

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

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From: **John Carlton**  
Reno, Nevada  
Tuesday evening

Thin Ice Department

Dear Friend and Subscriber,

Hey, let's see if we can't piss somebody off this month.

How about... women?

Okay. Let's do it. Here goes: Doc (long-time client and friend) calls me yesterday in a near-panic. Says, “I am more confused than ever! I don't see how *anybody* can sell *anything* to *women* at all. All they want is to do is loll around in an emotional fog, *feeling* things. It's scary!”

Ah, Doc, I reply soothingly, it ain't that bad. Go ask your wife...

“*No way!* She's one of 'em! Probably downstairs in the television room this very minute, sharing *feelings* with Oprah and her evil cabal...”

Eventually he calmed down, and I didn't have to dial 911. He was even laughing about it -- a little -- by the time we hung up. Shaken, but not so frightened anymore.

What had caused this reaction? Simple. Doc is a rabid marketer with a brilliant mind, always sniffing around new opportunities for his direct marketing business. *Very* successful in several ventures into male-dominated markets (sports stuff)... and very eager to tap into the larger female markets out there. Bombed with his first weight-loss product, but knew the numbers were there for other marketers, and was frustrated that

he couldn't seem to “crack the code” on selling to women.

So I gave him a homework assignment. Told him to hustle down to the local magazine rack and pick up every major women's magazine there: Oprah (you can't miss it -- she's *always* on the cover), Cosmo, Red Book, Mademoiselle, Self, Glamour, Vogue... geez, there's a lot of 'em... Marie Claire, Us, Martha Stewart Living...

“Then what?” he wants to know.

**Read 'em.** Every one. Pay close attention to how the stories are “sold” with cover blurbs (written by some of the best writers in the biz, by the way)... and what the stories focus on. More importantly, pay very close attention to the *ads*. What hot buttons they aim for, how they craft their sales pitch, price points... and, especially, which ads are running over and over again. That required a quick trip to the library, to thumb through back issues.

Now, is there any question in your mind *why* I had Doc do this homework?

Good. And guess what? Unless you have an extra “X” chromosome yourself, you need to do the *same* assignment. Right away.

**Because most men simply do not understand women.** Yes, even big successful studs like you. Almost no real clue at all. Doc, for example, had been married to a perfectly wonderful woman for 15 years (and had a pretty impressive bachelorhood before that). Seemed to

be able to communicate with women well enough. Just *assumed* he “understood” them.

Clueless.

And you desperately need to GET a clue, dude. Why? Well, for starters, women control 90% of the wealth in this country. The hubby may have written the check, but *she* chose the house. The furniture. The car. The summer vacation to Disney World. Even his ties and underwear.

But there’s more to it than that. Learning how to understand women is the first step toward learning how to *sell* to them effectively. It will be, for most men, one of the hardest things you ever do. Also, one of the most *rewarding*. Your personal life will get better overnight (whether you’re married, single, or considering the priesthood). And financially, your bank account will swell to obscene proportions.

**If you learn to sell to women, you will never want for anything the rest of your days.**

Women-primary markets dominate direct sales (QVC, diets, “make your kid a genius” products), retail (check out your local mall), food (besides big damn hamburgers and beer, what other food group is being sold to men?), even cars and politics (SUV-driving soccer moms can swing any election).

And yet most marketers are guys. Not the kind of guys who were considered hotties in high school, either. Most of the entrepreneurs I know can weave a pretty sad tale of woe about their social lives (at least up to the point they started making some bucks). Not too many student body prez/quarterback/homecoming king/honor roll/most-likely-to-succeeds among us.

Hey, if you have trouble getting a date because you can’t figure out what women want, you’re gonna run into some very nasty obstacles trying to sell a woman *anything at all*.

Thus, the homework assignment.

And what did we learn, Doc?

“Feelings! Oceans of feelings! Good God, they’re like *alien creatures from another planet!*”

Now, I’m not gonna present myself as some kind of know-it-all regarding the ladies. I learned

what I know through grueling years of trial, error (mostly error)... and *unfair inside help*. Through my pal Gary Halbert (himself an admitted ovary-challenged human), I met a shrink who shared a couple of critical classified secrets that were nothing short of a complete *revelation* in the gender wars. After that, I had a toe-hold in the female psyche, and could start navigating that wild world with a modicum of confidence.

I love women, I really do. I have always sought out close women friends, and I *never* reject their point of view casually. No matter how insane and irrational it is. Still, it took me *years* to learn how to consistently craft compelling sales pitches to them.

Most clueless guys attempt to sell to women as though they were “men with breasts”. In other words, men assume the thought process going on *her* head is similar to the one going on in *his*. Or should be.

And it *isn’t*. Not even close. If you could take a woman’s thought process and transplant it into a typical man’s brain, his head would explode.

The big difference... is *emotions*. Feelings, as Doc said. If it helps to think about this stuff in simplistic terms: Women *feel*. Men *think*.

That’s why I don’t even need to know the gender of the rookie writers I critique ads for. Men tend to overdo the *features* of any product -- they want to bull you over with the force of size, performance statistics, heft and expense. In other words, the “quantity” of the thing.

Women, though, get lost in the *benefits*. They go off on tangents about how it *feels* to experience the thing -- how the softness soothes, how the delicacy satisfies deep needs. The “quality” of it. Now, all copywriters learn early on that you must attach benefits to features for effective selling. But rookie lady writers often forget to mention any feature at all. You can’t figure out what the heck the product actually is.

The shrink explained much about how women think... and perhaps I’ll share more of the juicier details with you in a future issue. It’s pretty damn

interesting, I gotta say. (Maybe I'll call it a "short-cut sex ed class for clueless guys".)

But what he told me about *emotions* is more relevant here. It has stuck with me all these years, and I use the knowledge often when I know there are women in the audience I'm pitching.

You see, there have been many studies concerning how men and women *translate emotions in their brains*. I don't have the exact figures handy... but researchers found that men can identify only a handful of emotional states (and they often incorrectly classify "being hungry" or "being sleepy" as emotions) (or "being really, really horny, man"). Let's say most men have nine operational emotions.

Women, however, have something like 200 operational emotions. Feeling "cherished" carries very much different emotional weight than does feeling "loved", or "adored", or even "worshipped". And they can explain these states in *detail*. Just mapping out the landscape of "envy" and "jealousy" could take a lifetime.

Women also *multi-task* feelings with ease -- low self-esteem often coexists quite happily with the sense they are reincarnated princesses worthy of ruling the world. And they are capable of hating your guts, wanting to have your baby, mentally listing 14 super-detailed ways you should change immediately, and wishing you'd just step up and take control of the damn situation without being a jerk about it... all in the same nano-second that you're saying "Huh?" (They're also wondering what's good to eat in the fridge, and how the couch would look better over *there*.)

Trust me on this. Right now, if you're an average Joe, you have *no frigging clue what women want*.

**So get hip.** Read a couple of romance novels. (*That* will open your eyes. Especially when you consider that many upper-class, upper *income* women devour these things to the tune of three or four a *week*. They are shoveling romance into the bottomless pit in their hearts.) Pay close attention to ads that run month after month, year after year, in the women's magazines. Open your mind to possibilities the omnipresent horoscopes offer.

(Just remember that until the FTC cracked down recently, psychic hotlines dominated late-night advertising... to the tune of *billions* of dollars in income. Primarily from women.)

And copy out, in longhand, the blurbs on the magazine covers. **It's one of the best ongoing educations on power writing you'll ever get.** Plus... you know these words and phrases have already been "field tested" on the ladies. You'll see certain verbs and word-clusters appear again and again. The word "sex" is there a lot, for example. But don't be shallow -- pay attention to how the writers quickly *tie* it to an unrelated subject. (And don't pout when you discover -- as you will -- that the actual articles have little or nothing to do with sex as men understand it.)

Make this part of your continuing education and research into world-class marketing.

And please -- don't be afraid, guys. The opposite sex is still the same sweet, loveable, nurturing and exciting half of the species they always were. You're just going to lift the veil on the "mysterious" part a little, and educate yourself on the details as they pertain to marketing.

The girls won't hurt you.

Unless you piss them off, of course.

## Tales From The Vice Squad

Do you think I honestly angered any of the many women who subscribe to this rag with the above rant?

I don't. You know why? Because most of the women I know in this business have something a surprising number of the guys do not: **A sense of humor.** And a good sense of "if it's right, it's right, so don't have a fit about it."

That, of course, is *not* the case outside of the business world. And it's something I truly love about direct response advertising: All cries of unfair "good old boy" advantages, glass ceilings, and gender victim-hood are completely irrelevant. No one can *see* you when you write a letter or ad. They don't know what color, sex, nationality or age you are, unless you chose to tell them.

Nope. You must *earn* the sale by providing credibility on the strength of your testimonials,

your expertise, and your ability to craft a convincing sales pitch. It's the most "blind" kind of salesmanship there is. You could be a trans-sexual, trans-species Siamese twin whose visage frightens little kids on the street. Doesn't matter. In direct response, *it's what you can deliver in terms of useable information and useful product that counts*. Pure equality in action.

I've considered teaching a special seminar in certain cities directed *only* at women -- revealing the amazing opportunities for independence and fabulous incomes and complete control over your future inherent in forming your own direct response business. You want better child care, flexible hours, a workplace free of harassment? Then *make* one. No one's stopping you. There are no glass ceilings in the entrepreneur biz.

Women business owners have little patience with anyone who complains about "the boys playing too rough". They just play rougher, if they have to... or create the atmosphere they *want* in their own workplace.

No one is stopping you. That's kinda scary to most people -- it's much easier to blame your lack of success on outside factors. America is becoming a nation of victims, and it's just damned silly. If your "movie" isn't progressing as excitingly or romantically as you'd like... *change the script*. It's up to you. Unless you're literally chained up in some dungeon, *nothing* is holding you back but your own inner nonsense.

You know, you don't hear much complaining from street-wise hustlers, either. They don't expect life to cut them any slack, and they have learned long ago that they must *take* what they want, cuz nobody's gonna give it to them.

I didn't grow up on city streets. My childhood was spent running unfettered around the endless orchards and vineyards of Cucamonga. And maybe it wasn't as dangerous as the ghetto neighborhoods of Compton or Brooklyn, but there were plenty of opportunities to get your head kicked in. There was class warfare among the street racers -- you were either a committed "Ricky Racer" or a serious lowrider or you had no business being in their company. There were

some nasty race conflicts, too -- my closest friend was a Latino, but that didn't mean I could walk through the local barrio safely.

For every good vibe available cruising around on a Friday night chasing girls, there was a nasty *surprise* just as easy to run into. If you were scared, you had to stay home. The only rule was: You were responsible for your own safety. It was understood that you would make mistakes... but you were expected to *learn* from them quickly.

**It's the same with the business world, though few people realize it.** There are no guarantees when you get involved... and there are plenty of unsavory types out there who will happily eat your lunch and steal your bike.

I was thinking about this when I saw the movie "Snatch" the other night. Great flick, if you haven't caught it. Brad Pitt as a gypsy bare knuckle fighter in a riveting plot full of thieves, killers, cops, diamond merchants with no ethics... and wannabe thugs. It's entertaining as a movie... but if you look at it as a metaphor for *business*, it just sings.

In a nutshell, here is the lesson: Rookies get eaten alive. Lucky men run out of luck. And only the ego-less, cool-thinking pro survives.

Lots of self-centered pros get their clocks cleaned through hubris. They get cocky, or self-righteous, or just forget that there's *no rule against them losing*. Rookies are shocked when they lose, but they aren't necessarily surprised. The look on a pro's face when the unthinkable happens can quickly cure you of any silly feelings about your own invincibility.

In whatever market you're in, you really should understand *all* aspects of it with as much detail as an ego-less, cool-thinking pro about to enter a dark alley in a crime-soaked part of town... who wants to make damn sure he comes out alive. You don't go in unprepared. You don't figure on God watching your back. (He's too busy these days.) And you don't go in with *fairy tale ideas* of how the world works.

You won't "magically" succeed in business just because you try. It's not like Hollywood movies at all. Not one little bit.

Screw waiting around for something magical to happen. The savvy businessman just takes control right off the bat. And learns *all* about his market... so that he knows every detail, and knows it *better than anyone else*.

I can't tell you how often people send me ads to critique... where it's obvious the writer has *no clue whatsoever* what motivates the prospect he's after. It's insane. It's exactly like taking a bus to the worst part of town, and walking into an alley without the slightest notion of what to do when confronted by a hard-ass. Or two. Or three.

Okay, so maybe your market isn't full of thieves and street fighters. The point still holds. If your market is strictly little old ladies in need of knitting supplies, *you still have to understand them at their deepest level*. Because even a little old lady will blow off your ads with the scorn of a Mafia boss, if you don't immediately hit her sweet spot with your pitch.

**Next month:** The astonishing secret of "The Smuggler's Truth", and why you *desperately* need to adapt this truth to your own business.

## Salesmanship 101

Experienced marketers nod in agreement when I talk about hitting the "**passionate sweet spot**" of your prospect. They know that cold, lifeless, boring ad copy seldom gets read, and almost *never* gets acted on.

So I tell would-be writers, over and over, to put more *passion* into their copy. But there's a catch: Once you've effectively tapped into your own passion for your product... you must then put a *lid* on it.

Confusing? Naw. Let me explain: What you want to be is like the super-focused, super-calm salesman... who has a glint in his eye... and seems barely able to contain his glee and wonder at the benefits of this product. But he *does* contain it. You *sense* the passion... but he's not bowling you over with it.

Too many writers think that tapping into your own passionate sweet spot is akin to getting all riled up and insane. In print, the effect is like a three-year-old kid pestering you for attention. It's

damned annoying in kids, and a huge turn-off in adults. Don't grab my lapels and scream in my face, no matter how blinged-out you are about your product. Passion makes your copy powerful not because people respond to wild-eyed true believers... but because passion attached to a *reasoned and focused sales message* zeroes in on the human element in the process.

Imagine a guy asking his beloved to marry him. Jumping and down and hollering may show that your passion runs deep... but she'll think you flipped your lid, and will certainly think twice about hooking up with a nutcase who can't control himself. On the other hand, popping the question in a cold and casual way won't exactly melt her heart, either.

No. You must find that delicate middle ground... where your passion shows as a gleeful glint, something powerful that is yet under your control. True salesmen know that effective passion is something the prospect *senses*, and senses clearly. It is a tool to help the pitch. Unfocused passion is not a *replacement* for the pitch.

Examples: "I have just discovered something so exciting that I feel I'll *burst* if I don't share it with you..."

"Right now, it's past midnight here at the office and I should be home and in bed. But I can't sleep. There's something *urgent* I have to share with you, and it just can't wait..."

"Something incredible has just happened here... and the first person I thought of to tell this amazing story to was *you*."

Get it? It's not: "HEY! Look at *this!!!*" It's: "If you have just two minutes, I have an *amazing* story to share that will shock and delight you..."

Great salesmen know that, to make the sale, you must be in *total control*. If there are choices to make, you must guide the prospect to *make* them during the pitch. If there are problems or objections, they must be addressed and *solved* during the pitch. The role of passion is to keep the prospect riveted to the story, so these things can be reasonably taken care of... and the sale closed. Effective passion -- just like laughing -- is

contagious. You can (and should) infect your prospect with it, straight from your heart, but through your *brain*.

Think of it as “passionate reason”. You’re not a professor in a lab coat explaining a cold equation... instead, you’re a regular fella (just like your reader) *letting him in* on something truly fabulous and worthwhile.

Do it with an urgent gleam in your eye, and barely-contained excitement he can clearly sense.

### How-To Department

A good friend of mine, Stan Dahl, works in something called “information systems”. He talks about the “architecture” of data, and has worked with such massive collectors of information and data as NATO and ARCO’s AM/PM Mini-marts. These organizations bring him in when the mountains of data threaten to crush the system. (You don’t wanna know how unorganized NATO’s Belgium headquarters are. Scary.)

Anyway, I’ve known Stan for fifteen years or so, and it’s taken about that long for him to explain what he does to me in a way I can understand. It’s not that the architecture of data is all that hard to explain, or that I’m that dense... okay, maybe I *am* that dense, but that’s not the story here. It’s sort of like a major league pitcher trying to explain the mechanics of a true screwball to someone who’s never played baseball... or a musician trying to explain music theory to someone who’s never touched an instrument.

However, once I “got” it, I realized I’d been practicing my own form of “data architecture” ever since I created my first ad. And -- just to show you how all things in this universe eventually intersect -- my own style of managing massive amounts of information are almost identical to what Stan tries to teach the brainiacs in charge of missile silos.

Namely -- he has a tactic he calls “Find 3 Rules That Work”. Briefly, he teaches the info wranglers to stop trying to embrace the totality of any one project -- which usually creates more confusion and logjams of data -- and to simply find 3 basic categories or rules or activities that

accomplish something, and to build from there. It’s like creating a foundation that you know is viable, before going on to the layers that must stand on that foundation.

Well, guess what? When I’m confronted with a fresh copywriting project (especially with a new client), the first thing that often lands on my desk is a Federal Express box (never a slim envelope, mind you) crammed with paperwork and videos and notes and transcripts and manuscripts. This is everything the client can find explaining the product, showcasing other marketing efforts made, other ads run, studies done, and committees convened. In short... it’s a big honking pile of data that must be wrangled.

And my job is to take that honking pile, digest it... and come up with a slim, snappy sales pitch that *condenses* all that information into plain English.

And I have to do it in my head.

Now, those of you who have studied my ads and letters (and shame on those of you who haven’t yet), you will notice that often, my headlines are structured with three benefits. Sometimes less, sometimes more... but most often, it’s three.

Three is a very important number. It’s the least number of legs needed to support a stool. Most huge literary efforts are in trilogies. Most religions have some version of the “father, son and holy ghost”. It’s a prime number. It’s the number of fingers on Mickey’s hand. And so on.

Anyway. At first, I created this “3 Benefits” thing unconsciously. It just seemed right. Had a bit of poetry and rhythm to it. *Da da da*.

And I suppose, were I to corral a smart guy like Stan and grill him extensively, I might discover that I’m using a kind of information system to distill all that data.

But it doesn’t really matter. At this stage in my career, I can simply look back and see what worked (and still does work). And using three benefits for your Unique Selling Position, or your headline, or your basic sales pitch, simply makes sense.

Because it *works*.

Look at your own pile of data. If you're working for clients, you're faced with a bunch of new stuff. If you're writing for your own product or service, you're up to your neck in details about it. Hard to see the forest for the trees.

So begin by breaking it all down to *three simple benefits* that you can easily explain, and back up. Even the most complex product or service can be knocked down to size -- and should be, anyway.

I don't care if you're launching satellites into space, starting a local bakery, or selling yachts to rich folk. What you offer, whether in product or service, can be broken down to three basic benefits. You can have more benefits, of course. But those come up later in your pitch, as you're turning up the heat (under the category of "but wait, there's more"). That's how I load up my bullets.

But when you're crafting your all-important USP... which is the basis of all great headlines, by the way... you need to get down, dirty, and direct. (See, there's three benefits right there.)

Here are a few examples:

1. **Fast, cheap, and good.** (One of my favorite ways to start the process is to see how the job meets these criteria. At least half the time, if you can justify to your reader that what you have is of high quality... a bargain... and brings results quickly... you're off to the races.)
2. **Simple, easy, and lucrative.** (Combined with fast, cheap, and good, these pretty much take care of the entire consumer landscape.)
3. **Get good, get connected, and get paid.** (This is the basis of my "how to be a high paid freelancer" course, but it applies to other ventures as well. It means "become an expert, become a functioning part of your market, and demand you are paid what you're worth.")
4. **Consistent, accurate distance.** (Very elegant phrase I've used a lot in my golf pieces. Covers the three primary concerns of most golfers.)
5. **Buy your dream home, sell your old house fast, and get a great mortgage rate even with lousy credit.** (An example of how this might work in a real estate ad.)

I could go on... but I won't. You get the picture, and that's all I wanted to convey. Mostly, to be honest, I just wanted to impress you with my savvy in ultra-modern techno-babble. Or, at least, my ability to talk a good line of bull.

But the power of "**Find 3 Benefits That Work**" stands. Once you distill all the available info you have down to three compelling benefits, the rest of your headline and copy practically writes itself.

**Next month:** Okay, I'll finally explain how to construct your most *potent* USP. It's second-nature to most veteran copywriters, but remains a near-total mystery to rookies. And it's critical. I feel bad I haven't covered it before now.

### Coaches Corner

Last issue I promised to tell you how to be an "ethical hustler"... because good guys *need* to know a few dirty tricks. I feel pretty strongly about this subject. Too many people live in a black and white world, where everything is either good or evil, and there's no gray area. And that's just nonsense.

Some of the most fascinating people I've met are street-level hustlers. Jumpy, excitable guys always looking for a way to make an easy buck. They're fun to share stories with over a drink, but you don't want them to know where you live.

And nearly all of the most *boring* people I've met aren't excited about anything. They're sleep-walking through life, afraid to take a risk, terrified of a little pain, scared of confrontation. They can put you to sleep in a two-minute conversation, but you'd trust them to water your plants while you were away.

There *is* a middle ground. I'm living proof. I grew up around vandals and risk-takers and ballsy hustlers who were just as frightened of the dangers of life as the boring guys... but who just went ahead and *did* the risky stuff anyway. Cuz that's the *only* way you got anything worthwhile done. It was also a total blast.

So, yeah, I've fallen out of trees, been chased by cops, knocked senseless in an alley, and stayed up all night long for no good reason at all. I

wouldn't have it any other way. It's kept me edgy, interested and interesting.

You don't have to leave your family and start sleeping in gutters, either, to shake off the dust. Just start showing a little honest enthusiasm for being alive. Give your senses brief and intense "field trips" a couple of times each day: Look at things in terms of the opportunity they might represent... keep an ear to the ground so you know what's happening around you (both personally and in business)... feel the pulse of your neighborhood and market.

Learn to love and appreciate short bursts of super-focused, disciplined work. Hone your convictions and develop a friggin' opinion once in a while. Don't be afraid to be wrong, either -- just admit it quickly when you are, and adjust your mindset appropriately. And always do the right thing. Don't dither. Show some leadership, take more responsibility, and follow through on *everything* you attach your reputation to.

Are these "dirty tricks"?

In a way, yes. Because if you follow my advice, many people who heretofore had no opinion whatsoever about you... will start to *hate* you. I've said that the best salesmen know to take command of the situation, steer the prospect where he should be going... and *push to close the deal* by solving problems and meeting objections right away. That's not exactly playing fair, according to most folks. They dither away their time, avoid decisions, and put off duties. You force them to *want* something so bad they feel compelled to take out their money and hand it over... you've taken them *waaaaay* out of their comfort zone. This will often make them a little mad at you, even if you also make their lives better. This is the reason for "buyer's remorse".

So you use another "dirty trick"... and *confront* that remorse right away, before it even surfaces. You never allow the customer to find a "way out" of the sale -- because you keep him happy, continue to meet his needs, and solve every little dilemma that comes up. Money will be an issue, so you explain the *value* in a way that makes price irrelevant. After-sale service will be

an issue, so you make him feel completely secure he'll be taken care of. He will be anxious about what his spouse, friends and colleagues think, so you provide simple reasons why he got a *bargain*.

These are all "dirty tricks", in the way you must trick your puppy to become house-trained, or trick your child to eat spinach, or trick your girlfriend into believing you're worthy of her love and affection. (You bad boy, you.)

**The biggest "dirty trick" of all is to take control of your life.** Step up the plate and take your hacks. Never threaten or cajole -- just get things done, and don't waste time on the small shit. Get negative people out of your life, fast and without apology. Make sure your actions are proactive, not reactive.

Be a big man, and ignore what you can endure. Never listen to any critic who's never had to meet a payroll. (This, too, is a dirty trick, because all critics demand attention as their birthright -- it's just *mean* to withhold it.)

Learn to trust your own judgment. No ideology allowed. True believers need to constantly twist facts and reality to fit their pre-determined view of the world. Don't fall into that trap. When you sign on to be a world-class marketer, you *must* agree to let the blinders fall from your eyes. And you may have to let some old friends go their own way, and build a new group of confidants.

You *can* be an "ethical hustler" -- someone who learns to spot and embrace opportunity, is at home with ambition and a little healthy greed, and isn't afraid of a little risk. Or of doing the right thing.

The meek may indeed inherit the earth at some point... but only *after* the bold are through with it.

**Next month:** Even more tasty stuff for your greedy little marketing appetite.

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