

“Truth & Order Amidst The Chaos”

The Marketing Rebel

RANT

Issue No. 3 Volume 1

From: **John Carlton**
Reno, Nevada
Wednesday morning

Dear Friend and Subscriber,

Watch closely, now. See, nothing up my sleeves. For my next trick, I shall reveal to you how marketing success is deeply connected to...

Farting!

Thank you, thank you. Please sit down.

All right. Actually, I want to show you how world-class salesmen use a cool psychological trick called “cognitive re-framing” to put the correct *mental spin* on a marketing campaign.

This trick was explained to me by a very savvy psychologist who uses it with outrageous success with therapy patients. And I love the example he used to illustrate it: A family was in bitter turmoil because their father had an irritable bowel... and he regularly upset the peace of the house by ripping off gaseous explosions that sounded like a Harley with a bad exhaust manifold.

Everyone was embarrassed, ashamed and in a bad mood.

And yet they solved the problem relatively easily. They simply “re-framed” the way they *perceived* what was happening. They agreed that, every time Pop would discharge another round, they would pretend he had just yelled “I love you!”

And everyone within earshot would yell back to him “I love you, too, Pop!”

Instantly, the embarrassment, shame and bad moods lightened up. It became a family in-joke, rather than a dark secret.

What’s this got to do with marketing?

Lots. Here’s a great example: I recently wrote a great long-copy ad for a client who was attempting to bust into a new market niche. There are several large-circulation magazines in this niche, and he chose two of the best-known to test this new ad.

As orders started coming in, I would occasionally call to find out how the project was doing. And the sad answer, for weeks, was the same: “It looks like the ad is only breaking even.”

That just didn’t seem right to me. It was a killer ad, and this market had never seen this kind of balls-to-the-wall salesmanship before. We should have been kicking serious ass.

Finally, after hearing this response for the third or fourth time, I asked to see some numbers.

And I had to laugh when they came in.

The ad was *not* “breaking even”. One of the mags was pulling dog-meat numbers, it’s true... but the *other* magazine was already at two-to-one (\$2 in orders for every buck the ad cost) halfway through the month. With *weeks* still left on its shelf-life. It was a winner.

In other words: We had identified which hot magazine to run this and all future ads in... and also identified a loser mag that was probably lying about its circulation. The market was rabid for

the product. They just weren't paying attention to every rag out there. It was a *very* successful test.

By simply "re-framing" the answer -- and not going snow-blind looking at it in just one way (in this case, despairing over total numbers instead of examining each ad individually) -- everyone's mood brightened considerably.

And the client realized he had a respectable hit on his hands, and needed to get busy with a fresh back-end product to maximize profits.

How are you looking at *your* current marketing efforts? You know, when things aren't going the way you'd like them to, it's basic human nature to start hunting for someone or something to blame.

And it's important to remind yourself that it's *never* the customer's fault when an ad doesn't sell. Even the best writers on the planet pen a lame ad once in a while. (If you *aren't* failing occasionally, you ain't pushing hard enough. All the great writers and marketers are risk-takers, and that guarantees a bomb now and again.)

When this happens, simply go back to the fundamentals... *and "re-frame" your sales pitch.* Take a good, long, cynical look at your unique sales proposition. Can you sum up, in one killer pithy sentence, why someone should do business with you... and not the *other* guy? (The essence of that sentence should be somewhere in your headline or opening paragraph.)

It's a cliché, but it's one that brings home the bacon: **You gotta walk a mile in your customer's shoes before you can sell to him.**

Listen to yourself making your basic sales pitch -- would *you*, in the same position your prospect is in right now, be interested in this product?

Your customer needs to hear certain things from you before he will open his wallet. You need to nail his passionate "sweet spot" with specific benefits, craft an offer no sane man could refuse... and get him so worked up he won't be able to sleep until he gives you money. Maybe you're only telling *part* of the story right now... and gutting your potential profits in the process.

Sometimes the glass is half empty, sometimes it's half full... and sometimes you just need to order another friggin' beer.

It's all in the way you look at it, Bucko.

Salesmanship 101

Often, to be a good salesman, you have to get in touch with your "inner obnoxiousness".

I don't mean you have to be a jerk. But you *may* have to be that guy who refuses to take a hint.

This is the case when you get your mitts on a white-hot, *proven* results-getting ad. If you have something that pulls like crazy, you want to perform "targeted repetition" until *waaaaay* past the time most marketers would have excused themselves and gone home.

It's pretty simple, really (though most businesses don't get it). Find hot, flush mobs -- in other words, large populations with money to burn who are eager to fund their passion. Hit 'em with your ad. Hit 'em again. *And again.*

Repeat until you're mailing or running the ad at break-even.

There are two parts to this lesson: (1) Most marketers tire of their advertizing long before the paying public does. You see the ad every day, you're bored with it, you're sick of looking at it. (And your spouse finds its brazen hard-sell embarrassing.) You want something new, fresh, something *snappy* that pops off the page. So you shelve the proven ad, and wander off to commit business suicide.

And: (2) It's a mistake to let *logic* interfere with your decision to run or not run an ad.

Look -- the single biggest mistake I see rookie marketers commit... is to *refuse to remail* an ad to a list that just pulled outrageous profits. The little logic synapses in their brain say: "Everybody already *saw* the ad. Why should we bother them with it *again*?"

Well, those little logic synapses are dead wrong. Experienced mailers know that each successive mailing to a profitable list can pull approximately half the result of the previous mailing. So, if it cost you \$10,000 to mail the list,

and it pulled \$45,000, the *next* mailing (sent out at least 3 weeks later) should pull around \$23,000. And the *third* mailing will also likely be worthwhile, if only to collect the names from a slightly-better-than-break-even mailing.

Are these late-buying recipients tossing the first two letters they get, and then suddenly reading the third? Nope. Sometimes, it just takes a whole bunch of viewings for a prospect to flip. In a magazine, he may notice your ad the first time, and shrug. He may recognize it the second, third and fourth times, and still shrug.

But the *fifth* time he sees it, he may decide he needs to see what the fuss is about. It must be something worth looking into if it's running so damn often. This is why hot ads *stay* hot, even with multiple insertions. Some folks buy right away, and others dawdle.

Dan Kennedy once told me that no infomercial is ever watched from start to finish. The typical prospect sees perhaps the middle 5 minutes one night, the last 8 minutes two nights later, the first 5 minutes a week after that, and the middle 5 again later that month. That's why good infomercials have frequent little "commercials inside the commercial" -- because they know they have to *repeat the sales pitch* for all the prospects who just tuned in, and will be around for only a few minutes.

I have written slews of ads that are still pulling strong 10 years (and *longer*) after they first ran or mailed. The magazine sales rep may roll his eyes at yet *another* insertion of the "one legged golfer" ad... and certain people may wail in despair at receiving the same damn "best bargain of your life" letter yet *again*... but my savvier clients do not care.

Because, as long as the ads pull a profit, they will continue to be mailed and published.

The party ain't over 'til the *numbers* say it's over. You go ahead and be the guest who's still sitting on the couch with a lampshade on your head, telling that same old story one more time, long after most everyone else has gone to bed. Because that one lone drunk listening to you may become your best new customer. (You know, that

analogy pretty much explains the infomercial phenomenon, doesn't it. Mainstream businesses laughed at the marketers eagerly running long, boring stories in the wee hours when "everyone was asleep"... until the numbers started coming in...)

Next month: How to make it crystal clear in your prospect's mind that what you offer *really is* "simple and easy". Just saying the words won't convince him. You gotta get *funky*.

Lessons From The Vice Squad

So Gary Halbert and I are wandering along the main drag in Fort Lauderdale during Spring Break a few years back. The place is pure pandemonium. Chaos theory in action.

And suddenly we find a sight that stops us cold. Here are two *nearly identical* bars, sitting not twenty feet apart from each other. Pretty much the same décor, same size, same liquor.

Yet... one of them is packed tight as a sardine can with college kids... while the other one is as empty as a politician's promise.

Now, being obsessive marketers, Gary and I immediately begin to argue about how we might solve this problem. Brief argument. The answer is so obvious we find ourselves agreeing within a minute, and where's the fun in that?

What would *you* do, if you owned the empty bar? You're sitting there, wiping up imaginary spills on the counter, wondering if it's your breath or what... while the joint next door rumbles like an earthquake and the cash register is *ka-chinging* like Prohibition just ended.

Seriously, think about it for a moment before reading any more of this. What would you do? If you've ever haunted more than one bar in your life, you should have the answer already.

You know what Halbert and I would do? Simple: *Ringers*. Bait the place with girls who just wanna have fun.

Now, I would *never* suggest you hire hookers. That's overkill, stupid, and illegal to boot. It's also *unnecessary* when you think like a salesman.

Because... you can cheaply pack your bar with legitimately attractive people fairly easily just by using simple marketing tactics. *Ladies drink free night*, for example. (Duh!) Or find out what college has congregated at the local beach, and target them. (“Ohio State women’s happy hour tonight.”) And I’d make sure every college-age chick on the beach *knew* about it, too. You get a bevy of beauties in there, the guys will follow. Money in hand. Think: Catnip.

Now, I’d also make sure my juke box was playing the *exact* music the crowded joint was, and my bar was stocked with the *exact* kinds of booze they served. Because I’m not out to start a new party... I want to get in front of the party that’s *already cooking*, and give them more of what they already want.

The lesson for marketers? You want to make your business -- as much as possible -- seem like a “packed bar”, even if it’s not yet. How do you do this? You “stock” your advertising with *attractive visual imagery*. You are the place to be.

The great Joe Karbo did this with astounding results. In his Hall of Fame ad “The Lazy Man’s Way To Riches”, he wrote about his bitchin’ little office on the beach (you could almost smell the sea breeze)... where he and his staff rarely worked past noon (you could almost see the relaxed crew yawning and stretching after barely working for a few hours, making a fortune)... and he would drive his expensive car down to the dock to go play on his expensive boat (and you could almost hear the water lapping at the pier).

That was a damn attractive scene... and I wanted in on it. Me, and about a million other readers, who all bought Joe’s book in droves. Couldn’t get the check in the mail fast enough.

Why do people squeeze into a sweaty, already-crowded bar, when there’s an equally nice one with lots of elbow room right next door? Because *that’s where the action is*. Remember: Most folks lead lives of excruciating boredom, absolutely terrified that they’re missing out on the party. They don’t get to meet interesting people, or do interesting things, or go to interesting places.

So... you offer an opportunity to *feed their passion*. To do something exciting. To share in the fun and prosperity and good times that is the stock and trade of your business.

You don’t have to brag, or preen, or show off. You can be humble. But be *clear* -- you are letting the reader in on secrets he won’t find anywhere else... letting him peak inside a world most people never see... and offering him all the staggering advantages of knowing the right answers, making the right decisions, getting the best bargains, and earning a huge dripping slice of the American Dream.

I don’t care if you’re selling car insurance, or drill bits, or a course on basket weaving. Nor do I care if you’re up against the largest, oldest, most established competition this side of General Motors.

They may be hosting the party right now... but you can siphon off a vast part of it, simply by offering people *more attractive imagery*. Paint pleasing pictures in her mind about the benefits of your product. Help her see herself -- happy, rich, thin and fulfilled -- enjoying the targeted-to-her-needs soiree you’re offering.

Next month: A very critical marketing lesson I learned while trying to bluff a veteran poker player. (Hint: I lost.)

How-To Department

Listen: I am *totally* “Old School” when it comes to writing copy. For my money, the fundamentals of world-class copy were laid down *a hundred years ago*.

Sure, I adjust for modern slang and I keep my written “voice” tailored for modern ears... but the *basics* underneath even my most cutting edge pitch are all ancient. Old as dirt.

For example, take the “**Bucket Brigade**”. Almost a lost art among new copywriters. And that’s a darn shame... because it’s so *easy* to use, once you take the time to learn the details.

What’s more, it’s one of the Grand Secrets behind copy that gets *read*.

And that means your pitch has been delivered... *and that’s how sales happen*, Bucko.

What, you ask, is the Bucket Brigade? You've been reading it, all through this newsletter. All through *every* piece of copy I've ever written. Take a look at the first words of the six paragraphs above. The phrases "listen"... "sure"... "for example"... "what's more"... "and that means"... and "what, you ask" are all members of the Bucket Brigade.

Hard working words that *get your copy read*.

Here's the story: (That's another phrase in the Brigade.) In the days before fire departments got organized, townsfolk would fight a fire by lining up and passing buckets of water from the nearest pump to the point of the blaze. Another line passed the buckets back to the pump.

This was the Bucket Brigade in action. Moving the water along briskly. No let up. No pauses. The buckets went in a fast, efficient, linear direction to get the job done.

Early copywriters adopted this term to explain the job of certain "keep reading" phrases. Used at the beginning of key paragraphs, these phrases and words made a simple promise to the reader: Don't quit reading now -- I have something really important for you right here. *Don't stop, or you'll miss it.*

The most common blunder rookie copywriters make is to assume the reader will "hang in there" while the writer wanders around making a convoluted pitch.

Your reader will *not* hang in there. At the very moment you bore him, or confuse him, or ask him to "bear with you" while you mumble and equivocate... he is outa there. Sale lost.

There's a simple trick I urge my clients to use at the bottom of each page of a letter or ad: Split the last sentence, so the reader *has* to turn the page to continue reading and finish the thought.

Most people don't get it. (And typesetters fight me on this.) I don't want to give the reader even a *slim* chance of losing interest. So I will *force* her to turn the page -- using the same psychology those old Buck Rogers serials did to keep the kids coming back for the next installment: Cliff hangers. Ol' Buck is last seen dangling off a precipice by his fingertips... and the

reel ends. You wanna find out what happened, you gotta come back next week.

You gotta turn the page.

This is how I put every factor I can in my favor, doing *everything possible* to keep her reading. At page four of a twelve page letter, she may be getting a bit fatigued. If I gave her the opportunity to take a rest -- by finishing a thought, a sentence and a paragraph at the end of the page, so she could say "Oh, I see" -- then I could *lose* her forever.

Prospects do not put down a letter and come back to finish it later. You lose her, she's gone.

I keep this same sort of tension going all through my copy -- sometimes at the beginning of every single paragraph. I want her curiosity burning at high intensity each time her eyes move down the page.

The Bucket Brigade does this handily: "Not only that"... "But wait -- there's more"... "And check this out"... "One more thing -- it's important"... "And that's just for starters"... "We're not through yet"... "It gets even better"... "Do you understand what this means?"

Or, you can *startle* her: "You think I'm lying, don't you?" "The doctors were sure I was going to die." "So I stole it."

Easiest: Use the old journalism trick of "who, what, why, where, when and how". "Who else uses this secret?" "What does this mean for you?" "Why would I share such a valuable tactic with a stranger?" "Where did I find this information?" "How would like to see it for yourself?"

The good old Bucket Brigade. Leading your reader in a fast, linear path *straight from your headline to your sales pitch*. No let-up in tension. No chance for her to conveniently put your copy aside "to finish later". She will have to make an *effort* to tear her eyes from the page... and that's in your favor all the way.

So let's hear no more whiny slander such as "but that sounds so *corny!*" It's only corny until the checks start coming in.

Then, it's music to your ears.

Hey -- how *did* Buck Rogers survive that mile-high fall from the cliff, anyway?

Next month (also a phrase from the Brigade.): How to cleverly *trash your competition* without looking like a jealous wacko. You'll be on the side of the angels, and your opposition won't know what hit 'em.

Ship of Fools Department

I will bet that, right now, you have a monster operating very close to you. Psychic vampires walk among us, and they are intent on ruining your success.

Think of your life as a stage. And each major event -- getting married, starting a band, educating yourself, launching a business venture -- is a play... where, at some point, the curtain must rise.

Well, guess what? A huge part of the population consists of people who will do everything they can to *keep that curtain from going up*.

Their reasons are myriad, and often unconscious. They are afraid of success, or of failure. They can't handle proactive movement, and are only content when everyone is stalled. They are good at complaining and kvetching and criticizing... but *awful* at taking responsibility.

And they will suck the life out of you.

I have met hundreds of these vampires during my career. It took me a long time to learn how to recognize them... and even longer to figure out how to deal with them.

Let me lay it out for you: Most people do not have the energy or drive to run any project on their own. It's all they can do just to hold down a nice, safe, "normal" job like clerking or running an office or answering phones.

There is no shame in this. The world runs on the sweat and nose-to-the-grindstone work ethic of the average American. Entrepreneurship requires enormous sacrifice, verve and balls. We can't all lead the band. Somebody's gotta hold down the rhythm section.

However... in every single business I've worked with, there has been at least one vampire lurking. It can be the executive secretary, or the marketing vice president.

Or your best friend.

Have you ever heard the term *Schadenfreude*? It's German, loosely translated as "taking joy in the misfortune of others". (Now that I've pointed the word out for you, you'll start seeing it everywhere.)

Why in the world would anyone take joy in the misfortune of others? Because their own life is a mess. Because they are wracked with self-loathing. Because success would require change, and they are addicted to wallowing in misery.

I first saw this while trying to form bands in high school. Some of the best musicians around just flat-out *refused* to get on a stage. Their excuse was usually that they wanted the band to be "perfect" before they would commit... but it was a lie. They were *pathologically incapable of following through with anything*. (And most of them wound up selling their guitars, just to make *sure* they could never succeed.)

Later, I routinely encountered people who would pour their life savings into "preparing" a business venture. But they could never let the enterprise actually begin. They would spend *years* in meetings, endlessly rewriting and critiquing ads and never running them, forming committee after committee to "study" the venture.

Anything to keep the curtain from going up.

Smart businessmen have a saying: "Anything worth doing is worth doing *badly*." Just jump into the damn pool already -- quit bothering the swimmers with endless questions about how cold the water is, how much chlorine is in there, how deep it is. Jump in and find out.

Bring the damn curtain up.

I eventually learned to identify the vampires through "brainstorming traps". In official brainstorming, you set up rules, like "no nay-saying". You want ideas brought up, not shot down.

In random brainstorming, like in your office when you just want to float something, you're of course looking for ways to be proactive with any idea. You want to hear how it might work.

Psychic vampires will have none of this proactive shit. They are the guys who immediately say "let me be the Devil's advocate

here”, and will wax prolific on why any given idea *won't* work. They delight in killing newborn ideas before they can take a breath.

Listen carefully: Negative people will destroy you and your business. If you have someone close to you who is always complaining, always seeing the bad side of any situation, always sighing heavily at your “nutty ideas”... *get him out of your life*. Immediately.

Break off the friendship, fire him, get him shipped off to an assignment at the North Pole.

Ideas and fledgling business ventures are fragile. They need nurturing, not criticism. The psychic vampire is not just an annoyance you can safely ignore or chuckle at. No. She is *actively passionate about ruining your life*. She cannot abide success, or change, or even good news.

She is a walking soap opera, and she wants *you* to be one of the tragedies. So she has company.

Do not take this warning lightly. If you truly desire success and the attainment of your dreams, you must purge the vampires from your life. Now.

Next month: The very critical difference between guilt and remorse. *You* may be the person sabotaging your own life.

Coaches Corner

One of the most important lessons I pass on to rookie copywriters... is the need to **establish authority** with clients.

Especially if you're gonna write gutsy ads that go for the jugular. Hard-hitting copy makes clients squirm and often turns them into cowards. So, you *need* to be the guy in charge, to force them to run the ad and do the right thing. (In other words, let the numbers decide.) I've had to do this many times, with all kinds of clients (and even partners).

You must learn to walk a thin line with your attitude to pull this off. You do not establish authority by talking loudly, or by threatening anyone. It's *very* subtle. You're the guy with the chops, and the client needs you. He won't like

that feeling, and because he's the one signing the check, he would prefer that you grovel a bit.

The hell with that.

Here are two “magic” words that, used correctly, will help you get your head straight about being in charge. The words are...

1. “**No**”, and...
2. “**So?**”

I am always astonished at how many people there are who have trouble saying “no” to anyone. They think it makes them a bad person or something. Nonsense. Saying no to time-wasters and bullshit artists merely protects you.

Can you just change this one word in the headline here? No.

Can you soft-pedal the sales pitch, because we're nervous about appearing too “aggressive” to the four ministers on our list? No.

Can you write me another ad, for free, since we've already paid you so much? No.

Practice the chorus in the '60s song “Nobody But Me” (no no no, no no, no no noooo... no, no, no, no no no nooooo...). Now, you are allowed to give a reason *why* you've said no. The word they want changed is critical to the headline's success. Soft-pedaling the sales pitch will kill profits. (And *screw* the shockable minorities in any list. If you aren't getting at least a handful of outraged protest letters from each mailing, you aren't marketing hard enough.)

But you don't have to give a reason. *Can you work for free?* No. *Why not?* Uh...

And here is where the second magic word comes in. Actually, it's more of a concept than just a word. You don't have to *say* “So?” to get your point across. (It can sound rude in the wrong tone of voice.) But, in your head, *that's your attitude*.

You're nervous about running the ad? I understand. (So?)

You think my fee is high? Well, yes, it *is* high. (So?)

You want me to get a haircut before meeting the boss? That's interesting. (So?)

The trick is to *not* get into a conversation about things you aren't going to do. *Can you*

come in for a meeting tomorrow morning? No. Why not? Let's have a conference call in the afternoon. What's wrong with a morning meeting? I'll be available after one o'clock. But we want to have a morning meeting! I'll expect your call in the afternoon. (So?)

All said in a pleasant, agreeable manner. You simply *aren't* agreeing. You're setting the rules down. You're in charge.

Because you *have* to be. Most businessmen out there are addicted to committees and meetings and studies and anything that guarantees a waste of time. They have to fill up 8 hours every day.

I haven't done a meeting with a client in twelve years. I politely decline all invitations to come to meetings. This irritates some of them.

So?

Next month: Why the race does not always go to the swift or the smart or the righteous... but to the *cunning bastard who knows how to recognize a good thing.*

Shame and Success Department

Subscriber Ted Sudol was toying with a project that required a "star" -- an expert he wanted to film and put out as a teaching video. He wondered how to pay this expert, and whether to make him a partner in the venture or not. After all, it was this expert's "talent" that was at the center of the product.

That set me off on a rant. I have clients who have learned how to work with the "talent" only after getting *burned* several times. It's an important lesson. Here's my reply email:

Hi Ted. We'll get to your other questions in a minute... but first, I want to warn you about the "Primadonna Syndrome". All talent suffers from it eventually. No exceptions. Sooner or later, they will start thinking they are responsible for all the success of your project. They aren't, of course -- it's the marketing that decides the success or failure of any project. But to their clueless eyes, they are the "star", and thus the most important element.

No matter what you pay your talent -- and no matter how grateful they are at first -- they will soon think it's not

enough. You need tough love. I've seen it a dozen times: They've got zero action happening when you find them, you bring them fame and money, and suddenly they want 90% of the profit. Their greed gland goes out of control. (It's even worse when they have a clueless spouse who keeps whispering that they're the brilliant hero, and you're the unfair, foolish, selfish bossman who doesn't appreciate real talent.)

So, it's never a good idea to start out with anyone whose head is already swollen. Better to find someone who has already floundered in marketing themselves, and who at least has an inkling that it takes a great ad to sell anything. It won't keep his ego from exploding later on, but it's a good way to start.

But the best method is to find a starving talent with a story... but no reputation. (My "Scrawny Kid Accidentally Discovers How To Drive Golf Balls 400 Yards" ad is a good example. This kid was ranked 66th in the world long-ball championships. But he had a story -- he was small, gawky and unathletic... yet he smacked golf balls a country mile. The ad rocked the golf world. Yet a second ad, for the guy who won the Re/Max Long-Ball championship twice... and who refused to let me write a ballsy ad, because of his "reputation"... bombed big time.)

Reputations equal ego problems. Remember that. It's the story, not the ego, that sells product.

Expect ingratitude. Never give away a large percentage of the action, either. My clients used to offer 5% and more of the gross. Now, they often pay just a one-time fee. The talent makes his money off the PR, though increased fees for private lessons.

This works.

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. **Comments, questions and rude remarks:** Email john@marketingrebel.com.