

# Can we do something great and valuable together?

An interrogatory presentation prepared by Jeremy Hildreth  
December 2014

“Calling you a brand consultant is almost an insult. What you do is alchemy.”  
– *client comment*

What I'm asking for.

Where I've come from.

What I'm like to work with.

What I'm doing lately.

I'm playing a hunch here.

And if you're reading this, then you are, too —  
for which I'm grateful.

So I'll begin the way slideshows usually end:

Thank you.

A Californian by birth, I had an Ivy League education, followed by a first career in Washington and on Wall Street.

Then I did an MBA at Oxford, where I got hooked on branding and identity, thanks to my lecturer – then employer – Wally Olins.

In the last decade, I've advised all sorts of clients: from banks and barbecue grill makers, to nations and neighbourhoods, to airlines and armies (yes, armies: more on that later).

For the latter half of this period, I've been a "gun for hire" – a consultant, a freelancer.

**And while one-off projects are full of endless novelty, they are short-lived.**

You get to know the client, they get to know you... and then it's finished. You've got to start over again. This is inefficient, I've decided, and I'd like to fix that: "A little more professional continuity in the headphones please!"

**But... I don't want to start my own agency.**

So I am looking for a great company to get into bed with – a company that's good at what they do, and that can become even better at it by involving me. (Involving me *how*? Hang on, we'll get to that...)



Also, because I'm demonstrably, achingly at the top of my game, I want the greatest projects I can get my hands on.

I want my work to have maximum impact, maximum exposure, and — let's not beat around the bush — maximum remuneration.

I'll continue to have some "side hustles" (e.g., my ventures in Iceland and Mongolia).

And I'd want my main client/company to *selfishly* regard these extracurricular activities as a massive boon – a never-ending "executive MBA" which they're benefitting from without paying a lick for.

# My ideal position

While a full-time post isn't *off* the table, the ideal role I seek is:

- a 6-month or 1-year contract (so we can get to know each other)
- under a hybrid retainer/days-per-month sort of arrangement
- that's less than full-time (but I'd be available 7 days a week)

What would I do in the role?

*Something spectacular? Hopefully.*

*Something that's never been done before? Possibly.*

It's up to us to define. And the role might not currently exist.

# And what am I asking for, right now?

I'm asking for a phone call.

Based on several experiences of presenting these slides to company executives who *haven't* yet worked with me, by the time you reach the end of the deck you are likely to be some combination of:

- a) puzzled;
- b) impressed, and;
- c) intrigued.

Which is why my contact details are on the last page.

“Okay, then, I’ll keep clicking. But what do you do, Jeremy? How would we use you, potentially?”

The remainder of this presentation – and the phone call I hope it will lead to – represents my best effort to answer that question.

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Branding pioneer and guru Wally Olins was my lecturer at Oxford's Said Business School in 2003. A year later, I became the only former student of his whom he ever hired, and the first full-time consultant in Saffron's London office. Wally and I worked hand in glove for the next five years.

*H&co*

***With Jacob Benbunan (Saffron's CEO) and Wally in Munich, September 2004***

# The overview

Born and raised in Los Angeles.

U. Penn (Wharton) undergrad (BSc economics, '96)

“The Washington and Wall Street years” (long story...)

MBA at Oxford (2002-03)

Last decade: branding, consulting, copywriting

- Saffron Brand Consultants 2004-2009
- Independent since 2009
- Collaborations: Ajaz Ahmed/AKQA, Winkreative, et al.
- Contributor to *Monocle* and *The Wall Street Journal*
- Achieved a reputation in place branding (but not only)





## Notable past clients (some with Saffron)

Nike

Visit London

Mondragon

Volkswagen

N. Ireland Tourist Board

AkzoNobel

LVMH

Rio de Janeiro

Capital One

Turkcell

Lithuania Dev. Agency

Swedish Lapland

Lloyds of London

London Dev. Agency

East Timor

Vueling Airlines

Latvian Institute

Audimas

Thames Water

European Patent Office

DTZ

Monaco

Whyte & Mackay

Shanghai Tourism

Poland

Polska! Year

Lynx Grills

Any sectors missing?

I don't think so.

Certainly I have *some* perspective  
on damn near everything.

# “Thought leadership”

Keynotes and lectures (50+)

Radio appearances (15+)

Academic journals (2)

Magazine and newspaper articles (100+)

Book chapters (4)

Books (10+): other people's

Books (1): co-authored  
(*Brand America* translated  
into 5 languages)





Worked in 20+ countries. Visited 70+ countries, 300+ cities.

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I'm *not* a generalist.

More like a 'specialist in the whole.'

I see the big picture...and the concrete details.

**And when I'm lucky, I see the unseen.**



## In my client's words (2014)

"You help people figure out what they don't know they don't know.

"You wear many hats: psychologist, anthropologist, etc., and you connect the dots.

"I'd say brand consultants hijack sentiment, but with you, it's as if you play with collective memory. Gosh, it's hard to describe!

"But somehow, it's the difference between voodoo and medicine, and if someone were to describe you as a branding consultant I'd almost want to defend you: 'Hey, don't call Jeremy that!'

"You're a different species."

Both hemispheres of my brain work in unison.  
For me, strategy and creativity are the same  
thing.



# The same client continues

“[What you do is] analogous to a golf instructor that audits your posture, swing, etc., and then helps you make adjustments to create meaningful improvements that seemed *impossible* prior to the adjustments but *inevitable* after them.

“I suppose it’s similar to amplifying what is there, leveraging the positive or mining/extracting what is precious.

“I think you achieve this by distinguishing noise from signals and also by deploying your multi-disciplinary approach that results in layers and depth – this is that hardest part to pin down and describe.

“There is something Indiana Jones, Bear Grylls about your approach.”

I'm a strategist, with a gift for "tactical creativity" at both exalted and mundane levels.

What do I mean by 'exalted and mundane levels'? Here are four examples of how my mind works:

## Apollo Tyres (2008)

The #2 tyre company in India was preparing its market entry strategy for Europe, with the intention of selling directly to fleets (taxi agencies and car rental companies) and downplaying their Indian origins. Instead, I advised the managers to boast proudly:

- *“We make tyres for the worst roads and the worst drivers on Earth. They’re definitely good enough for a German taxi.”*



# Vilnius, Lithuania (2013)

Working for the mayor of the capital of Lithuania, I recommended several new policies and initiatives, including the installation of an array of lasers in the river as a “symbolic action” to demonstrate the city’s technological prowess (half of all the coloured lasers in the world today incorporate parts made in Vilnius).



# “Unity of Art and Life” @ Vilnius Airport (2014)

Started by Lithuanians in the 1960s, the influential Fluxus art movement emphasised the “unity of art and life.”

In that spirit, we charismatically introduced passengers arriving at Vilnius airport to the city’s bohemian essence by sending a vintage crate offering fresh fruit out onto the baggage claim alongside their luggage.

*Watch the 2-minute full story:* <https://vimeo.com/87997949>

*Watch the 18-second teaser:* <http://youtu.be/KfQKm8xuqIY>



# Visit London: It rains more in Rome (2008)

This strapline, which I composed for Visit London (the marketing department of Europe's largest city), caught on mightily for awhile.

Mayor Boris Johnson even referred to it during the city's Olympic games.

And yes — to quote Henry Kissinger out of context — “it has the added benefit of being true.”

# London Shared Property Management (2013)

I advised a property company client: “Just because your competitors splash their logo over 80% of a sign’s surface area, why must you do it, too? Better to use that space to say something funny or interesting. Then people will get an even bigger message: this place is for rent – and by an agent that clearly isn’t bloody Foxtons!”



So, I'm a branding guy – I'll cop to that.

And a writer.

But more so: I'm a clear, deep, imaginative thinker, with a knack for identifying non-trivial insights and useful creative levers.



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# Active clients

The Museum of London

The Baker Street Quarter / Portman Estate (London)

An Indonesian property developer (in Malaysia)

The trade promotion offices of Latin America

The province of Limburg, Netherlands

And three personal projects: in Mongolia, Iceland, and China

## Recent clients

The Household Division of the British Army (2014)

The EU Presidency of Latvia (2013)

The Mayor and City of Vilnius, Lithuania (2013)

The Mongolian cashmere industry (2011-2012)



The Mongolia brief:

**“Give Mongolia’s cashmere sector the tactics and tools to challenge its rivals in China.”**

*The Gobi, February 2012*

*I spent 6 months in Mongolia, including time amongst the nomadic herders.*



The Household Division brief:

**“Portray London’s ceremonial soldiers as more than ‘Mickey Mouse at Disneyland.’”**

*Parliament Square, London, June 2014*

*The film I directed for my production company Thrilling Cities: <https://vimeo.com/107994329>*



The Baker Street brief:

**“Foster the identity of a neighbourhood  
using indirect communications.”**

*Winkreative's office in Marylebone, July 2014*

*Creating possibly the best “tear-off” neighbourhood map ever*



A large, ornate conference room with high ceilings, arched doorways, and large windows. A long table covered with a black cloth is set up in the center, with several people seated around it. The room has a patterned carpet and large chandeliers. In the foreground, a laptop screen displays a presentation with colorful graphics and text.

The Latin America brief:  
**“Brand an entire continent from  
Tijuana to Tierra del Fuego.”**

*Montevideo, Uruguay, October 2014*  
*Presenting the proposed campaign to the client*



latin  
america

always a  
great story

Only  
once  
has a  
European  
capital  
city  
been  
located  
completely  
outside  
of  
Europe. It  
was  
from  
1808 to  
1821  
,  
when  
Rio de  
Janeiro  
was capital  
of the  
Kingdom  
of  
Portugal.

"Maria the Mad,"  
Queen of Portugal,  
Brazil and the Algarves



Real poster, mock advert:

Just imagine if they run this in *The Economist* like they intend to. Thanks to my designer Rejane Dal Bello's killer layout, it'll stand out like a shimmering jewel from the usual corporate advertising pabulum... you know, those full-page ditties energy companies like to publish, where they try to be your friend by showing you a photo of a wind farm.

Caption:

"Maria the Mad," Queen of  
Portugal, Brazil and the Algarves



These days, I'm obsessed with doing stuff and making things – and cajoling my clients to go along with me on that.

(I've gotten pretty good at cajoling. Part of the trick is to be unfailingly polite, even while being pushy.)

And I work like a dog to leverage my growing experience, perspective and aptitude in the **increasingly indistinguishable** areas of organisational strategy, brand identity, PR, graphic design, service design, copywriting, advertising, digital, behavioural economics, content development, filmmaking, &c.

# Let's talk.

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