

# A Schmitt is Bernd

## Marketing Prof. Appears on Comedy Central's Daily Show

Interview by Olivia Ralston '06

Marketing Professor Bernd Schmitt, who is also the Executive Director of the Center on Global Brand Leadership, was recently tapped by Comedy Central's "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart" to offer his expert assessment of CBS's effort to manage its brand. The news network is dealing with the "Memogate"

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### The Bottom Line

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## "See B.S. [Bernd Schmitt]" Shine

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scandal surrounding Dan Rather's use of forged documents about President Bush's service in the National Guard during Vietnam. In a spot cleverly called "See B.S." that aired Friday, February 4, 2005, Daily News correspondent Bob Wiltfong sought out Prof. Schmitt's

### *Any publicity is good publicity.*

advice on how CBS should cope with its crisis. For those readers who are not familiar with the show, the Daily Show bills itself as "The Most Trusted Name in Fake News," and in addition to national news headlines, features special reports in which oftentimes interviewees are made out to be complete fools. Which leads us to our first question for Prof. Schmitt:

OR: I'm a huge fan of the Daily Show, and I've always wondered whether the people

who show up on those spots know going into it that they're going to look like idiots. Did you know?

BS: Oh yes, I knew going into it. I'd watched the show a few times so I knew what I was getting myself into. I knew that they would be able to make me out to be whatever they wanted - as stupid, or as the stereotypical boring professor, or the crazy professor....

OR: So why would you agree to be ridiculed?

BS: Well, any publicity is good publicity. And you know, teaching is in part entertainment, so it's not so far off from what I do. And the Daily Show has a cult following, so I figured it would be great to be on it. I've done a lot of interviews, like CNN's Business Unusual, but this is the first time I've gotten emails and calls from people who have seen me.

OR: How did they pick you to be the rebranding expert?

Ahem, not that it's not completely obvious that they should pick you.

BS: They called up the Center on Global Brand Leadership saying that they were looking for a professor who was an expert in rebranding. I called up Columbia's PR office to make sure they wouldn't

of footage here on the third floor at the Center for Global Brand Leadership. In fact, it wasn't totally obvious that the story would be about CBS; they asked a lot of different questions. I asked if I



For more information about Prof. Schmitt, visit [www.schmitt.com](http://www.schmitt.com).

should wear anything special and they said no.

In retrospect,

have a problem with it, and they called back half an hour later to say that no, they had no problem with it...they recognized the need to have a sense of humor about these things.

OR: So what about the actual taping? Did you go to the Comedy Central studio? Did you get make-up, wardrobe...?

BS: They shot about an hour

they should have told me to wear a black turtleneck. [At one point in the interview, Wiltfong asks, "Is now the time in the program when we dance?" which elicits a confused look from Schmitt. Wiltfong follows with, "Sprockets? ...Dieter?... You don't have a monkey?" and it cuts to a scene from Sprockets.]

OR: What do you think of it now that it's aired?

BS: I think they did a terrific job. They did a great play on my name. He [Wiltfong] came in with a list of questions but also came up with some spontaneously, like the Dieter one. One of the hardest parts about it was having to stay serious and keep a straight face. Nick Peterson and Peter Rogers [who work in the Center] were there and having a hard time not laughing.

OR: So when he asked you about mascots, was that your actual reaction? [Wiltfong asks, "NBC has the peacock, Fox has Hitler, what about CBS?" Schmitt's reaction is some eye-shifting followed by, "Umm...what did you say?"]

BS: Yes that was my actual reaction. See, I'm German so very conscious about anything having to do with Hitler. So I wanted to make sure I'd heard him right.

OR: So seriously, what do you think CBS News should do?

BS: I think they should just let it pass.