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No Lipstick on Israel: Martin Kace Delivers Surprising Response to Israeli Foreign Ministry's "Brand Israel" Proposition at 10th Annual Herzliya Conference

New York, NY February 1, 2010 – The government of Israel, following a multi-million dollar investment and 4 years of preparation, today unveiled its version of the central message in Israel's rebranding effort, coining Israel's essence as Creative Energy.

"Great effort," says Martin Kace, "but no cigar."

Creative Energy. Ido Aharoni, leader of the "Brand Israel" campaign, sponsored by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was charged with delivering the product of the years-long quest to redefine Israel's image at the 10th Annual Herzliya Conference today, Monday, February 1. Aharoni's team has identified the central image of Israel as being the nation of "Creative Energy", and posed that this concept permeate all of Israel's global communication.

The Herzliya Conference is the annual venue for Israel's highest officials from government, business and academia to unveil their policy recommendations and for the release of statements of national importance. This year, "*Winning the Battle of the Narrative: Strategic Communication for Israel*", was a highly anticipated session, of particular interest to the international community.

Martin Kace, a New York City-based branding guru, one of the "*Strategic Communications*" panelists, voiced appreciation and respect for the Ministry's work, but held that "Creative Energy" lacks in both robustness and resonance amongst a global audience. Israel, which ranked 185th out of 200 nation brands in 2009 (East West Global Index 200), clearly has a number of hurdles to overcome in terms of its international image perception.

During his succinct address to Herzliya participants, Kace used his own hair loss metaphorically, likening the Ministry's efforts in the "Brand Israel" campaign to a comb-over. Kace maintains that there is no honest brand for "Israel beyond the conflict", and that Israel's public diplomacy efforts need to embrace Israel's *strength, perseverance and tenacity in all senses* in all its messaging. According to Kace, simply asking the public to shift their views from negative to positive is simultaneously overambitious and impossible.

"Everything Israel does is strong; both good and bad. Therefore, the notion of Israel '*beyond the conflict*' is a fallacy and needs to be framed, instead, as Israel *beside the conflict*," asserted Kace.

Kace expressed his hope for Israel developing a message more "true to its actual self" and that "serves as an honest point of engagement globally."

About Martin Kace

Born in New York City, Martin Kace spent his formative years in Israel. Holding two Masters' Degrees in psychology, Kace has made a career of branding everything from apparel to nonprofits. He is the former CEO of Joe Boxer and Phat Farm, and currently teaches "The Designer as Entrepreneur" for the MFA program at the School of Visual Arts in New York. Kace's manifesto that good ideas shouldn't get lost in bad communication led him to found Empax.org, a New York City-based branding and strategic communications firm.

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