, conviction, okay, AI, DCA, I don't think anybody else did it. And to me, conviction is certainly as important as all the other things. They don't believe you. You forget it. And that's where things like testimonials come in.

Ken McCarthy 25:51

And so you, you established that in the very first line, because the the guy speaking was the guy who attained what all the prospects wanted to attain and and you also shouted out to them, in other words, that if you were weightlifting type of guy, you would have been caught by the very first line,

Drayton Bird 26:11

yeah, but it's not. It's not aimed at weightlifting kinds of guy. Oh, okay, tell me more. So it's aimed at people who know that if they want to get strong and fit, copying a weightlifting kind of guy is not a bad move. Okay, gotcha. Gotcha. Very important to understand the difference between the impact that something has on the people you're selling to, and why that may have an impact, even if they're not weightlifters. They're not weightlifters at all. They're ordinary people. I have a financial guy who has worked for me on and off since he was 17. Still works for me is in his 70s. He has a ball worker Gotcha.

Ken McCarthy 26:57

And the market of regular guys is far bigger than the market of weightlifters. So if you're going to make money and you better reach and you better reach the regular guy, and then you use this great word, reveals. We're all certain that somebody's got the secret,

Drayton Bird 27:11

The secret nobody's told me what it is. If I'd known the secret of how to build a business without going broke, that would have helped me.

Ken McCarthy 27:24

And this and when? When did these ads? When did you create this ad? Do you recall just the decade 60s?

Drayton Bird 27:32

Okay, so that's 1965 probably.

Ken McCarthy 27:36

Okay, so that's getting to be so-so. So, if I look at myself in

Drayton Bird 27:46

The mirror every morning and I say, is that you didn't suffer

Ken McCarthy 27:54

So, if anybody's worried that things that that tried and true things wear out. I think they needn't worry.

Drayton Bird 28:04

Well, the greatest, one of the two or three greatest copywriters of all time was did an interview with the Wall Street Journal. And I always remember one thing he said, When the questioner said, you know, do all these things apply today. And he looked at them and he said, times change. People don't

Ken McCarthy 28:30

Who was it? Who you coined the phrase the moving parade? I don't know. Well, it's a great one. And again, it's very easy to think, Well, everybody's heard this before. You may have heard it, but the moving parade, the new group of people coming through, hasn't so then the next thing in your headline was, was it seven exercises? And I love the seven exercises.

Drayton Bird 28:51

Ah, these are very important.

Ken McCarthy 28:55

Why is it important? Because it's specific. Don't be vague. I think it also sets up a – if you just say seven exercises, it's like, but these, okay, well, what are those? You know, it makes somebody more curious. Here's something a lot

Drayton Bird 29:12

of people don't know. A single word could make a big difference. So if I put there are one word, several varieties of the same thing that if you put in front of a headline, will improve your response. This is one. These is another because it's specific, yeah. So I think of all the trivial things that I know, and it's terrifying,

Ken McCarthy 29:45

and yet some of them are very useful. So then we this fellow, this icon reveals these seven exercises, and I can't read my own handwriting.

Drayton Bird 29:57

Builds a power-packed body

Ken McCarthy 30:01

Gotcha. And that's, that's, of course, what we will want to have, a power pack body, and then the great one in 47 or 42 or 43 we don't know yet.

Drayton Bird 30:14

42 seconds or 49 seconds. It was seven times seven. 49.

Ken McCarthy 30:22

So the theory of the bull worker was you just needed to do an intense workout periodically, daily, I imagine.

Drayton Bird 30:33

A couple of times a week, two or three you didn't need to do the funny thing is that I'm, as you'll see I'm a fine fit, but I'm very, very fit. Actually, I swim, I walk, I do press ups, I do lots of exercises. I learn, you know, I'm 88 I'm fairly good running water. All because of the business that I went into.

Ken McCarthy 31:08

Really? Explain, please, how does direct response lead to better health and longevity?

Drayton Bird 31:17

Well, I think direct response, in aspects of direct response teach you a lot, because in order to sell something, you have to study it. And so I worked with people who sold books, including the man who sold more books than anyone else through the post, whose name will come to me I keep forgetting.

Ken McCarthy 31:43

Is it the American? Eugene Schwartz,

Drayton Bird 31:49

Yeah, Eugene Schwartz. He offered me a job. I met all these guys because they all came over to England, and so they taught me things. And Gene took to me. And he said, he said, he said, he said,

I've got this out. He said, Tell me what headline you would write for this product. And I wrote a headline, and he said, he laughed, and he says, Well, I'll show you the headline I'm running, and it was almost exactly the same. And then he said, Why don't you come and work for me?

Ken McCarthy 32:24

Wow. Do you recall? Do you recall the circumstances by which you even met him in the first place he came to England.

Drayton Bird 32:31

All these guys had come over to England just to because they wanted to tuck the European markets. You know, the oldest place to begin was the one where they spoke the same language, more or less, gotcha,

Ken McCarthy 32:44

Gotcha, and then you were, of course, the fellow with the biggest direct response agency.

Drayton Bird 32:53

I started the agency seven or eight years later. And I'd spent the seven years because I'd lost so much money under a false name, and then eventually I decided there was room for a direct response agency that there were, there were other ones, and we'd done freelance form, and so I started this agency with two partners, and it was called Trena Harvey Bird and Watson and a friend of mine, an American friend of mine was a mute. A couple of years later, he said, I see that Tiona Harvey Bird and Watson is Jarvis Byrd. In fact, Watson brilliant, brilliant copywriting. He went away and made a ton of money. I think he's still got an agency that we did. These are things that people don't do, that there are few things I can say with confidence that I'm better than most other people. Okay?

And one of the things I did was, instead of doing one thing, I did everything. What I mean by that? Well, some of most advertising agencies, as you'll notice, do not believe in advertising. They believe their clients should advertise, not we did advertising. I learned to speak in public because I realized it was a big market for speakers, and I had to take that two valium and two large brandies before I made my first speech. I was so frightened, yeah, and I remember after I'd given it to a lot of publishers class, I didn't know I was living in polite or not. And I said to somebody there, I said, was that any good? Yeah. I said, why? She said, Because you knew what you were talking about.

Ken McCarthy 34:53

Well, that you know what? That's a great lesson, because you have described yourself as a shy person. When you were younger, is that, yeah, well, I was, I have to tell you, I was too. I, you know, there's the cartoons. You'd see knees, the the cartoon character, his knees would knock together. That's real. I experienced that when I gave my first public talks. And I want to say to people who you it's so valuable to cross that divide, and you don't have to cross it initially by being skilled or charismatic or humorous, just know what the hell you're talking about, and people will be relieved

Drayton Bird 35:30

and surprised. David Ogilvy was very shy, and when I sold my business to David, I remember I was, I was on the board of the Ogilvy and Mather. In fact, I was the worldwide vice Chairman of something or other. I was on the board. Anyway, David was there, and my wife was there, and then there were two people from another agency that Ogilvy and David had to make a talk, and he was sitting there fiddling with his cock room. I said, David. I said, Listen, everyone loved you. He said, shut up.

Ken McCarthy 36:14

He was nervous.

Drayton Bird 36:15

I got on so well with him. And it all came about because we used all these different forms of publicity. We ran ads, we went to all the events, we made speeches. We used direct mail. I wrote a newsletter, and I wrote for another newsletter under Force Nine. I worked like hell.

Ken McCarthy 36:38

This was for your agency?

Drayton Bird 36:44

Yeah, gotta do everything. We've got to be everywhere. We've got it. And I used to say to my partners, I said, You've got to prove that you bring back more than it bloody will cost for you to go. But David rang me up one day because I'd hit somebody written something rude about him, and he said that was very kind of used to. And I turned to my secretary.

Drayton Bird 37:13

And shortly afterwards, the chairman was the chairman of Ogilvy and Mather in Europe. Come have dinner. I turned to my secretary over we wanted by us, but he was terribly shy, very, very shy. I don't know. I know Churchill was also very, very ill when he had to make a speech. I think that there's a phrase that I know from a 17th century writer, Francis Bacon, who, some people wrote Shakespeare, who did he wrote, and that he wrote a series of essays on how to succeed and lies. Now, really, yeah, I've got a copy in there. And he said, by pains, men rise to greater pains, and by indignities to dignities, for it is a strange thing to seek power and lose liberty. I do like, I like. I collect quotations because I very often they are distilled wisdom. Absolutely

Ken McCarthy 38:31

I do the same. I time. I see when I write it down, I throw it in the file. And, yeah, you can learn a volume from a well thought out in its description of reality,

Drayton Bird 38:47

I think I knew. I think I knew what I was trying to do when I was doing it, but only in retrospect do I see the things that I did well, because we started with nothing. We used to go to our day jobs, four of us, and then we would work at night and early in the morning at lunchtime to get our business going. And then we found another agency in Carnaby Street in London, and they didn't have any good creative

services. We'll do creative force if you give us somewhere to stay to work, if you give us somewhere to work. So we had nothing and nothing. And then we found an agency that was for sale. We had no money, we offered to buy it, and we did some very complicated deal. And eventually someone else came along and bought it, yeah, and by now, I understood a lot about business, you know, because I've made all the mistakes and you can make and a few. Were some that few people would think of making in the first way. And I remember some executives from a very big agency called Young and Rubicon had bought this agency, and they came in on the Saturday to do the deal, and they were sitting there, and I said, I said, Have any of you ever run a business before? And they said, No, it's going to be very interesting for you. And I turned out after they're going to go broke, they went broke.

Ken McCarthy 40:34

So going back to something you said, so important, the thing that you acknowledged that you did very well as an agency was marketing and advertising.

Drayton Bird 40:46

The agency itself marketing, it being in making speeches, being everywhere, having our newsletter, running our ads, and then I wrote the book.

Ken McCarthy 40:57

This is important for people to understand. You know, if you have an employee mentality, the idea show up at nine, do a good imitation of someone doing work, leave at five, wash wins and repeat for five days. If you're going to go out on your own, be prepared that you're going to work like no one else you've ever seen in your life. Probably it's it takes a lot. In other words, there the other, the corollary to this is there's no such thing as the brilliant master stroke, and everything suddenly falls into place. It is, I think, one of our revolutionary people here in America in the 1700s was talked about lighting bonfires in the minds of men.

Drayton Bird 41:44

You know, This is still selling after 44 years.

Ken McCarthy 41:49

Now, let me check something so we're we are now in 2024 that book is 44 years old. Yeah.

Drayton Bird 41:59

Well, this is the 25th anniversary, and this was in 2005

Ken McCarthy 42:07

Yeah, so I encountered an earlier version of that book in the big, well, there's a big there's Fifth Avenue in New York City. There's the grand public library. Then across the street there's the functional library, where you actually go. And this would have been, I'm going to say, 1990 something, like there.

Drayton Bird 42:29

I remember the first time I met you. You asked me to speak at an event in London Airport, and you said to me, I got into this business because of your book possible?

Ken McCarthy 42:43

I had, I had, by that point, I had read a lot, but it was all, I'm not, it wasn't theoretical, but it was all geared to someone who already had a job, already had a business. You know, you're doing a job for American Express. I think of Robert Stone, for example. Was that his name, Bob Stone? I was reading a lot of books like that, and they were very they were very interesting, but they were hard to relate to. And your book was the first one where I said, Oh, human beings do this.

Drayton Bird 43:13

I wouldn't count myself as well. I can't.

Ken McCarthy 43:18

I was gonna say, Well, how about normal person? Well, I can't say, I can't use that either. But someone, let's put this way, someone I could relate to, was in the business doing things. You just humanized it, and you and you made it, I don't know, it crystallized so many things for me. So I went home and I said, maybe I could be, maybe I could be like this. I could be a person that does advertising for yes, you swine.

Drayton Bird 43:39

You went away and became filthy rich while I was struggling away in the bowels of the earth, all on the base of my bloody book.

Ken McCarthy 43:51

Well, I always say, I wish, I wish I had made the following deal with all my students. I'll teach you for free. Just give me half of 1% of your gross for the rest of your life.

Drayton Bird 43:59

Well, I mean, some of the people that started out with you have done so incredibly well. Yeah,

Ken McCarthy 44:05

I'm very, I'm very proud of them. And I, yeah, and I, and the Great, the great thing, and I know, you know, this is true, is somebody start, ideally, somebody starts as a student, you know. And then they go out and do amazing things, and they become a peer, you know. And then you wake up one day and you realize, gosh, they know more than me. Now I better be studying with that which is the best. And I have a few people like that who are just Ben settle would be one. I don't know if you know Ben's work. I learned a lot from him. He remind, he remind, he keeps. And we should really talk about this, the s, the importance of the fundamentals, how easy it is to get off track and be distracted by the latest shiny objects. The more I do this, the more I realize if you stray from the fundamentals, you're really in trouble.

Drayton Bird 44:54

Yeah, I think going back to what I was saying a little while ago, I. Uh, most of the advertisements that I see now one of the most important ingredients in persuasion, which is, tell me why. And so they'll have a very catchy thing to grab your attention, and then they'll have a picture that everyone takes is very

clever, not very much copy, because nobody reads long copy, and nobody, anybody in this business, who knows what they're doing. All the people that you taught, one or two that I taught, they all know they have to do a complete selling job. And many, many years ago, I saw that McGraw Hill, the publishers, had done a study to see which of the advertisements that run in their publications did best. And the one thing I remember they discovered was that all the best ones repeated the proposition at least three times.

Ken McCarthy 46:01

Oh, interesting. Yeah.

Drayton Bird 46:05

Well, that's one thing that I was always interested in learning. I still am strange in that I think.

Ken McCarthy 46:15

The first time you hear it, you kind of are aware somebody has said something, the second time you hear it, you say, oh, I should pay attention to that. The third time you finally listen. You know, we're all very distracted all the time, and it takes a lot to bring somebody in and help and focus their minds, and the idea that you're going to convey it the first time is madness, right? What was it? David Ogilvy, we found out when he worked for Gallup that someone had to hear about the title of a movie seven times before they even began to contemplate going to it.

Drayton Bird 46:53

David, his book is a fantastic book, advertising. It's a fantastic book. Yeah, I don't think many people in advertising understand what he understood. He was a very, very funny man.

Ken McCarthy 47:13

Oh, he did have a good sense of humor.

Drayton Bird 47:16

Absolutely hilarious. He used to remember, I used to go to his chateau, and he had the story about pointing out of the window. He said, you see over there? Said, that's those are my grapes over there. Some guests said, he said that we might write on them. And one person doesn't taste very nice, doesn't travel well, does it? He was hilarious, but he was a beast. If he, if you, if he, if you failed him or you, he was a beast. He was. He did not suffer fools gladly or at all.

Drayton Bird 48:10

He was a lovely guy. I mean, if he liked you

Ken McCarthy 48:13

like I think, I think he was known for just a tremendous work ethic himself. So he just expected everybody else to be doing the same.

Drayton Bird 48:24

The guy who edited his book over on advertising, whose name escapes me for a moment, a friend of mine. I took him to the opera here in England. He worked in Chicago, and I was in Chicago once and talking to him about David. David had gone and worked in Chicago for a while, and he said, Well, he said, I'm a hard working guy. Said, but I would go into the office of on a Saturday, and David would be there, leave at the end of Saturday and have Sunday office and I'll go drive past the office on Sunday night, David was still there. Wow. I wonder how happy he was.

Ken McCarthy 49:14

Well, he was driven. Yeah. I think those of us that are driven are being driven for a reason.

Drayton Bird 49:20

So I don't think I'm driven at all, but compared to a lot of other people, I am.

Ken McCarthy 49:28

Well, speaking of being driven, one of the things you did for Ogilvy was travel extensively, I believe, and he developed a far-flung empire of ad agencies, and you were the man he wanted to have, you know, explain the wonders of the mail order direct response model,

Drayton Bird 49:54

As much, the job was much more than that. Um. What happened was that they bought the business, and then the guy who was running the business said, I would like you to be the vice chairman in charge of direct stuff all over the world. And then he said, I'll pay you quite I think they paid me just under a million dollars the first year, which is an awful lot of money,

Ken McCarthy 50:34

A dangerous amount of money,

Drayton Bird 50:39

But my job, in fact, was to go around the agencies. We had about 37 agencies around the world at that time, meet the clients, be charming to the clients. Do a talk to the clients. Do a talk to the people. Find the good people and find out what they wanted. So if they wanted, for instance, I remember the guy in New Zealand was set up with New Zealand, so I got him a job in Thailand, moved people around. And it was a very interesting experience, very interesting and very instructive and, and it's, I think, as a result of my association with over with May, that I've worked in 55 countries. Wow. And it's very interesting to see to what degree people differ, what degree they're the same all over the world. And in fact, the truth is that people who work as executives in any country have more in common with other executives in any country than they do with the people down the ladder. I'm not sure this is a good thing, but that's what I discovered. It was a wonderful experience, and I think I've been fortunate to been to so many places and met so many interesting people.

Ken McCarthy 52:14

Also being based in the UK, a lot of your clients and colleagues are, of course, from UK, but also Europe. You've had a lot of experiences. We have someone you introduced me to alesh, the king of Lavinia.

Drayton Bird 52:31

Well, I did my last ever seminar about a year ago. Ken was there.

Ken McCarthy 52:39

I was there.

Drayton Bird 52:42

I mean, it was great.

Ken McCarthy 52:44

By the way, let me say this for I don't know. I hope you're making those tapes available. The quality of direct response seminars or marketing seminars has really gone down a lot. I just That's my assessment. So if anybody wants to know what it used to be like in the old days when things were great, get the tapes from that seminar, because it was amazing. I went all the way to London to be part of it, and I was taking notes furiously. It was a fantastic three days.

Drayton Bird 53:16

It was. I don't think people are running things like that anymore.

Ken McCarthy 53:20

I don't think they do.

Drayton Bird 53:23

Then everyone thinks it can be online, but you can't sit there and ask somebody a question when it's, you know, been pre-produced online.

Ken McCarthy 53:33

I also think people with the people you selected were excellent. And also I think people bring their best game to a live thing this, you know, because you're going to be with the Speaker, if you're if you're doing it online, well, you just turn it off and you can run away. But if you're in a in a ballroom or meeting room, and you're doing a presentation and you don't put your whole heart and soul into it, you're going to get a bad reaction from the people in the room. So I think people bring their I know I did. I tried at least, you know, you bring your very best game, and you selected great people. And I, frankly, worry about the younger generation that is not getting access to this level of training. It's, I don't know where I would send somebody to get it, so I just want to tell people, and by the way, before we before we forget, to do this. If somebody wants to follow up with you, what's the best way for them to do that? Sign up for your list.

Drayton Bird 54:28

Yeah. DraytonBird.com, very difficult to remember. Send me a line if you've got any questions, sad old sod session. It's raining outside. What can I do? So I reply to people's messages.

Ken McCarthy 54:48

I mean, guys, you have no idea what the value of that. And I get the newsletter. It comes every day, comes every day, and more often than not, I read it, and more often not, I learned something from it. It's. Good one. It's a real won't waste your time. Sometimes you might not exactly know what Drayton's Getting at but, but most of the time you do. But there's some, there's some profound stuff in there. So, you know, I You mentioned that before you started in the business, you read all the books. And you were reading books from people recounting things that happened in what the 1920s and the 1930s and the turn of the century, turn of the century, yeah, and I read, I read a lot of those same books. One of my favorite, gosh, I forget the title, but it came out in 1900 was just a little red volume written by a guy that actually trained the people that going on to create Fortune and Forbes magazine. He would he had a he had a financial magazine, and then he employed.

Drayton Bird 55:50

I have not read that. I've not read that.

Ken McCarthy 55:53

You know, and I don't even I usually I can visualize where the book is in my collection. I don't know where it is. I found it in some weird bookstore. It looked like a dog had bitten off one of the corners. And it was a guy. He was laying and this was like 1900 and he was talking about the wonders of the new industry of mail order. And literally, you could just change a word, a few words. In fact, you know what? I think that's what I did. I'll have to dig into it. I'll find it, and when I find it, I'll send it to you. You could have just changed a few words. And he was describing the Wonders of the World of Internet Marketing. He even had a whole list of products that do well.

Drayton Bird 56:31

Yes, this is something the big, biggest mistake, I think, made by people today is to assume that, because it's a new medium, you only have to learn what's going on in that new medium. It's not true. No, because not only do that I said, times change, people don't, but also technology changes, people don't right. Nothing changes people. That's why you could still read the Bible and you can recognize human behavior. You see, it hasn't changed, not changed at all. Maybe the numbers have changed, maybe the names of the currencies have changed, but people have not changed. I mean, I'm watching the American election at the moment with deep

Ken McCarthy 57:28

I mean, you have to admit this one's a weird one. This is a weird time.

Drayton Bird 57:36

It's a very well. I mean, prior to us, outside America, it's a very worrying song. It's a very worrying song. We'll see what happens.

Ken McCarthy 57:50

So we want to tell people, oh, the thing I wanted to point out, so you'll have, you'll have someone who's a star on Tiktok, that's the new place to be a star, and they'll find themselves with a million or 2 million or 2 million followers. There's a fellow that does house inspections, right? And his job is to go and before house sells, to make sure it's not falling down. He's got over a million followers, right? This is these. These things are incomprehensible. But the big mistake anybody on Tiktok who's doing well or the the social media du jour is, as you point out, they stay in that lane, and they think that's the whole world, and there's nothing else to learn. And oh, are they leaving money on the table?

Drayton Bird 58:32

It's interesting, actually, because I have two, not several children, but my eldest son, my youngest daughter, they both live in America. My son lives in near New York, and my daughter lives in Los Angeles, and she's a singer and but she also does a lot of stuff on Tiktok, okay, and which is hilarious, absolutely hilarious. And she gets, like, half a million people, and she, I remember I was not the last time I was there, but the time before, she said, Oh, let's do a little let's do a little video. And just like that, you stand over there, master over there. She said, Have you got your wallet? I said, Yeah. She said, take your credit card out. I took my credit card out and and she did. I'll send it to you, actually, because it's very, very funny.

Okay, it's all about how exploiting your father is, and it's got me taking my credit card out, and they're saying, Thank you. She understands, understands all that stuff. She's a model and a singer. I don't know how she understands it, but she. Was very, she was very smart at school, actually. But she's, she's also she, her partner is the guy who does the voice of the crowd for Disney. Oh, really, one of the things he does voice over artist, okay, well, he's not just that. He's he also, who's the fellow that Bruno Mars. He also works with Bruno Mars, who, so he's written nearly all Bruno Mars stuff. Oh, wow. And he performs with him. And the last time, not the last of time, before last time took the states, was simply to see them and to see Bruno Mars, and then spend a bit of time with her and spend a bit of time on some but now it's such a trip to go there. And one of the great problems with America, which is no problem if you're American, is that the people on the immigration are universally unpleasant. No sounds unwelcoming place I can think of.

Ken McCarthy 1:01:05

It's a shame. It's a shame. I mean, I gotta tell you, though it's it's not that different for me. Every time I come home from somewhere, from some foreign country, it's almost invariably it's not nice. It's just amazing. And meanwhile, if you were to show up at the border with a suitcase from Venezuela, they'll let you write in. They'll give you an apartment. Now, apparently they give them cars. Now, it's, it's, but we don't want to go too far.

Drayton Bird 1:01:36

I think you've been misled slightly. We won't go there.

Ken McCarthy 1:01:44

But we've, we've talked about a lot of things. And just if I think of the things that really jumped out, one is there, there's boundless, that, literally, truly boundless opportunity in this in this field, the price of

admission, which, which you mentioned right off the bat is to be well informed, and no one's stopping you from being well informed, right? No matter how dire your circumstances are, you can get to a library at a minimum or and then there's the internet of the library, but that's fundamental. You just have to be a student of the game. You can't think you're going to wing it based on a few YouTube videos. And then the second thing, I think you made very clear is you got to market yourself like hell. You just, you cannot stop it's, it's not going to take care of itself for you.

Drayton Bird 1:02:35

You're going to be everywhere. Yeah, yeah.

Ken McCarthy 1:02:39

And if people want to follow with you, and I strongly recommend they do that. Go to Drayton bird.com you can sign up for drayton's newsletter. It's a really good newsletter. It's nice and short. It's usually funny and sometimes quite profound. I've printed out more than a few and gone down a few rabbit holes, following some of the leads you've given me to look into. It's a first class education and your book as well a common sense direct and digital marketing.

Drayton Bird 1:03:14

I put the digital in because that was what everyone was talking about. Yeah. What can you do? You know, they confuse the media with what it's really all about.

Ken McCarthy 1:03:24

Exactly, exactly. Well, well. Drayton, thank you for this, and thanks for everything. And I'm assuming the UK will allow me into the country, which I never assume. I hope to see you again before too much time passes. It's

Drayton Bird 1:03:41

Lovely to talk to you.