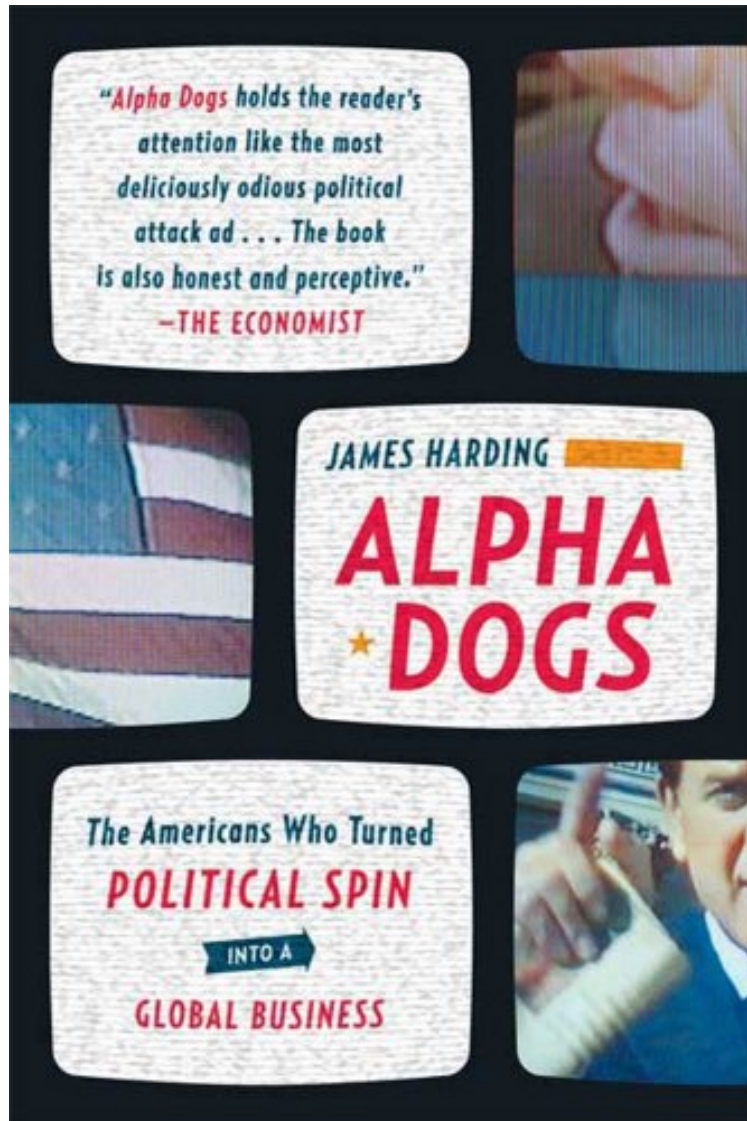


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# Alpha Dogs: The Americans Who Turned Political Spin into a Global Business

James Harding

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**James Harding : Alpha Dogs: The Americans Who Turned Political Spin into a Global Business** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Alpha Dogs: The Americans Who Turned Political Spin into a Global Business:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great for political junkies, just 'OK' for everyone elseBy William PettiHarding presents a an interesting history of the birth of modern political consulting in the United States and abroad through the lens of legendary Sawyer-Miller Group. Harding's argument is that the American style of

campaigning (personalized candidates, negative attack ads, style over substance, reliance on emotional appeals and platitudes instead of specific policy discussions) born in the late 1970's and 1980's was exported around the world through US-based political consultants looking to kill time, make extra money, and test new campaign strategies and tactics in foreign elections. The Sawyer-Miller Group made extensive use of sophisticated polling and market research techniques as well as Madison Avenue marketing strategies to promote candidates. They mastered the art of strategic communication and helped usher in the current era of personalized politics. The book is quite interesting, but meanders in spots. Harding does a great job of chronicling some of the more spectacular elections and political revolutions worked on by Sawyer-Miller (e.g. Marcos in the Philippines and Pinochet in Chile). However, he tends to pay short shrift to campaigns and events in the United States. It would have been interesting to read more about how the consultants adapted the lessons learned in those "experimental" foreign campaigns to US-based campaigns--what was applicable, what wasn't? I also think Harding would have benefited from some of the work done in academia on the rise of personalized politics. Certainly, the success of campaigns based on these types of strategies created a copy-cat like scenario. However, significant changes to the primary process--particularly for Presidential elections--opened the door for a more personalized approach to campaigning. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A real page turner if you enjoy applied politics. By Danny. A real page turner if you enjoy applied politics, adventure, and dramas. I learned a great deal from this book, about the history of political consulting and their methods. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Alpha Politics. By Customer. Great book. Interesting to find the machinations behind political campaigns.

Alpha Dogs is the story of the men from an enormously influential campaign business called Sawyer Miller who served as backroom strategists on every presidential contest from Richard Nixon's to George W. Bush's. David Sawyer was a New England aristocrat with dreams of a career as a filmmaker; Scott Miller, the son of an Ohio shoe salesman, had a knack for copywriting. Unlikely partners, they became a political powerhouse, directing democratic revolutions from the Philippines to Chile, steering a dozen presidents and prime ministers into office, and instilling the campaign ethic in corporate giants from Coca-Cola to Apple. Long after the firm had broken up and sold out, its alumni had moved into the White House, to dozens of foreign countries, and into the offices of America's blue-chip chief executives. The men of Sawyer Miller were the Manhattan Project of spin politics: a small but extraordinary group who invented an American-style political campaigning and exported it around the world. In this lively and engaging narrative, James Harding tells the story of a few men whose political savvy, entrepreneurial drive, and sheer greed would alter the landscape of global politics. It is a story full of office intrigue, fierce rivalries, and disastrous miscalculations. And it is the tale of how world politics became American, and how American business became political.

From Publishers Weekly The rise and fall of the Sawyer Miller Group, a political consultancy firm, makes for a whirlwind look at international electioneering in this thoroughly engrossing book. The firm grew out of a partnership among the political neophytes who essentially invented the American-style of campaigning and served as backroom strategists in every presidential contest from Nixon to George W. Bush. Editor at The Times in London, Harding draws on over 200 interviews to reconstruct the behind-the-scenes history of the Sawyer Miller Group's meteoric rise to power and influence, offering an intimate look at the firm's involvement in global politics; its hand in steering Corazon Aquino to power in the Philippines, its clients' successful campaigns in South America and its machinations in Chile and Israel. The author closes the main part of his narrative in the early 1990s, with the firm's crushing defeat in Peru, a company shift toward corporate clients (e.g., Coca-Cola) and an acrimonious buyout. Though Harding spends little time on domestic politics or his protagonists' personal lives, this fascinating book vividly renders political history with clear insight and rich detail. (May) Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. [A] stinging new book... Newsweek; Alpha Dogs holds the reader's attention like the most deliciously odious political attack ad... The book is also honest and perceptive. The Economist; This absorbing first book by the editor of the Times tells the story of Sawyer-Miller, a pioneering and hugely influential campaigning company in the US that laid the foundations for our modern methods of politics and made 'spin' a global phenomenon. The Bookseller; James Harding's Alpha Dogs is one of those wonderful books that takes you to a time and place you may not know much about but where life as we know it was changed in real and lasting ways. This inside story of how American-style political spin was sold to the world is a fascinating and insightful glimpse into the clockwork of global power. What's more, it's a great read featuring complex characters, high stakes, and drama. They've tried to make movies about this sort of thing but movies can't hold a candle to the real intrigue, ambition, and plot twists that in the end impacted millions of lives. David Rothkopf, author of Superclass; A terrific read. Long before Karl Rove and James Carville became household names, Scott Miller and David Sawyer were peddling the techniques and political snake oil of modern American campaigns to dictators, scoundrels, and earnest and courageous reformers throughout the world. James Harding gives us an eye-opening, sobering account of the rise and fall of one of America's premier political consulting firms, and the saints and

sinners it helped get elected to office. It's the rough and tumble of modern politics and the alpha dogs who made it that way." Dennis W. Johnson, George Washington University, author of *No Place for Amateurs: How Political Consultants Are Reshaping American Democracy* "Since Theodore White, those who write about politics strive to shape a narrative, tell a story that makes events come alive. Most fail. James Harding succeeds. Harding sits readers at his campfire and vividly tells the story of the birth over the past three decades of modern campaign consulting firms, notably the Sawyer Miller Group, a firm that started with noble intent and ended in cynicism. Harding is a man of learning, so there is a historical frame of reference, a perspective on how those who set out to educate citizens came to manipulate them both here and abroad. But what makes this story come alive are the characters: those who speak of their early hopes and of their later depravity; those who quit and those whose lives end in tragedy those who know they have had a pernicious effect on politics; and those in designer suits who don't have a clue or don't much care. The two most frequently cited words of the 2008 presidential campaign--"change" and "authenticity"--owe to the frustration of Americans with the spin and manipulation so commonplace in campaigns. If you want to understand why, *Alpha Dogs* is the book for you." Ken Auletta About the Author James Harding is the Business and City Editor at *The Times* in London. He was previously the Washington bureau chief of the *Financial Times*. He has written for *The Washington Post*, *The New Republic*, and *Slate*, among other publications. *Alpha Dogs* is his first book.