

## Marketplace Creator Jim Russell quoted in new journalism book



Perry Parks'  
*Making Important News Interesting*  
Marion Street Press, 2006

### Excerpts

- “These days, if you don’t speak any business and economics, you can’t get by – or you get by without understanding the forces that are buffeting you.”  
-- Jim Russell, creator of *Marketplace*
- *Marketplace* sounds like non-businesspeople talking about business because that’s what it is. *Marketplace* creator Jim Russell boasts of earning a D in Economics 101 and says public radio honchos approached him to launch a business show precisely because they were trying to reach a broader audience. “It just seemed to me that people like myself needed to have access,” Russell said. Approaching a public radio audience, most of whom were highly educated but many of whom knew little about economics and finance, “meant we had the privilege of defining business anyway we wanted. It turned out that we could, under the umbrella of business, cover any damn thing we wanted to.” That meant covering the business of sports, the business of entertainment, and the business of religion, right alongside the more typical economic news.
- *Marketplace* combines this expansive definition of business news with a cheerful irreverent approach to storytelling. The driving force is curiosity, a search to describe not just what happened, but *how* it happened, like “a great detective story.” Russell had read a book about how stupid mistakes nearly ruined many major companies, which gave him the perspective that “error and folly and stupidity and vanity and all those things are part of business.” So covering business well requires “just being willing to be honest, just talking business of some kind of pedestal ... Frankly being a little bit smartass – not in a nasty sort of way because the audience doesn’t want that – but they do like it when we kind of poke each other in the ribs.”
- “It’s funny that we journalists have to keep learning the same lesson over and over again, and that is: A good story sells, period,” Russell said. “It’s never the subject, it’s always the treatment.”