

“Truth & Order Amidst The Chaos”  
The Marketing Rebel  
RANT

Issue No. 6      Volume 1

From: **John Carlton**  
Phoenix, Arizona  
Saturday evening

Dear Friend and Subscriber,

Can anyone give me a good reason why Phoenix exists at all?

I'm not putting the town down, mind you. I just wonder how it came to be. Did some exhausted pioneers break a spoke on the way to California, throw up their hands and say “Screw it. We're stayin' here.”

I know, I know... you're chuckling to yourself because I live in Reno. Well, at least Reno has some definable history. There are *reasons* for it's existence. Big gold and silver strike in the mid-1800s, later the divorce mecca of America. Gambling, sin, all that cool stuff. And Captain Reno was with Custer, I believe, at the Little Big Horn (and escaped with his scalp). That's not relevant, of course, but we have some history with our soiled reputation.

A phoenix is a mythical bird that rises out of ashes and flies away. The town of Phoenix grew out of hot desert sand and stayed there.

What's up with that?

It's on my mind because I've been coming to Phoenix quite a bit lately. It's sort of replacing Vegas as “seminar central” for many marketers. And, truth be told, I actually *like* coming to Phoenix for events -- polite staffs at all the hotels, decent facilities, big underused airport.

The last event I spoke at in Las Vegas was in a seedy Rat Pack-era casino, where I paid \$150 for

a beer (hey, the poker machine was glaring at me from the top of the bar). And the taxi driver tried to get me interested in his private stable of hookers on the way from the airport. (Actually, it was fun listening to his pitch, as I am always keenly fascinated by street-wise salesmen. I even wound the story into my lecture the next night. The guy included rave testimonials as third party endorsements, a long list of bullet points with *very* clever feature/benefit touts, and an urgent call to action. Plus, he really did make it sound like a genuine bargain. No guarantee, though.) (And no, I didn't bite. Shame on you for thinking so ill of me.)

Wait... where was I?

Oh, yeah. Phoenix.

Hang in there. I do have a point to make.

See, I am in Phoenix right now as the “star” guest speaker at a huge Dan Kennedy Copywriting Boot Camp. His last one, in fact. Hanging up his spurs on that front, apparently. (I hope he changes his mind. There truly is nothing like a Dan Kennedy boot camp -- or a Gary Halbert seminar -- to get your blood moving again.)

In preparation for this massive event, I decided to go buy a new house with the girlfriend. Because... well... because there's no better way to give your brain that “edge” that is so necessary to teaching... *than to completely overwhelm yourself with a project the equivalent of invading Russia.*

At any rate, it seemed like a good idea at the time.

So there I was, two days ago, panicked over the boot camp and the looming escrow hassles, running over speech ideas for the one event and moving boxes aimlessly in the garage for the other. Dude, I was cultivating an “edge” as sharp as a sling blade.

And suddenly, for no good reason at all, I actually removed the lid from an ancient cardboard banker’s box (mysteriously labeled “Biz Relics”, whatever I thought that meant when I had labeled it ten years earlier)... and there, nearly buried amongst nixies and old bills and tattered detective novels... was a dog-eared file folder labeled “Kennedy notes”.

Inside was the very speech I had given at a copywriting seminar for Dan *over a decade ago*. A killer speech I had seen neither hide nor hair of since moving from L.A. in the early ‘90s, and had, in fact, pretty much forgotten about.

This was *not* like finding a needle in a haystack. This was like finding a needle I wasn’t looking for, in a haystack I didn’t know *existed*.

Now, I incorporated much of that old speech in the one I gave last night at the Boot Camp, and slayed the room. Huge hit. I am *extremely* happy I found the notes on that speech. There were brilliant ideas all through it, each worthy of their own lecture.

It was good stuff. Best talk of my life.

Nevertheless... *what was up with finding those notes in the first place?* I had spent hours in the garage getting stuff ready for the move, without opening a single carton. Then, for no conscious reason, I open this weirdly-labeled box, and dig *straight* for the file folder with a speech in it that hadn’t seen daylight in ten years.

Coincidence? No way.

The strange handiwork of God? I like to think God has better things to do than micro-manage my professional life.

No. This was some *back-water corner of my brain* acting up, never having forgotten the obtuse meaning of the label “Biz Relics”... firing up just enough neurons to make me open it and search for

a file I wasn’t looking for (but not firing enough neurons to make me do it *consciously*).

**The lesson:** Our brains are *waaaaay* more complex and conniving than we can ever fathom. Spooky in the way they work.

But there’s a flip side. You see, the premise of that speech was extremely *simple and straightforward*. The best forms of teaching always are. Easily understood, and easy to listen to. Why did my mind want me to find it?

I couldn’t sleep last night, trying to connect the dots on what had happened. Very complex and mysterious brain. Very simple and straightforward speech.

Complex.

Simple.

*Doh!* It finally dawned on me.

**Listen:** Our brain -- yours, mine, everyone’s -- is a humming machine of such intense complexity that we may never completely understand it. BUT...

### **It Craves Simplicity!**

This explains one of most basic fundamental principles of salesmanship... the same one that most businesses continually screw up.

Namely: The art of crafting a simple sales message that is easily comprehended... yet also *deeply satisfying* to the data-dense “computer” in your head. Both the twitching, half-feral lizard part of your brain, and the sleek, neurotic, ultra-modern cerebral cortex.

This is actually a *huge* revelation for anyone attempting to master the elusive art of world-class salesmanship. For years, I’ve been trying to get rookie copywriters to simplify their writing, stop wandering off on intellectual tangents, and calm down the rhetoric, while not losing their edge.

At the same time, I’ve also been trying to get them to pump up the emotion, make the images more vivid, and titillate the reader’s senses. I call it “getting wicked simple”. Grab attention, get the adrenaline flowing, make your case, light a fire under your prospect’s ass, and pitch your sale.

It shouldn’t be brain surgery.

Now I understand why so many inexperienced writers choke on the close. You have to present your case simply... and yet appeal to the complex soap opera inside your reader's brain.

This is why top writers often fill multiple pages of their ads and letters with riveting bullets that attempt to "surround" the emotions, the intellect, the greed and the fear of their reader.

All at the same time.

In very simple ways.

Think of your prospect's brain as some ridiculously-smart creature from another planet, regarding you warily from a very superior attitude. And yet you know, from experience, that you can win its devotion with something as simple as offering it a cookie.

Complex. Yet simple.

I love it.

### Lessons From The Vice Squad

Savvy street hustlers know something most civilians do not: *You can't con an honest man.* You need two critical ingredients in the mix:

1. **Greed** (which is easily understandable), and...
2. **Secrets** (which is less easily understood).

Greed gets the mark hooked -- he's thinking he's gonna make a killing, or pull one over on someone.

But it's the *secret* he carries -- the thought that he is operating almost sociopathically for a change, and feeling damned superior because of it -- that "cooks" the con game. Whether you're trying to guess which shell the pea is under, or playing pool for money, or buying brand-name merchandise from the trunk of some guy's car... if you think you're pulling one over on the hustler, you're meat.

You've just bought into the age-old idea -- once again -- that there could ever be such a thing as a "free lunch".

All great salesmen understand the power of secrets. If you've ever bought "high octane" gasoline for your fancy car, don't snicker at anyone who's bought snake oil health remedies. You've both fallen for a pitch. You've both succumbed to the allure of "secret ingredients".

Secrets are actually an enormous *burden* to most people. Have you ever found, say, a cheaply-priced antique or comic book or coin at a garage sale that you knew was worth a lot of money? You probably shook with glee and sweated with anticipation as you jammed your couple of bucks into the seller's hand, and actually gloated as you drove off.

Human nature. Most of us have done it. However... you must also remember how *urgent* it was to share your secret discovery with someone. (Heck, I've known people who were compelled to tell the seller of the item what it was really worth, immediately after money exchanged hands. Cruel bastards.)

That "burden" of secrets works in many ways. You have a secret, it's like having ants in your pants. You can hardly stand to have it inside you, percolating and annoying your calmer sensibilities.

Ah... but when you want to KNOW what a secret is... well... it can be *worse*. And that's why so many hall-of-fame ads are nearly entirely "blind" -- full of teasing about the life-changing secrets you will learn. But *only* after you've bought the product.

I can't count the number of times colleagues (really good copywriters themselves) have admitted to me they bought some product in an ad I'd written... not because they wanted the product (which they KNEW was similar to products they already possessed)... but because they actually *couldn't sleep* until they found out what a particular secret was I'd teased them with in the copy.

One secret, in a 12-page letter dense with other sales points. Igniting the passionate "sweet spot" of the reader.

*One* super-juicy secret can make the sale.

No one is immune. The entire world is sitting around staring at locked doors all around them... and when you come along, offering the *key* to the secrets behind those doors, you earn undying trust and gratitude.

**Remember this:** One of the great secrets of great salesmanship... *is secrets*.

**Next month:** Why no good deed ever goes unpunished.

## Salesmanship 101

Are you nice and comfy in your little world? Agree with your friends about politics and literature and sit-coms? Seldom argue about where to go eat, or what movies to see?

Well, *stop* it. Right now.

Because, if you want to be a world-class salesman, you can't allow yourself to get flabby inside a tight little existence. You need to hone your *edges*. Get dirty once in a while.

Get *uncomfortable*.

In most businesses, your customers are NOT going to be like you. They won't think like you, behave like you, or live like you. In fact, if you ever really got to know them... you might find you intensely disliked them. They are often that fundamentally different.

This is easily explained. For one thing, the mere fact you are in business -- and thus taking responsibility for something -- separates you from the vast majority of the great unwashed hordes out there buying your stuff. Most people abhor responsibility. They shudder at the prospect of action. They fear change, and their guts twist at the very thought of risk.

Yet, your differences can go even deeper than that. You, as a salesman and advertiser and marketer, must be *conscious* of the world and everything in it.

And this consciousness sets you apart.

Get out of your comfort zone. Start today. Go buy a magazine you've never read before. Better yet, read one you're embarrassed to be seen buying. The National Enquirer. Cosmo. Rolling Stone. The National Review. Mother Jones.

Playboy.

Start watching television shows that make you cringe, or shake with anger, or turn the sound down on so your kids won't hear.

Go eat at all the ethnic restaurants in town. Even the ones that cook up parts of animals you thought were supposed to be thrown away.

And get some friends outside of your usual circle. Go out to lunch with the plumber, or the guy who always busts your chops at the barbershop, or one of your kid's teachers. Get into social situations where you cannot safely spout your usual political nonsense without pissing somebody off, or being challenged on your facts.

Get your safety zone shaken to its core.

Why? Because you're a friggin' *salesman* now. And that means you must be MORE a part of the world than your customers. They can go about their lives half-asleep, unchallenged, snuggled into the familiar. *You*, however, must gobble that fruit from the tree of knowledge, and embrace it.

A couple of very cool things will happen when you do this. First, you will discover that the world really is a land of wonders and adventures and romance and things you never dreamed of before. You will actually feel your soul *expanding*.

It's good for you.

And, second, you will "arm" yourself with **potent bonding tools** which will instantly put you in touch with the deepest desires and needs and fears of the people you reach with your advertising.

You will eventually come to know your customers *better than they know themselves*. Because you are consciously examining the world.

These tools are priceless when dealing with large markets. But they are worth FORTUNES when dealing with niche markets. I've known a lot of businessmen who didn't understand the niche they were in, despite eating, breathing and living it. They were too absorbed in their own comfortable "niche within the niche", unable to see the Big Picture because of their long-held prejudice and bias. (This includes golf equipment manufacturers who created stuff most golfers didn't really want... diet product pitchmen who insisted that everyone should follow the same obsessive/compulsive program they did to lose weight... and even restaurateurs who never really

understood why people came to their joints, and failed by capriciously changing the atmosphere or menu or location.)

When you become conscious of the world... and actively seek out those parts that are not in your comfort zone, and entertain offbeat ideas without judging them against your old habits... your salesmanship skills become amazingly powerful.

You *can* sell by inflaming the dreams of others... but you *cannot* sell from inside your own dream.

Wake up and smell the money.

**Next month:** What world-class salesmen know that you don't yet about closing the sale, on your terms. (Critical stuff.)

## How-To Department

I've used lots of grabbers in my time. You know what a grabber is, right? It's something you attach to your sales letter to "grab" the reader's attention. It can take the place of a headline, or work in tandem with one.

The most common type of grabber I've used is money. I have attached pennies, nickels, dollar bills, twenty dollar bills, hundred dollar bills and fake million dollar bills to the tops of letters. Also checks, made out to the recipient. And lottery tickets, good for the next game. And pesos.

I've also used "widow's mites" -- 2,000 year-old coins unearthed from the Holy Land. (They're fragile and odd-looking, but remarkably cheap. Our ancestors kept them in the equivalent of piggy banks, forgot about them... and modern excavations of ancient sites uncover mounds of the coins frequently.) You can tell a pretty damn good story about that widow's mite in the small plastic pouch attached to the top of a letter.

I've also mailed tiny sacks of sand, pencils, photos (real photos held by paper clips, not just printed on the page), magnets, and packets of flower seeds.

When done right, grabbers can send results through the roof. It's no longer just a letter arriving at your prospect's mailbox -- it's a lumpy envelope full of *secrets*. You get the same

reaction from your reader as the prize in the bottom of a box of Cracker Jacks affects a kid. "What the heck is *in* there, anyway?"

You don't even have to necessarily directly tie the grabber into your sales pitch to be effective. Gary Halbert perfected the dollar bill mailing, opening his letter with a brief (and much ripped-off) paragraph saying "As you can see, I have attached a dollar bill to the top of this letter. Why have I done this? The answer is simple: I have something very important to share with you, and needed some way to catch your attention quickly. And... since what I have to tell you involves a lot of money... I figured a dollar bill was the perfect 'eye catcher'."

And guess what? There are many, many businesses and products "involved with money". That same grabber and opening could be used with products as diverse as biz op programs, financial newsletters, insurance companies... even the local car wash (if you can make the case that you'll save a ton of money going there).

Replace "dollar bill" with "packet of aspirin" in the above example, and you can introduce a product or service that relieves your headaches -- whether it's a massage therapist or a company that handles the yuckier parts of your business day, like accounting or payroll or janitorial. (Subscribers Ted Sudol and Stan Dahl both recently did killer packages using this very concept.)

You get the idea.

Anyway... twice now, while in Phoenix, I have met a guy who appears to have access to every kind of offbeat, goofy, or otherwise effective grabber there is. His name is J.R. Roren, and he found me through Joe Polish.

He recently sent me a box of goodies that is still ticking, twitching and occasionally beeping from the far corner of my office. I dived into that box as soon as it arrived, and after an hour of pulling out and playing with palm-sized computers that walked across my desk... tiny pouches that expanded into full backpacks... and spring-loaded little things that almost seem

alive... I had to banish the box from my desk area, so I could get back to work.

J.R. has scoured the world markets for the coolest gadgetry and most intriguing objects I've ever seen. There are so many possibilities here. I always will consider the dollar bill as the "king" of grabbers... but this world-market stuff comes in a close second.

And he swears he can get it all at dirt-cheap prices. If you have ever mailed a buck to someone (and marveled at the response)... then you must consider using a grabber that costs around a buck, and see what kind of response it gets. The best test is to mail your "lumpy" package... then call a day or so later. Tell your prospect you're the guy who sent the letter with the whatever attached. I guarantee he'll say: "Oh yeah, I got that letter." And you've just gotten your first "nod" -- a positive response.

For many top salesmen, that's all they need to begin closing the deal.

Check out the special "hidden" page on J.R.'s website at [www.synergypromo.com/grabber](http://www.synergypromo.com/grabber). He set it up (at my urging) just for direct marketers who want to see what kind of cool new stuff is available.

**Next month:** The pure magic of deadlines... and how to use it to *rocket* your ass into the financial heavens.

## Ship of Fools Department

I talk a good game about controlling your workday and keeping Operation Moneysuck going at full tilt. But even with all the "attitude tools" I've gathered over the years, I still get overwhelmed at times.

Like, oh, today, for example.

I'm speaking at a seminar, helping with the hour-to-hour logistics of the event, making deals and doing a little selling... while checking messages from my office every 15 minutes to see what fresh horror is evolving with this move into a new house that is happening concurrently.

You know you're pushing the boundaries of multi-tasking when you find yourself trying to brush your teeth, pull on socks, answer the door

for room service and make notes for a meeting, while giving instructions over the cell phone to your assistant back home. (Right now, there's toothpaste all over my socks, and I apparently told my assistant to just set the tray on the desk, which confused her no end.)

Some people operate just fine in chaos. I know writers who pen killer copy in busy airports, and business owners who juggle dozens of projects in their head without dropping a single one. I can't do that. I don't even try.

Instead, I've come to understand a basic principle of human behavior I call "**The Laundry List Theory**". Explaining it has helped everyone I've shared it with.

**Here's how it works:** Each of us has a certain number of "things to do" we can handle at one time without going into a panic. It varies wildly from person to person. Some folks can go all day long plowing through a list of duties that would choke a drill sergeant, and others have nervous breakdowns when they have pick up the dry cleaning and get gas in the same trip to town.

Most busy people keep lists. At the start of the day, you just jot down everything you need to accomplish. If it's a lot, you can trim the list by assigning importance to each item, and putting all the lesser stuff on the back burner. (So you only pick up the dry cleaning when you've run out of clothes to wear, but you're caught up on calls to clients.)

If you keep lists -- and you should -- collect a batch of them for a month or so. At the end of each day, mark each list with a star if you had a good day, and never felt overwhelmed. If you had a bad day and did feel overwhelmed, mark that list with a sad face. Once you have a pile of these lists, sit down and take a good look at them.

This is where "The Laundry List Theory" comes in.

I'll bet that, after you collect all those daily lists, you find that there are a certain number of items on each of the lists that have stars. Could be twelve, or fifteen, or six items.

And, I'll also bet that the sad face lists have at least *one more* item on them. Thirteen, or sixteen, or seven, or whatever.

It was a bad day, because you overloaded your system. And all it took was *one* extra item.

I've seen this too many times to shrug it off. I can handle a lot of things going on at once. But, at a certain point, I just suddenly feel overwhelmed. Other businessmen I talk with report the same feeling. A very busy day can be fun and exhilarating... while the next day, while only just a wee bit more busy, is just overwhelming.

While it's easy to understand that having "too much to do" can bring on feeling of drowning... the big revelation here is this: It can take just ONE added item to your list to throw your entire system out of whack.

**The solution:** When you feel overwhelmed, you can often "unplug" that feeling just by knocking a single item off your list. It can quickly bring your "Laundry List" back to the level where you feel comfortable and effective. And you won't be overwhelmed anymore.

So go pick up the damn dry cleaning. When you get back to the office, things may seem much rosier than when you left.

**Next month:** The "emotional contract" you have with everyone in your life (including customers you've never met)... and what happens when you violate it. If you aren't careful, you can ruin everything.

## Coaches Corner

Hey, it's getting late here. Finishing up this newsletter is my current task to knock my own Laundry List down to size.

So let's wind up with a cool little Bidniz Lesson that -- cue up the theme music -- is both astonishingly simple, yet complex.

Here it is: **People are wacky.**

That's it. That's the lesson. People are wacky. You may not have noticed before.

This simple realization, however, has *profound* repercussions for your business life.

You know the old joke about the firefighter jumping into the freezing river to save a kid who fell in? He's sitting back on the shore afterwards, shivering inside a blanket, when the mother of the child walks up. She asks him, "Are you the fireman who jumped into the icy river, grabbed little Seymour, and brought him back?"

"Yes, ma'am, I am."

"Well," she continues, looking pissed off. "Where are his mittens?"

Now, that's a funny joke... but it illustrates a much deeper lesson about human behavior. For example... is there *any* question in your mind that this scene could have actually happened? Of course it could have.

Because people are wacky. If you go through life -- and especially if you go through your business life -- not understanding this fact, you will hemorrhage time, money and energy.

Look -- people, basically, are your stock and trade, no matter what your business is. And in most markets, the 80/20 rule is in effect: 80% of your problems will be caused by 20% of your customers... who are either insane, criminally stupid, or time wasters. (This is just an estimation, of course. In my line, it's more like 90% of the problems are caused by 10% of the customers.) The actual percentages are unimportant.

What is important is the realization that the root of your discontent may be much more centralized than you think.

The damage may be more extensive than you can chart, too. I advise marketers to NEVER look at any of the "white mail" that comes in -- which includes all refunds, complaints and dumb meanderings. Any incoming correspondence that doesn't contain an order. Most of these marketers ignore my advice -- and often waste *hours* responding to a refund or complaint.

I try to have Diane, my assistant, intercept as much of the time-wasting stuff as possible... but some sneaks through. And it is ALWAYS tempting to get deeply involved.

Last month, some bozo wanted a refund on something... and send a long letter explaining

what he felt was wrong with my material. He claimed he was a 20-year veteran of advertising, knew it all (he didn't), considered my teachings too "under-stimulating" for him, yada yada yada. There was no purpose served by me reading that letter... and, worse, as a result of reading it, I was in a bit of a lather for the rest of the day.

Time wasters get you twice -- the time you spend reading their drivel is wasted, and the time you spend *stewing* about it is wasted, too. You aren't writing new ads, you aren't finding new customers, you aren't performing Operation Moneysuck. Instead, you're thinking up clever retorts, or (worse) actually writing a reply letter.

The advice I give myself and clients: **Just let it go.** If anyone is causing you grief, or cheating you, sic the attorneys on him and let them do their job. Don't waste a second threatening anyone, or cajoling anyone, or begging anyone to do the right thing. They won't. Time wasters LOVE it when you get involved with them.

That's how they win -- they engage you in a vicious little dance where nothing gets done, but they get to see your bile rise. Your flustered rage is a turn-on to them.

*You* win by denying them that dance.

Gary Halbert, long ago, showed me a truly nasty and effective way to deal with a client who showed themselves to be a time waster. It's brilliant, and super-effective.

**Here's the set-up:** We had written a killer ad for this guy. Any savvy marketer would have mailed it right away and started making money with it. Not this guy. No. He wanted to talk on the phone, endlessly discussing details and dreams and irrelevant ideas.

Questioning everything, and acting on nothing.

He insisted we "owed" him this treat (he loved to talk on the phone and avoid letting the curtain rise on any project) because he had paid our fee.

So Gary sent him his money back.

"We're not going to work with you," he said, simply. "Here's your fee back. Don't call again."

The guy was floored. This had never happened to him before.

He assumed he held a "power" over us by paying that fee, and he felt *entitled* to waste our time.

Entitled.

He had obviously done this before. Imagine what a poor plumber has to endure with this freak -- who feels *entitled* to just talk and talk, and actually *prevent* anything useful happening. I dunno -- maybe there are plumbers out there who don't care if a guy wants to pay their fee and never let anything get done.

That's not the way I work. When I write an ad, I know that's only half the game. The rest is in the mailing or publishing of that ad, gathering sales, and counting the money.

I don't wanna discuss it.

I wanna *mail* it.

Anyway, it was not only deeply satisfying to pull the rug out from under this jerk -- who could not believe we were actually shutting him down -- but it was also very *profitable*.

How so? Easy. By shutting this guy out of our lives, we opened up a spot for someone *else*. Someone who knew the game, and wouldn't sit on a killer ad.

So keep track of the time you spend dealing with your customers after the sale. If anyone's name is constantly showing up... or if you get even a single long, rambling letter trying to get your dander up... or if your staff has multiple conversations that include someone's name and the word "trouble" too often in the same sentence... think seriously about *jettisoning* that person from your life. Even if you have to send his money back.

Consider it money well spent.

Time wasters eat up profit and your will to live. Screw 'em. You have better things to do.

**Next month:** The *scary* side of cash, and how to beef up your most fundamental resource of wealth no matter what happens to the economy.

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**Subscription info:** \$199 a year. Send check to John Carlton, 316 California Ave. #114, Reno, NV 89509... or fax your name, mailing address, credit card number, expiration date and signature (including billing address, if different) to 1-775-562-2655.

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