

Transcript Details

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Bad Breath & Booming Business: The History of Halitosis

Marshall Miller:

Welcome to another pungent episode of *Rub Some Dirt in It*. I'm Marshall Miller.

Marketing makes the world go round. No matter what the condition and subsequent treatment to deal with said condition, there was a marketing guru there to take the concept and turn it into... gold, Jerry, gold.

Let's talk about the greenish haze in the room. It lurks in the shadows but always announces itself eventually. Yes, my friends. It's Halitosis.

In 1923, Gerard Barnes Lambert and his brother Marion came across a short blurb in the *British Lancet* about Halitosis. The Lambert brothers had already invented a product named after Dr. Joseph Lister, an early pioneer in using antiseptics in surgery. Now, the antiseptic properties of "Listerine" were touted to deal with more serious issues like Dysentery and Gonorrhea and maybe some less serious ones like hair loss and dirty floors.

Translating Halitosis from Latin, you get, roughly, Bad Breath. It suddenly hit them. Bad Breath was the key to their marketing success story. Or was it...Got Bad Breath...no, that won't work- it's kind of gross...hmmm. Got Halitosis- yes! now we're talking salesapalooza.

The oral hygiene industry is only worth about 7 Billion dollars now... all because Halitosis, as ads from the 1920's actually told us, apparently makes you unpopular.

In 1550 BC, our old friend Hippocrates, a frequent guest here on the program, knew what was up. He said, "Any girl should have a pleasant breath, making sure always to wash her mouth with wine, anise and dill seeds." No marketing guru in the world could turn that into gold.

So sip, gargle, and repeat...or you can just...rub some dirt in it.