

The Lost Chapters of Overdeliver

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SECTION ONE: INSPIRED BY DIRECT MARKETING RULES OF THUMB

#1: Customer service and fulfillment: “Phone a friend...or maybe the CEO?” (March 2019)

My Mom is a spunky 94 and she loves to talk.

I know that she would think I was a much better son if I called her more often too.

When I tell her that email is the “new thing” and if she participated she'd hear from me more often, she isn't buying...if it's not a phone communication or an in-person visit, it doesn't count in her world.

Although if she was on email she'd hear from me more often, that's for sure.

At least every Sunday like you! ☺

But I am glad she is mostly “offline” since she would be angry with me if she read this—she hates telling anyone how old she is—but as you can see, 94 is the new 74 in my family!:



No matter how angry she gets with me regarding “not calling enough,” my Mom, whether she knows it or not, is in synch with me as it pertains to multi-channel marketing.

While she might not embrace Instagram or Facebook, she loves snail mail.

Case in point: I regularly send her the prettiest postage stamps I can find since she seems to think the electric company and cable TV provider will be kinder to her if she sends in her payments with a beautifully stamped envelope.

She's got my back on the power of direct mail, that's for sure.

But her favorite offline medium is the telephone...one that is often forgotten as a powerful tool in the direct response marketer's toolkit...but not by my Mom.

I find this ironic since most of us are attached to our smart phones all day long but we rarely see it as a "phone" (as opposed to being a vehicle to post vacation pictures, food photos and participate in political rants).

Using the phone for marketing purposes seems to elude many of the smartest marketers I know.

Maybe my Mom is on to something and we should pay more attention.

Besides laying on the guilt re: how infrequently I call her with "inbound" telemarketing, her "outbound" operation is quite extensive.

When she gets a can of tomatoes that seem to be less than the freshest they can be, rather than simply return the can to Shop-Rite, her first plan of action is to call the CEO of Del Monte.

And every time I see her, she always has a story about how she got "satisfaction" calling anyone who will listen, at any company or store who has stepped out of line (in her opinion), responding to her tales of woe.

She's relentless and won't stop until she gets what she needs.

Does that sound like any of your customers?

Or more importantly, do you have any idea how your customers really feel about you?

When she tells me about her “adventures in telemarketing,” all I can think about is the person she gets on the phone with for an hour about the new step stool she bought that’s missing a screw...and how that person better satisfy her...or else.

And even at 94, she sees herself as someone worth staying a customer for life with every company she deals with—and she becomes that with those who take the best care of her issues.

The fact is, I have been on the other end of those calls when working at Boardroom for the first 30+ years of my career...I’m still serving my clients and mastermind members in the same way today...and dealing with consumers like my Mom in my early days was the best marketing education I have ever gotten.

I talked about the “return on returns” in the past—and my Mom has inspired me to talk about this critical topic once again...that is, customer service and fulfillment are *marketing* functions and we should never lose sight of that.

Note that I affectionately called my Mom’s practice “telemarketing” rather than “complaining.”

In fact, I dedicated an entire chapter to this topic in my new book, *Overdeliver*.

It’s based on the premise that it may take a lifetime to win (and keep) a customer but you can lose that customer in a heartbeat (with one misstep).

How this played out for me in the past:

You all know the phrase, *“No one lying on their death bed wishes they spent more time at the office”*

And despite loving my work, I guess that’s true for me too.

Of course those of you who hate your job, and are at the office right now, are probably running for the door.

But being dedicated to your work, your craft, and the stuff that may not be so obvious to the success in all you do, might involve staying late at the office once in a while.

And until one evening in the 1980's when I was at the office way too late, I didn't realize that being there when no one else was there would lead to some insights that have stayed with me my entire career.

The best thing about being in the office at 7:00 or 8:00 in the evening (in the 1980's) is that if the phone rings, you have to answer it.

I'm talking about the days when we didn't even have a nighttime or automated attendant—and there was no caller ID either.

The phone would not stop ringing unless you picked it up...someone on the other end wanted something...and at that time in the evening, my experience was that what they wanted was "satisfaction" (which often included yelling at a real person).

My company, Boardroom Inc., had millions of customers (mostly subscribers to our newsletters and buyers of our books)...and at any one point in time, about a million of them were "active" with the company...currently subscribing to a newsletter—or they had bought a book fairly recently.

I didn't know it the first time I did it but answering the phone after hours and speaking to dissatisfied customers is actually the best way for me to meet some of those millions...and it is also the best "customer research" you can do in the trenches.

It may also be the most valuable thing you can do as a marketer.

I know that one phone call is not representative of the entire customer base...but if you do it enough times and get similar complaints, you then realize that you are smack in the middle of doing critical qualitative research (like a focus group, one-on-one).

Of course the next step might be to go deeper into those complaints you hear most often and then do some **quantitative** research (surveys, questionnaires etc.).

Regardless, all of the information you gather will help you with selling better up front...and retain better on the back end as well.

I said it above and will emphasize this again here:

Customer service and fulfillment of products and services are MARKETING functions.

No matter what the problem—from missing an issue of the newsletter to annoyance that their book had not arrived yet, or to their concern that their dog ate page 17 and 18 of the special bonus that contained the most important secret regarding treatment of their Type 2 diabetes...all complaints are relevant to how you deal with your customers now...and in the future. Nothing is too small.

Listening and interacting with your customers will give you insights beyond any spreadsheet or report on the makeup of your database.

You've probably heard about the CEO's who get this concept...the ones who spend time every week (or maybe once a month) listening in on customer service calls to get a real sense what the end user is feeling and needing and also complaining about the most.

I also know some insightful entrepreneurs who hire "secret shoppers" (i.e. people on the payroll but outside the company to go through every aspect of their sales and marketing operation) to find out where there might be a broken link or a hole in the operation that no one would ever see without this kind of anonymous yet monitored buying.

One brilliant entrepreneur I know had his secret shopper answer one question—and one question only—at every step of the process as they experienced the organization's sales funnel:

"How does that make me feel?"

His secret shopper bought everything, returned a lot of stuff, complained at every turn and basically made as much trouble as possible for customer service reps...and then the secret shopper reported on how they are dealt with at every step of the process.

And most importantly, how they *felt*.

It's a great exercise for any organization.

Back to my late nights at the office:

When I picked up the phone it was usually an angry customer (or my wife asking me when I was coming home). We will focus on the former, not the latter.

I risked so much abuse, throughout my career, by intentionally staying late to answer the phone as the "last line of defense"...but it was always worth it for what I learned.

I've got the scars and the knowledge to show for it.

I learned the valuable lesson, first hand, that paying closer attention to the bad news you hate hearing (at least at the time) may be the key to making positive changes to your business.

When I picked up the phone and heard that angry customer, I was ready to play the game that every direct marketer must master:

"Give the customer more than they would ever expect"

Saving a cancellation was only a minor victory...and it was irrelevant financially since in most cases, I was "saving" a \$39 order.

The ultimate goal: Make them a customer for life after they called to complain, cancel or curse (or all of the above).

Making that happen taught me valuable lessons about marketing that I could never read in any book.

I even came up with ideas for new products, bonuses and premiums as I loaded the complainers up with hundreds of dollars' worth of products.

I also always learned stuff I didn't know about our products and our customers during these interactions.

The ideal situation was always when the person on the other end began:

"I am very unhappy and I want to return the product."

That's when I knew I was just getting started...and it was time to get a return on the return.

So whether it's you, your secret shopper or a friend who happens to be a customer and tells you the truth about how they feel about your company, the key is to put yourself in situations so you can hear information about your business "on the ground"—react to it—and to just keep saying YES until the customer is satisfied and you learn what holes need to be plugged.

And if your evening automated attendant doesn't allow you to talk to real people...or if your home office number is never used by customers (i.e. all customer service is outsourced)...make it a practice to spend some time listening in to what your customers are telling the folks you have entrusted to be on your front lines.

All of this ties into one of the most important direct marketing rules of thumb.

It is always easier to keep a customer than to get a new one.

This is what links new customer acquisition to customer retention and/or renewals.

If you think everything is all just about great "front end marketing" (i.e. "getting the sale), think again.

To repeat for the third time: *"Customer service and fulfillment of your product or service is a marketing function."*

The selling part is sexier but the retention part is how you stay in business for the long haul.

Gordon Grossman, the man who built *The Reader's Digest* in the 1960's and 1970's, once told me:

"Marketers sell subscriptions; editors sell renewals"

While he was talking about magazine subscriptions here, the lesson is universal:

If you don't truly "deliver" the product or service you sold in the initial promotion, you can re-sell until you are blue in the face and you won't get the renewal (or repeat order).

Let's now add in customer service and fulfillment to the equation:

Even if you deliver what you said you would deliver content-wise or product-wise, I still defy you to completely satisfy a customer who didn't get the bonus you promised or to delight them after they received your amazing product 3 weeks later than you said you would deliver it.

It's all connected.

Bringing new customers into the fold is often more a function of our ability to persuade than to actually deliver; keeping customers for life is always about coming through in the clutch on all of the persuasiveness you used to sell them in the first place.

Of course be ready to answer the phone when they call and need something more.

And if it's my Mom, please tell her I will be calling her soon.

#2: Premiums and bonuses: “Share the love...and the ethical bribe” (February 2019)

This post is in two parts...kind of like “the card” and then “the gift.”

And be polite—read the card first! 😊

Part one: Share the love

I love Valentine's Day.

I would have included a heart emoji above but I don't know how to do that in this email delivery system.

Next week we will talk about sharing the love with better technology.

I love “V Day” because it's one of those “holidays” where it's all about love...which to me is the kissing cousin of being grateful for all the wonderful people in our lives.

Truth be told, I should be a Hallmark stockholder on February 14th...I send cards to every female relative in my life (plus my nephew who my daughter and I dressed up as a girl when he was 5—he's in his 20's now—and I know he hates getting a Valentine's Card from his Uncle B).

Now that's what I call “tough love!”

Also—Valentine's Day is the birthday of the most influential personal and business mentor to me, Marty Edelston, who passed away in 2013.

He is with me every day and twice on Valentine's Day.

And he's a big part of my new book, *Overdeliver*, since he's the guy who taught me how to over deliver.

It is no accident that the most generous man with the biggest heart in the world was born on February 14th.

To celebrate his life five years ago (almost to the day), I started this weekly email.

At that time it was so influential, reaching dozens of friends and relatives who felt sorry for me that I didn't have a weekly blog.

Today my online family has grown to where I might even need a decent size hockey arena to fit all of you—not large by today's standards—but definitely a small but mighty family.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

Marty often said, “You only go through life once so you might as well be the world's best”—so I share that with you today as you share the love with everyone in your life, being the world's best friend, relative, business partner or associate...and being the best at everything you do.

And the quote that I shared to kick off this weekly missive five years ago was this one from my good friend, author and internationally known speaker, Sean Stephenson:

“I love everyone because as soon as I don't love you, you own me”

The lesson from this quote is simple:

When we spend our energy *not* loving someone, we willingly hand over our power (and more than likely, our confidence) to them.

But if we work on eliminating the things in ourselves that keep us from loving others, what's left is just love and gratefulness (and more confidence).

So now make it an awesome Valentine's Day.

Part two: “The ethical bribe”

OK...you read the card...here's my gift (and there are a bunch of gifts coming).

I'll start with a shocker:

Using bonuses and premiums is an idea that was not invented by an online marketer.

Believe it or not, bonuses and premiums have been part of the best direct response offers since the beginning of time.

In his “31 Rules of Thumb,” direct mail guru Dick Benson devoted two of those 31 to this concept alone (and remember he did his thing before the Internet):

#12 “Dollar for dollar, premiums are better incentives than cash discounts”

#17 “Two premiums are frequently better than one”

Digital delivery has made these rules even more powerful. And online delivery has made it easier for us as marketers to offer more premiums and bonuses without adding to our costs.

For those of you who have been doing this for as long as I have, you will agree when I say that this has been awesome for all old school direct marketers.

Giving away our best stuff digitally is so liberating.

The inspiration for talking about this topic today (I have spoken about it before) is twofold.

First, I am in the middle of working on a resource page/web site for my new book *Overdeliver* and you will be the first to be able to access it when it's completed.

It contains 11 (which is “one more than 10” for fans of the movie *This is Spinal Tap*) hard-to-find and exclusive bonuses just for buying my book through the site.

I'll just tease it now by telling you that among the 11 bonuses will be:

- Over 6 hours of never before released to the public video from what Dan Kennedy called “The Event of the Decade, (which was called *Titans of Direct Response* in 2014)

- Two PDF's of entire out-of-print classic marketing books not readily available anywhere

- A swipe file for the ages featuring the best promotions from the best copywriters talked about in *Overdeliver* (copywriters I worked directly with over my almost 40 years in direct marketing)

- Interviews with some of the greatest marketers who have ever lived

And yes, there's more. This list goes to 11, one more than 10.

The second reason I wanted to talk about ethical bribes today is to repeat my take on this critical concept with specific examples– and also to repeat an offer I made a couple of years ago (full of ethical bribes of course).

I was on the phone this past week with Scott Harrison the man who built one of the most influential charities in the world (charity:water) and he will be a guest speaker at the next Titans Mastermind meeting in May.

More on Scott and charity:water in a minute.

Let's talk first about how Benson's two rules of thumb on premiums (which can be defined for today's purposes as “ethical bribes”) apply universally.

When you are sitting in a brainstorming meeting cooking up irresistible offers (regardless of the medium), you should never leave the room until you spend a considerable amount of time talking about what bonuses and premiums will be part of those offers.

That might sound obvious but let's dive deeper using the two “Benson Rules of Thumb.”

Premiums are better incentives than cash discounts

When you are selling and marketing to an audience who you know and love (and who knows and loves you), you want to always treat them like family.

Giving them a discount is nice...but giving away more of what they love about you will always have a higher perceived value than cash...especially in a direct marketing environment.

That's not to say that cash or early bird discounts or discounts on multiple orders are not effective inside of your best offers (and those should be tested rigorously); but offering more of the material they came to you for in the first place is where the offer becomes much more irresistible.

Let me add my own corollary to Benson's rule here:

"If your audience is buying information (e.g. editorial content), premiums that are "additional information" (e.g. editorial content) are better than "hard premiums" (e.g. hard goods, gifts)

The core audience of the company I helped build, Boardroom Inc. (which published books and newsletters for affluent consumers), were "information junkies" of the highest order.

Because of that, we always had our biggest successes offering additional content as premiums.

Our subscribers and book buyers couldn't get enough of our stuff.

We often joked that we sold our content by the pound.

And when we tried to simply add in a calculator, a magnifying glass or the hottest new gadget that we could offer that cost us less than \$5, those offers never did as well as when we just kept giving them more free content related to the topics they were most passionate about.

Irony: The stuff they wanted most (e.g. books, special reports, pamphlets, information) not only worked better in terms of creating higher response rates, but those kinds of premiums were much cheaper to produce and fulfill than more expensive hard goods.

That's even truer today when the content is digital (and for the most part free to fulfill) and the hard goods are not.

One exception occurred with our *Tax Hotline* newsletter. The control package for that publication offered a calculator as a free bonus with a subscription...but even there, the calculator by itself as a premium was never a winner. The best package was always some version of the calculator along with a 200 page special report on new tax law (or some other additional special report or book).

Interesting that when we removed only the calculator from the offer we had better results than when we removed only the special report.

Having both was best but we wanted to know how each premium was pulling its weight.

We always did "single variable testing" to make sure we knew precisely which element(s) were lifting response and profit.

Conclusion: The editorial premium was much more important to the offer than the calculator to this audience.

And maybe even more important, if we just had the calculator, my guess is that the lifetime value of new subscribers coming in on an offer like that (i.e. without an editorial premium) would be lower.

That is, we would run the risk of the offer looking more like *only* a "bribe" rather than a "bonus"; and we would also run the risk of attracting new subscribers who were only interested in the free calculator ("tire kickers") rather than potential long term subscribers.

While the calculator was part of a winning offer, it was BOTH the calculator and special report that was the *best* offer.

Lesson: Understanding your audience and how you can be super generous and still create the highest lifetime value, with the highest upfront response on the initial offer, should be your goal as you construct offers with lots of bonuses and premiums.

Two premiums are frequently better than one

I'll add on to Benson's rule of thumb here too:

"Two premiums are better than one; four are better than two; 50 are better than four; 100 are better than 50"

You get the idea.

Benson stopped at "two" because he was a direct mail guy who always had printing and postage costs on his mind.

I think it's safe to say that Benson would have also loved the lower cost of digital content.

Case history: We had an offer for an annual book called, *The Bottom Line Yearbook* and our copywriter created a new package with 2 (two) "special reports" (and yes, they had to be printed on paper and sent in the mail). I know that makes you digital folks break out in hives.

When that worked, we created 4 (four) special reports under the copywriter's direction.

When that became the new control, we created 50 special reports with each one being approximately 2 pages in length, on 50 specific topics we knew our readers were most interested in.

To keep our costs down, when we fulfilled this premium, we had the 50 premiums printed and bound into one 100+ page book.

The offer then revolved around the “50 special reports” much more than the *Yearbook* itself; and every report title was listed and described in the promotion, creating many more entry points for potential readers and buyers.

Once *that* became a huge winner for us, and the fact that our copywriter was no dummy, the next test became 100 special reports as the premium (in a single bound book of 200+ pages).

If we could offer 100 bonus reports (printed on paper!) in a direct mail package and make it pay out (which we did), I encourage you to think bigger and bolder regarding your premiums and bonuses when you construct your offers.

Some version of that package was the control for years...my guess is that it still is...and the printing and fulfillment didn't cost a lot more compared to the cost when we had only two special reports.

It got even more economical when we created the online version of that promotion and 100 special reports cost the *same* to fulfill as two.

That's why I am so excited about this “digital content thing”—I believe it will eventually catch on.

This reminds of a funny quote from a coach I worked with who was helping me prepare a speech.

My PowerPoint slides had way too much copy on them and he encouraged me to take my 20 slides and turn them into around 50 slides with only one image or only a few words on each slide.

He said:

“Slides are free!”

I titled part two of this post "The ethical bribe" for a reason...even though I haven't even hinted at anything that could be construed as "unethical" in the examples.

I love bribes that are used for good and not evil.

Creating premiums and bonuses for your family (i.e. your list) is always about giving them more of what they want, not just giving them "more free stuff" to get them to say yes the first time. And when it's the "right stuff," they will stay in your family a lot longer.

I also always found it fascinating that our best offers always emphasized the premiums and bonuses above the main product being sold.

In direct marketing, if you can make all the free stuff worth more than what folks would pay for just the core product, selling the core product becomes that much easier.

I wrote in my afterword to the new edition of the classic, *Breakthrough Advertising*, that human behavior has not changed since Gene Schwartz penned his classic book in 1966...and frankly, human behavior hasn't changed since 1066...or even way before that.

Another simpler way to say this is to quote Gordon Gekko (played by Michael Douglas), who was the lead character in the movie *Wall Street*. Gekko famously said, "Greed is good."

In direct marketing, it is especially good when your existing and potential customer's greed matches your ability to make them customers for life with an offer that is ethical, robust and relevant (and full of awesome bonuses).

#3: RFM: “The currency of time” (November 2018)

RFM is not a rule of thumb of direct marketing. It's way bigger than that.

The more I study it in the context of all we do online and offline today, selling products and services, it is abundantly clear that RFM is actually a foundation of human behavior.

I have an additional spin on RFM today—“RFT”—and I would like to thank my friend and coach Perry Marshall who gave me this new distinction.

But I think a refresher course on RFM is in order first.

Some of this is from a post I did about a year and a half ago—feel free to skim if you know it as well as you should and if you are applying regularly without further prompting.

RFM

I've been shocked how many people practicing direct response marketing today are not even aware of the term—or that analyzing RFM on their customer list might be the most critical and basic thing to do over all else.

While at its most sophisticated level on multi-million name databases you may need a statistician figuring out RFM formulas and models for you, it's actually a pretty simple concept accessible to anyone—and much of it can be done by observation and “tallying” (or tagging) your prospects and customers this way.

Let's break it down:

1) “R” is for Recency

What this says is that a suspect/prospect/customer who interacted with you more recently is far more responsive (and immediately more valuable) than someone who responded less recently.

I remember when I entered the direct marketing industry in 1981 how much this didn't make sense to me logically...thinking that if someone just bought from me, they now had less money to buy something else from me right away.

I even remember an old time legacy publisher who did not rent their mailing list of book buyers to other mailers offering books because they foolishly thought that, "every person has a set budget to spend on books per year and we only want them to spend with us."

I guess it's no surprise that the company is no longer in business, failing to understand that no one has unique names, only unique lists...and also failing to understand that all boats rise when we keep the folks on our list active and happy with all kinds of *relevant* offerings.

Thank goodness I discovered how naïve I was within days of entering the world of direct response and that I didn't fall into the trap that some others did at the time.

It still astounds me when I think about the companies who considered themselves direct marketers back then who didn't understand the power of recency.

Fortunately, most marketers today know the importance and value of recency...when have you *not* received a pop up or immediate cross-sell (or up-sell) offer immediately after buying (or even inquiring) about something online?

In direct mail, the names of more recent buyers are called "hotlines"—and list owners still charge a premium for those names.

I have been lucky that I have been able to see firsthand—over decades of mailing millions of names and almost always selecting hotlines on lists—that recency is more often than not the make-or-break whether a list pays out.

The importance of recency should never be lost.

And this is as true today as it was in the past.

2) “F” is for Frequency

Man cannot live on recency alone.

Frequency pushes us to combine the most recent buyers (or inquiries) with the most frequent buyers or inquiries (what we called “multibuyers” in the direct mail list business).

Recency and frequency gives you a one-two punch that will enable you to segment any list, no matter what the size, in order to focus on the people who will be your best customers for subsequent products or offerings.

Again, for many of you, I know this sounds basic.

Of course someone who bought from you multiple times is a better customer than someone who bought from you once...or never...right?

But let me add creative and copy into the mix here:

Are you communicating with a “multibuyer” with different language and offerings based on their relationship with you as opposed to communicating with them as a one-time buyer or inquiry (for example)?

Or are you sending the same message to the “3 time buyer who bought their third product from you today” to the “one time buyer from 6 months ago?”

The first group is “family”...the second group are “invited guests.”

And there are even cases where frequency trumps recency...based on the direct marketing rule of thumb that your “expires” (or previous customers or buyers) are usually your “best list.”

Example: If you had a subscriber to a publication who renewed multiple times and then stopped subscribing 6 months ago, mailing them again with messaging that speaks to them like “family” (e.g. “We want you back!”) rather than messaging that speaks to them as a “guest” (i.e. like any other new prospect), you are clearly missing a huge opportunity. And this would apply if they stopped subscribing a year ago...or more.

The video I sent a few weeks ago, “Phone a friend” talked about expires as your best list with some additional concepts around this rule of thumb. Take a look here if you missed it...it's short.

While recency of when they expired is still important to know and select by, I have had experiences in my career where I was able to mail expires who have not been active for 3 or more years and we could still revive them—and make them active again—by knowing their real value as previous, *frequent* customers.

I know most of you know this instinctively...however, I have consulted with too many marketers and heard too many horror stories from folks who use “one-size-fits-all copy” to all segments of their audience; and even something as simple as “we want you back” to a segment of frequent, former customers (who may not be recent) can double your response rate...or more. I've seen that happen.

They know you know them already...you know them much better than you might be acknowledging...and you also (I hope) once loved them.

Why would you want to hide that?

3) “M” is for monetary value

Now round out this RFM formula by making sure you know the total amount of money every person on your list has spent with you...and create “tiers” that make the most sense based on the price point(s) of your products.

The amount of money spent by each customer, in isolation, can be deceiving however...but combine it with recency and frequency and you will see the power of segmenting your list in this fundamental way.

And making sure you don't have "one size fits all promotion" as I mentioned before (emails, letters, anything)... and that you talk to your customers based on their relationship with you...all "calculated" through RFM...can be a game changer.

I want to share a quick story to bring this home:

I have a friend/client who has 18 different products...and she does an incredible job cross selling and upselling to her existing customers the products they have not bought previously.

But when I saw a breakout of her buyer list, something like 80% or more of the folks had only bought one product while most of the others had bought 2 or 3 at most...and it seemed that with some "RFM segmenting tweaks" there was huge potential to get more of those "1 to 3 time buyers" to buy much more given all of the related offerings available.

We got religion on this when I noted that there was ONE person on the list who bought ALL 18 products (and no, it was not a relative!)...and I asked the question:

"When did you invite this 18 time buyer to dinner?"

Of course I was being a little sarcastic...but I was also trying to make an important point.

Yes..."lists are people too."

From that question we started surveying the most recent, frequent and high dollar spending customers, finding out why they bought multiple products and also in what order they bought them to look for trends in buying behavior.

That led to what I call a logical (and much more successful) “contact strategy” where we started offering products to previous buyers in a sequence that made more sense than simply making random offerings.

I guess there might be some of you, sophisticated online marketers, saying to yourself, “that’s simply a funnel.” And you would be right. I just want to emphasize that if you are creating your funnels based on previous buying behavior (and RFM) they will be much more powerful.

This strategy was rooted in addressing the needs and buying patterns of existing customers...and of course with copy and creative that spoke to why their recent purchase leads perfectly to the next purchase...with customized copy to different segments.

RFM ruled the day even before anyone ever used the word “funnel.”

I am only scratching the surface how something as basic and fundamental as RFM can change your entire marketing strategy in terms of which offers to offer when—and how to speak to different segments of your family, online or offline, when making those more targeted offers.

It’s an entire chapter in my new book. *Overdeliver* (which comes out next April).

But I needed to give you a preview of this critical chapter just in case there is even one person in my online family who doesn’t look at RFM as the most important, basic segmenting tool at their disposal.

It’s the one thing that always needs to be in play when doing any kind of direct response marketing.

RFT

In a world where it takes a lot more time for prospects to write you a check or give you their credit card number (e.g. Facebook), looking at the “M” in the RFM formula (i.e.

how much money they spend with you) often needs to be analyzed by "T" (*before they spend anything with you*)...and the "T" stands for "Time."

This is taking the cliché "time is money" in a different direction.

The "T" here refers to the level of engagement your prospect has with you from the beginning of (and throughout) the relationship which has a direct relationship on how they buy, when they buy...and especially how long and how much they will buy from you in the future.

This was true in an era before there was digital content and when it was too expensive to give away your best stuff leading up to a sale.

And it is even truer today.

But as I outlined in the direct mail case history I called "the survey package vs. the bookalog" in the post, "How you sell is how they respond," heavier initial engagement in direct mail led to much higher profits and higher lifetime value...and the same is true today in digital marketing.

For example, if you track how much time someone spends on a video sales letter or pre-launch content (video or text) you can predict response rates, sales and repeat sales with much more confidence.

In the olden days, someone who spent time reading a 24 page promotion rather than a sweepstakes promotion (for example) might not respond as vigorously at the outset...but the odds of them being more wedded to your product from day one was much higher as was the likelihood they would want to engage with you more deeply with products two, three and four.

In the "RFT formula," recency and frequency are just as critical; but tracking "time" when you can't yet track "money spent" is as indicative of predicting success if they had spent money with you already.

I guess you can say the more time they spend with your content (and do it recently and frequently too), the more likely they will be “engaged to be engaged”...leading to “fully engaged”...and of course that should lead to “marriage.”

And in case you don't know it, bigamy is legal in direct marketing.

#4: Statistical significance: “Running hard up a stairway to heaven” (November 2018)

When I was a freshman in college, thinking about becoming an English major, the last thing on my mind was “statistical significance”...of anything.

I think the only statistic that was on my mind was how many unemployed English majors there were and whether my parents would be paying tuition for my sophomore year once they found out my plan.

It was abundantly clear that I wasn't going to learn about statistical significance in my English classes nor was I going to learn much about it in my marketing classes either.

As I recall there was one paragraph in my “Introduction to Marketing” textbook (and it was a very short paragraph—one sentence) that mentioned “direct marketing” and anything regarding the notion that advertising and marketing could actually have a return on investment, that everything was testable and statistics and numbers in marketing mattered.

In that textbook and course I learned all about about image advertising, brand advertising and other flavors of non-measurable advertising...even how to set up displays inside the liquor store I worked at in the summers during college.

While direct marketing was not in the curriculum, I learned how to strategically place impulse items and the bottles of wine on clearance due to excess inventory in places where there was more traffic in the store.

So I had that going for me during my summer vacations from college.

But heaven forbid learning about creating any metrics to track those sales.

It was only many years later when I learned about direct marketing (outside of the classroom and the liquor store) and I got my first lesson in statistical significance and why you have to believe your numbers assuming they are numbers worth believing.

More on that in a minute.

Back to college...

During that freshman year I recall the campus radio station asked the student body to vote on "the best rock and roll songs of all time." The year was 1977.

Those of you who ever participated in exercises like that in that era, know that number one was always Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" and number two was always "Layla" by Derek and the Dominos (featuring Eric Clapton).

I can't even recall what song usually ended up a distant third.

But I was sick of the same results all the time so as my protest, I stuffed the ballot box with a song and band I liked at the time: "Running Hard" by Renaissance.

Renaissance was popular but no one was confusing them with Led Zeppelin or Eric Clapton.

And "Running Hard" wasn't even their biggest hit...that would be "Carpet of the Sun."

You probably never heard of the group or either song...which makes this story even more interesting.

You should check them out, though. Annie Haslam, the lead singer, has an amazing voice with a five octave range—you might mistake her for an opera singer singing rock and roll. And she still sings and rocks today (I was fortunate to see a reunion concert recently).

Anyway, I spent the two weeks while "polls were open" voting for "Running Hard" as the top rock and roll song of all time. And I voted a lot...multiple times and every day.

I assumed they would eventually ignore the votes...but they did not.

I attended a highly respected, large state university known for mediocre football and basketball teams (actually awful most years) but not known to be a school full of dummies.

However, in my freshman year, to my mind, they (at least the students running the radio station) became known for not understanding a result that needs to be thrown out and a result that was not statistically significant.

Even this English major could have figured that one out.

Little did I know, I was getting my first lesson in statistical significance—one that was never going to happen in a classroom as mentioned earlier—and one that I didn't learn in earnest until meeting Dick Benson a few years into my direct marketing career.

So what did my college radio station do?

When they counted down, the number three song of all time was "Layla," number two was "Stairway to Heaven" and number one was "Running Hard."

I remember telling my friends that I felt really good about my college choice with so many Renaissance fans in the student body. What a pleasant surprise! ☺

Fast forward to the first online launch I ever did (sometime around 2008 or so).

I recall we were testing two offers in real time, online...which was very exciting since the usual for my company up until then (offline) was that we needed to wait 12 weeks to get actionable results while doing split testing in direct mail.

I remember we were testing a particular variable in the copy and a few hours into the test, we had 12 orders for one offer and 8 for the other which caused our launch expert to exclaim:

"We've got a winner!"

This was on a \$97 offer mind you...there was still more time to run the test (in addition to the numbers being so small)...so of course I would not let our expert roll out with his proclaimed "winner."

And at the end, the test ended up 23 to 20 orders (or something like that) and there was no clear winner or any kind of statistical significance.

I used these two extreme examples to emphasize the need to be educated in how to test effectively and accurately in direct marketing...something we could take a deep dive on here...but I will wait to share that deep dive in a future post with an excerpt from my new book on this critical topic.

Some broad things I want to share today though:

The first rule of thumb I learned about statistical significance was when Dick Benson encouraged me to have at least 100 net orders (in our case on a \$30 product) on each side of an A/B split test as a starting point to have confidence in the results...and that rule can get extrapolated in a variety of ways, online and offline.

(Note: The science of a true “A/B list test”—making sure the two groups are alike in terms of their list profile—is also a key thing to understand and make sure you can rely on your test results. You need statistical significance on the responses and you also need list universes that are demographically similar. More on that when we deep dive).

The other rule of thumb is to have an analyst (with an expertise in statistics) as your right hand person if you are a marketer—and it should be an analyst who is not an “English major type” but a “math major type.”

I recall a guest speaker at one of my Titans Mastermind meetings who had built a company that reached nearly \$100 million in revenue at its height—and he said that when he launched his business he assumed his most critical employee/internal partner would be his Chief Financial Officer.

However, after building that almost nine figure business on the principles of direct response, he said the most important employee in the company was his “Director of Analytics” since he learned that without accurate numbers on the true profitability of every campaign (based on statistically significant, measurable results) the company would have faltered many times. This was the key to their growth.

He is not the only CEO/business owner/entrepreneur who figured this out.

And it is always the direct marketers who figure it out first...and best.

I just received an amazing endorsement for my new book, *Overdeliver*, from direct response marketing icon Dan Kennedy who said this about the book (and direct response marketing):

"Pros will find it fascinating. Those new to the disciplines will find a vital crash course. Pin-head executives in big, dumb corporations wasting oceans of money on utterly unaccountable brand and image and ego advertising should be forced at gunpoint to read it."

Ogilvy was right when he ranted to his own agency's staff that only the mail-order people knew what the hell they were doing, and were Ogilvy alive, he would applaud Brian's work here"

Of course Dan almost made me cry saying David Ogilvy would like my book.

But that is not why I shared his observation with you—nor am I bragging.

I am sharing it to give credence to what I am talking about today.

The lessons are not just for "big dumb corporations" who don't get it.

It's also possible that there are still some college radio stations and online marketers who don't get it either...and all of us need to understand direct marketing and the principle of statistical significance.

The examples and people I have cited above might not lose "oceans of money" due to their bonehead thinking.

But I would recommend that the radio station should only be looking for the number *three* song of all time when they ask folks to vote again; and the online marketers mentioned above, and those like them, should hire a kick ass marketing analyst as a top priority, especially if math and statistics are not their strength.

I know there are many pieces of software that can help with this important function but it's a role that deserves a lot of personal attention too.

In short, they (and you) should do what David Ogilvy, my new BFF, says about that:

"If you ever find a man who is better than you are—hire him. If necessary pay him more than you pay yourself."

SECTION TWO: INSPIRED BY COPY

#5: “Confessions of a wannabe...the journey continues” (February 2019)

After 34 years helping to build Boardroom Inc. (working with some of the best copywriters who have ever lived)—and now four years into my “new career” of paying forward all I have learned—I am as convinced as ever that being a great copywriter is not just reserved for those who have it listed at the top of their resumes or C.V.

While the copywriters I have had the privilege to call business partners, friends and mentors—folks like Gene Schwartz, Gary Bencivenga, Jim Rutz and Mel Martin—they, like so many others, clearly have super powers most of us can only dream to have one day.

But for the rest of us to simply throw our arms up and to say, “I am not a copywriter” or “I wish I knew how to write,” is just not acceptable anymore.

I’ve written multiple times over the past four years about my career as a “copywriter wannabe”—and it wasn’t until I got called out on such a lame statement by many of you that I got off my butt and realized that I didn’t need to go to the “copywriting store” to create great copy...and that I could go shopping in my head much more than I ever imagined.

More on getting called out in a minute.

I had clues years ago how off base I was but didn’t recognize them at the time; but every day I see the truth more clearly.

As I teach and coach marketers and entrepreneurs who either treat copywriting as if it is a “commodity” OR they treat it as some magical super power, only reserved for an elite group, we need some additional clarity in both camps.

For those of you who treat it as a commodity, my fear is that you will get what you pay for if you hire on the outside...that is, not having someone write about your life’s passion

in whatever niche you work in, with depth and heart, is a missed opportunity (and can even be the downfall of your entire business). I wrote about this at length in "Success leaves clues."

And for those of you who have put copywriters on a pedestal and you think you can never stand on it with them, you are exactly where I was before I realized this:

In addition to researching and reading everything about the subjects they write about, the best copywriters get their best ideas from the minds of their clients when they interview them.

The copywriters absolutely have supreme talent we need to tap into no matter what; however the knowledge and talent gap between the best copywriters in the world and you (in your area of expertise) is not as wide as you think.

Frankly, if I had to choose the key ingredients in the makeup of the best copywriters I have ever met and worked with, it's their ability to *"research deeply and extract fully."*

My good friend and copywriting giant, David Deutsch, makes a keen distinction between "copywriting" and "copythinking" (and I will now lobby for "copythinking" to become a real word).

David always challenged me with this distinction when I was his client and now I see him challenging the members of Titans Mastermind of which he is a member himself.

It is important to understand that not all of us are people who write as part of our livelihood yet we all can do a lot more thinking, introspection and research before anyone puts pen to paper.

And if you hire outside copywriters, fire the ones quickly who don't want to have multiple "copythinking sessions" with you or your team or your experts before they begin.

It's what all the great copywriters do.

And why shouldn't we *all* do the same before we write anything, copywriter or not?

Looking back, I have spent way too much time lamenting that if I could have figured out how to write killer promotions like Gary Bencivenga or Gene Schwartz, life would have been a lot easier.

Thinking about being one of those guys seemed pretty cool (but unreachable).

And it's not just because it could lead to making a boatload of money.

The impact that "A list copywriters" can make in the world by moving millions of people to action is both inspiring and fascinating to me...always was and always will be.

And being able to write like those guys seemed very far away from my skill set.

Maybe I had "copywriter envy" and that is what led to calling myself a "wannabe."

But I was in the wrong discussion in my head.

When I thought about it some more, I realized it wasn't envy since I am eternally grateful for the relationships I've had with the most impactful writers in direct response throughout my career and how much I have learned from them.

They were (and are) all generous mentors. There was (and is) no envy. It's something else.

And that brings me to the subscriber who "called me out" a few years ago after one of my outbursts about my lack of copywriting prowess:

"This has been bugging me, Brian. And it's probably bugging a few others on this list who are quietly wondering the same thing every time I read your e-mails and you say you are not a copywriter."

He went on:

"Your weekly blog is full of DR copy style arguments and writing patterns so I assume you must have studied copywriting at some point and maybe you just prefer to call yourself a copywriter wannabe for, well...marketing reasons? Am I way off here? What's the deal?"

Ouch.

My initial concern was that this reader was angry with me (along with many others)...thinking I had other motives by saying "I am not a copywriter"...and that my primary motivation was to eventually turn my list into an affiliate cash machine by manipulating my readers using all sorts of "Ninja tricks" (hate that term) with my writing.

Trust me...I'm not that good.

That didn't happen nor is it ever happening...although many in my online family buy books and other educational materials I create and publish.

Selling educational programs are a natural extension of my writing...that's my story and I am sticking to it.

I made the mistake of thinking that I can't be a copywriter in the traditional sense since my writing is not about selling...it's first and foremost about relationship building.

So maybe that's why I became a "reluctant copywriter?"

It's still hard to compare myself with anyone who writes copy that moves people to action...but thanks to you, I have come to the conclusion that what I do is copywriting...I do move people to action...and what all of you do with every email, card, note, sales letter you write is copywriting too.

Since so many of you write to me regularly, I see it first hand in those emails.

I can tell that you have read and studied the best copy from the world's best copywriters over your careers which has clearly taught you a thing or two.

And from what I can tell, most of you feel pretty awesome when you are able to sell something after building a deeper relationship with your respective tribes; and unlike me, you have gotten over yourselves much faster than I was able to...but thank you so much for making me see the light on this.

Now it just keeps getting reinforced more and more every day.

Where I ended up after I got “exposed” by you (and this is what I shared with you at the time):

“If I was given an assignment today to write a promotion soup to nuts, in any medium, I would fall flat on my face. Guaranteed.”

However, there is no embarrassment in not being considered a world class copywriter while still eagerly sharing ourselves and telling our stories to an enthusiastic audience.

The fact that you or I may not be able to write a 12 page promotion, a 20 minute video sales letter or a half hour infomercial script doesn't mean we can't be competent writers, communicators, storytellers, and speakers.

And the tip that keeps coming up time and again during Titans Mastermind and Titans Master Class meetings, with so many copywriters and others who see themselves as anything BUT copywriters in the room, is that *anyone* can “speak” a 12 page promotion, a 20 minute video sales letter or a half hour infomercial script by simply getting interviewed about your passion by one of these magical writers.

When the finished product is as much your words as theirs—but written with a special pen by someone with a special talent—who is the real copywriter in this relationship?

I can safely say it is not one person.

I often talk about the example of when I painfully tried to write the original promotion for the landmark event, "Titans of Direct Response" in 2014, an event I had been dreaming about doing forever and thinking that no one else besides me could write about it.

At the event itself, when talking from the stage about the promotion that was responsible for getting the attendees into their seats (we had 350 people who paid from \$3,500 to \$5,000 each), I embarrassingly told the audience that after 10 hours of writing the promotion for the event, only creating a measly 6 pages of copy in those 10 hours, I realized I was in over my head.

How it got done was taking my best thinking (i.e. those 6 pages) to an outside copywriter.

My heart and soul was still in the final copy despite all the improvements the copywriter made for me.

I wasn't a failed copywriter simply because I asked for help.

Nor did the copywriter have all the vision.

But the copywriter had the poetry to move people to action. (Thank you Roy Furr!)

And if any of you think you can't write effectively about something you care about deeply, I encourage you to think again.

Many of you know the story of the original promotion written by Gene Schwartz that launched *Boardroom Reports*, the brainchild of my mentor Marty Edelston.

When everyone hailed Gene for a blockbuster launch package, he was quick to say that the "copy" was what was in Marty's head for decades, *Boardroom* being his lifelong passion project...and all Gene did was get the words out of him and "added a little of his own flair."

If you are like me, I bet some of the most compelling copy in your in box every day does NOT come from a seasoned copywriter but rather from passionate entrepreneurs who know how to write and communicate about their mission better than anyone in the world.

My good friend Jeff Walker, who inspired me to send my blog out every Sunday at 6:00 a.m. U.S. eastern time, does video for his posts (at the same time)...but if you can't "read" his passionate copy as he speaks to you from your in box every Sunday (right next to my posts in your in box if you subscribe to both of us!), you aren't paying attention.

He and I have talked about our own evolution into the "copywriters" we are today—maybe not in the image of someone like Gene Schwartz—but powerful writers and communicators just the same.

Copywriting is a learnable skill...some who do it a high level are just super human like in any other field...but everyone can take their writing to new levels all the time, especially when writing inside of their passion.

Deep "copythinking" becomes expert copywriting.

And while passionate entrepreneurs might not be able to write a promotion for someone else, we are the master of our own niche.

Some still need some help like I did; while others are doing just fine on their own, thank you.

I have many friends who are gurus to their audiences and after writing for years on the topics that are part of their heart and soul, they are absolutely their own best copywriter—and hiring a freelancer for them would be a waste of time and money.

My advice to all of you is to look within as you think about copy platforms to sell your products and services...and if it's also connected to your life's mission, you just may be the best copywriter you can hire.

However, the power of getting it proofed, honed, tightened (by someone else who is a seasoned copywriter or someone who also knows a lot about your niche) might still be in order. I'd recommend that as well. Even the top copywriters have "copy chiefs" looking at their stuff.

I've used this quote in previous speeches I've given:

"I'm not a salesman"

-From the last salesman who visited my office or called me on the phone

I'm sure you will agree that we are all salesmen and saleswomen in every aspect of our lives (i.e. not just in a business sense).

"Selling" my wife on the idea that spending countless hours calling balls and strikes behind the plate at little league and high school baseball games is a noble thing to do (and even makes me a better husband), is way tougher than selling subscriptions and books to millions of consumers.

I do, and have done, selling in both of those "categories."

And I constantly sell you, my online family, on the merits of marketing discipline, the importance of "original sources" in direct marketing, how lists, offers and creative all work together...you know, the marketing propaganda I provide every Sunday morning.
☺

Simply put, embrace the fact that we are all salesmen and saleswomen...and we are all copywriters as well.

Talking with Titan Ken McCarthy about this subject, we came to the conclusion that every negotiation, conversation or interaction starts and ends with building an argument...just like writing a sales letter.

That's how the puzzle gets solved.

Another subscriber wrote to me many years ago (and we have become good friends since) telling me his inspiring journey of going from architect to direct response copywriter.

We exchanged some ideas on how his career in architecture prepared him beautifully to be a copywriter (with only a little sarcasm)...and frankly, we could have had the same conversation if he had been a dentist, a teacher, a lawyer...anything...as long as there was expertise and passion present.

We also agreed that inspiration and inflections can come from any direction; and it is imperative to provide value in everything we do.

Who better to write about that value (or at least speak about it, record it and get someone else to get *your* words on paper) than you?

#6: ‘Smiling swindlers” (January 2019)

There are a lot of ways to be a hero to your audience...and the best combination to do that is to show off your super powers while at the same time calling out the villain (or villains) that you and your audience equally despise (i.e. villains who are holding you back from success and happiness).

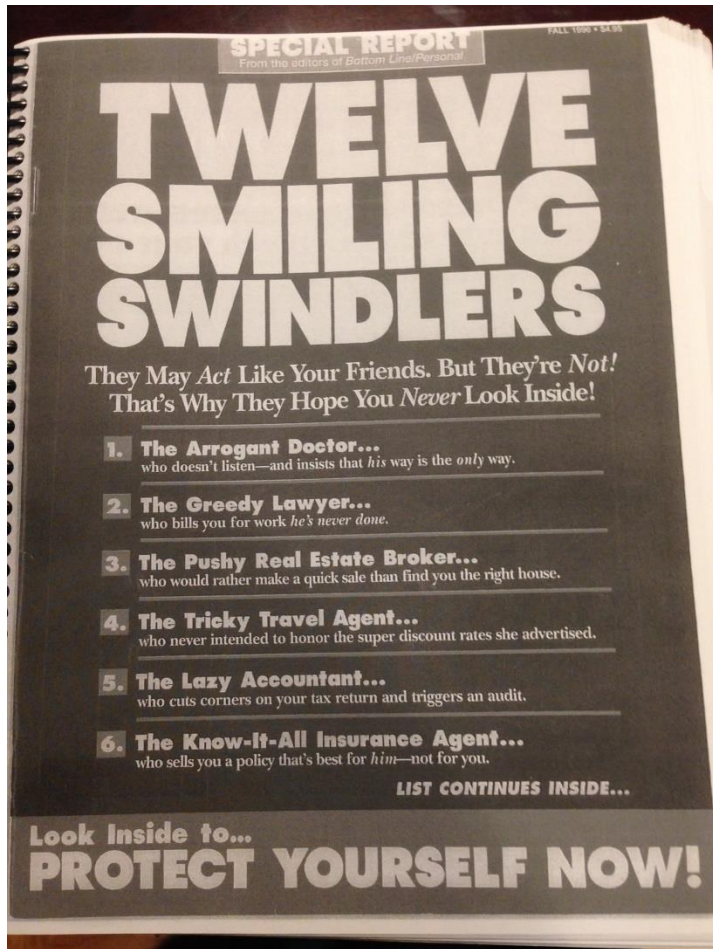
Sounds easy...but it needs some skill too.

Requirement: You can't get carried away with your own press releases on how great you are; and you have to choose your villains wisely.

My old company Boardroom did this masterfully with what we called “the bloodhound approach.”

While we didn't have a single guru or expert in any of our newsletters or books calling out the bad guys, we did have our founder, Marty Edelston, who was the most inquisitive and connected man on the planet...and he was always looking out for the average Joe.

One of my favorite promotions using this technique was this one for a consumer tips book called *The Big Black Book*:



Our copywriters perfected this “bloodhound approach” (which took a while) since we didn’t have one point of view with one person with an axe to grind (e.g. a doctor railing on the medical establishment) but rather panels of experts—authors, researchers and opinion leaders—who went out to seek the truth under Marty’s direction.

Marty just needed to be the most connected man, not the man with all the answers himself.

He then became a crusader for truth directing those experts to focus on justice being served, making sure your doctor isn’t arrogant or that your lawyer isn’t greedy...and whatever else he needed to protect everyone from including the ten additional “swindlers” in the promotion above.

Bloodhound is defined here as someone who is an expert on nothing in particular but seen as a watchdog and protector and someone who will spot the villains on your behalf.

I share this with you today since it comes up often among my mastermind members and other people I coach...they sometimes lament that they don't have the skill or the experience (and track record of success) to tell their audiences why they should trust them over others offering similar products or services.

But even without a track record of success, being aligned with those who can claim victories over various villains (who look like those you are competing against for example), and positioning yourself as the bloodhound leader of those experts, can often be a viable alternative.

If you don't have a single area of expertise, the bloodhound approach is something that could work for you in today's world when you position yourself as the "steadfast pursuer of the truth."

Another version of the bloodhound approach that worked well (and was also one of my favorite direct mail packages ever) was one we did for our newsletter, *Tax Hotline*.

A Boardroom trademark was how we brought our experts together on a regular basis...whether at our famous "Boardroom Dinners" or just assembling experts from a particular discipline to meet and debate to see what sparks would fly.

When they got together in a moderated discussion those sparks always turned into the best story ideas.

Marty once brought together all of our tax experts from all over the country in one meeting...and he was smart enough to not only invite our editors to listen in but also one of our copywriters too.

What came out of that meeting were dozens of the best story ideas...but unexpectedly, what also came out, was a blockbuster control package for *Tax Hotline*.

What the copywriter figured out was that the concept of a “secret meeting of the country's top tax experts spilling the beans on things they would not normally talk about in public” was another differentiator beyond just the content.

Only WE could get that special group in a room, spilling the beans on who was screwing the average consumer the most.

The heroes of this package were the top tax and estate planning practitioners and attorneys in the country, all brought together by Marty the bloodhound.

And there were lots of villains readily available starting with the government and the IRS.

They didn't go into the meeting planning on throwing anyone under the bus...but they did.

And the copywriter was the first to take note of that.

This “closed door meeting” was the premise of the new control, a control that was impossible to beat for over a decade.

Bloodhound plus experts (in a place where no one could get in without a special invitation) telling secrets how to beat popular villains, is a premise worth stealing if you are not a single guru.

(Another lesson here is to invite your copywriters and creative talent into your marketing process whenever you are creating content ideas...remember “copywriters as trusted advisors” rather than “vendors who write stuff for you” is a potential game-changing philosophy for your business.)

Side note about this bloodhound approach: The copywriters at the time generally preferred to work with many of our competitors who had single gurus...they found writing for us (who had “gurus by committee”) was much more difficult.

I guess they thought it was more direct with one guru: The hero could be a naturopathic physician who hates traditional doctors; or a financial planner with a

contrarian view on picking stocks who hates milk toast financial planners; or a superstar CPA who hates the IRS.

Eventually the copywriters got more comfortable with the bloodhound approach (and got better at it too), using many experts (under the supervision of a well-connected bloodhound).

They found new and creative ways in the spirit of "Twelve Smiling Swindlers" or the "Secret Meeting of the Country's Top Tax Experts" to battle many villains at the same time with multiple, yet unified, experts, with lots of success.

Once they perfected the approach, we were not as much at the mercy to the guru publishers for their services.

But bloodhound or guru, you also need to choose the *right* villain(s)...ones that the bloodhound's experts can expose as charlatans easily or ones that the guru is superior to...and it all comes down to believability and a track record (i.e. proof that you have the better solution).

Choosing inappropriate villains while at the same time not having enough success yourself, bloodhound or guru, could blow all of your credibility in a heartbeat...and ultimately diminish the effectiveness of using either approach.

I read two different promotions this week from online gurus who both seem to have a decent following.

And while both might be super effective, I want to point out some possible flaws.

In one of the promotions, the guru talks about, "The secret [which] is a skill rising in popularity called copywriting and...in the next 3 minutes, I'll show you the millionaire's definition of copywriting."

His initial proof elements are about his homes and cars and the wealth he's created from learning this "secret skill" and when he starts identifying his villains, he maintains

that "...the old way of learning copywriting is wrong" because guys like Halbert, Schwartz and Hopkins only wrote offline and his secrets are for online copywriters only.

Big promise...and it's one that he might be able to keep if he knows his list very well (i.e. he's talking to inexperienced marketers and copywriters)...although a logic line like this to a group of folks like you (who know copywriting is not a commodity) might lead to skepticism.

That is, at this point, he better be able to show his prowess compared to some of the best copywriters who have ever lived if he's got experienced and well read folks on his list.

He will need lots of successful promotions as a show and tell, with testimonials, and not just expensive cars and multiple vacation homes to prove he's got the deep dark secrets that no one had before the Internet.

All-time great copywriters may be good villains if his audience is made up of newbies; but they are dangerous villains to choose if his audience is made up of experienced copywriters and marketers.

I admit that I am not objective here since the best copywriters today swear by what they learned from those old timers. But it's also true there are many young copywriters who probably believe that the formation of the earth and the Internet was a big bang that all happened at the same time.

Believing that only new techniques work online is an argument that can be made...but not by me.

Maybe this approach wins short term with the right audience but long term, I think it's a loser to attract future rock stars.

The second guru I heard from made a much more convincing argument when her thesis was that "Facebook ads don't work anymore"—and whether it's true or not, Facebook is a villain that might be easier to hate than Halbert or Schwartz.

If she can then prove she has an alternative or shortcut on how to make Facebook ads work, and has a track record to back it up, this one seems way more plausible.

Being a guru comes with responsibility—you have to have the goods and show you are superior to the villain(s).

Studying copy through this lens of heroes and villains, whether the hero is a bloodhound or a guru, always gives me ideas for future copy platforms and maybe it will for you too.

Surround yourself with top experts who are best-in-class—or just be the best in your field—and the “smiling swindlers” will appear before your eyes.

#7: “Success leaves clues” (December 2018)

Copywriting is not a commodity.

Although if you sit where I sit, you might think that hiring a copywriter should be as easy as putting a listing on craigslist—because I get this question showing up many times per week in my In Box:

“Do you know a good copywriter?”

Of course the answer is “yes”...I actually know hundreds...and I'm proud to say that I had the privilege to work with some of the best ever. (And I am not being arrogant either...see #3 and #6 below).

However, just knowing great (and not-so-great) copywriters is not enough...and asking the question like there is a one-size-fits-all copywriter for any business is the worst way to begin the inquiry.

Ask a novice who has tried writing promotion copy and failed miserably if they think it's easy.

In fact, ask some of the best copywriters who have ever lived the same thing.

Not only is it not easy, all copywriters know that the secret to success is to master a niche before presenting themselves as the solution to all assignments in all categories.

Copywriters who have been at it for any length of time also know that what they do is not a talent they learned in school.

They also know that it is not a skill they picked up by accident by simply reading some books on the subject which miraculously led them to write successful copy and then make millions in royalties.

The faster things move in the online marketing world—as media gets cheaper and the barrier to entry gets lower—the more worried I get that short term success online with mediocre creative and copy has been interpreted as “copy is not that important” and also that “finding a copywriter” is not worth an extensive search.

In certain marketing circles even though it's clear that adding great copy (from skilled copywriters) working in conjunction with precise list selection and an irresistible offer has been game changing for so many, there still seem to be too many marketers who look at copywriting as a necessary evil, rather than a core competency (to do or to buy intelligently) that can change the trajectory of their business.

As I talked about in my short video "When 41% is a majority," if you have the list and offer dialed in, you will probably make some money with workmanlike creative and copy.

But that is not a reason to make copy and creative the "anyhow portion" of your marketing mix.

It's just the opposite: The biggest breakthroughs throughout my career were when we found the right copywriter on the right project; and the new copy approach by someone who had the chops and had done it before for many others is how we got 30% lifts in response (and more).

(NOTE: In the P.S. today you'll find literally a "once-in-a-lifetime offer" from one of the Titans of direct response copywriting, one of those writers who consistently got my company those huge lifts. Due to very special circumstances this publicity-phobic writer is making an exception and coming forward to reveal techniques he NEVER reveals publicly. As per my policy, it's not an affiliate deal but an educational opportunity I think you'll want to take advantage of)

Four years ago I began digging deeper into why copywriting was being viewed as a commodity by too many people for my taste...and what I decided to do was identify characteristics that were prevalent in every world class copywriter I had the privilege of working with in my career.

I originally titled that first crack at this analysis, "You May Not Know It When You See It"—or how to identify if a copywriter has that "it factor" that all of the greats possessed (and possess today).

I believe that the 7 traits below are what makes the great ones great...and even though most people don't ask me for this information (they just want a copywriter!), I send them some version of this, tell them they are asking the wrong question, and that we can have a much better discussion of their needs once they understand the complexity of what it takes to be an "A list copywriter."

I'm hoping this post can be a guide for you to follow if you are a copywriter; and also a guide to ask the right questions when looking for a copywriter.

I also hope that I make the case that hiring this asset correctly might be one of the most important things you will ever do in business.

You'll see that "knowing it when you see it" is a lot more than just spotting writing talent...although there is no substitute for command of the language.

Here are the 7 traits that go beyond just writing:

1. HUNGER

This is similar to one of my favorite concepts which I have shared with you before—the notion of "outworking everyone."

It's not only working more hours, it is also showing your dedication to your occupation.

I'm a believer in Malcolm Gladwell's "10,000-Hour Rule," (despite it being debunked in some circles which I discussed in "10,000 hours or 33 minutes?").

If you are not familiar with the rule, it states that it takes 10,000 hours to achieve mastery in just about anything.

Read the post if you want another spin on it but whether it's 10,000 hours or something less than that, it's safe to say that world class copywriters are not achieving greatness from an online course or a few hours of study.

2. INSATIABLE CURIOSITY

Readers of this weekly e-mail have heard me on this one before too...nothing replaces curiosity when it comes to being a great copywriter.

Copywriters I have profiled in the past have showed us why curiosity is the driver to making them the best of the best: Gene Schwartz through "the power of reading"; Arthur Johnson through "the power of specialization"; Parris Lampropoulos through "the power of immersion."

If you would like to read what I wrote about these three great copywriters previously (and others too on why insatiable curiosity matters most), click on any of their names above.

3. CONFIDENCE WITHOUT ARROGANCE

Who do you hang out with and why?

How do you stay accountable (and not just responsible) to your craft?

The communities you align with to become excellent at anything may be the most important career decision you will ever make...and there is not one copywriter who "goes it alone."

Although I always say, "you can't write copy by committee," the top writers run their copy past others they trust to tell them the truth about what works and what doesn't—based on their vast experience.

And of course they reciprocate.

Also: Like any other field where you are learning and growing, being an apprentice to mentors who can show you the way is critical; and then later on, you pay it forward by surrounding yourself with peers with equal or more talent than yourself.

And then you become a mentor and begin the cycle all over again.

One of the greats, David Deutsch, is a perfect example of this: When I met him he was kind of an apprentice to the one and only Jim Rutz; and now he has become one of the top coaches for up-and-coming copywriters—and a colleague of other writers who are his equals so they can continuously compare notes...and copy.

He never stops improving.

4. PASSION

If you start by writing with a purpose rather than for money, you are on the right track. If you have to call it “work,” why not start by creating magic in something you are passionate about first if at all possible?

My post “Direct Marketers Saving Lives” talked about this at length.

We should want to hire copywriters who talk about “10X” in terms of impact way before they talk about money. As a marketer, don't you want to start there too?

Another angle on passion which I alluded to in my intro: Going narrow to wide is almost always the better path the best copywriters follow. That is, going deep in one area or category and becoming proficient there first is the preferred way to eventually learn to go wider and write in multiple categories later on.

I also went deep myself on this in “Sharks, aliens and dinosaurs.”

5. BEING A STUDENT OF DIRECT RESPONSE MARKETING

When I speak about this to copywriters, the feedback I sometimes get is that it seems somewhat “intimidating”—talking about concepts like “RFM” and “lifetime value of a customer”—and why do I need to know that stuff if I only want to write?

I try to move the conversation to the fact that I am I trying to give them an unfair advantage over other copywriters competing for the same assignments.

Going from “copywriter writing for food” to “trusted advisor being part of an entire enterprise or mission” feels so much better and will be much more profitable—and it is easier to get there being a student of marketing and not just a student of writing.

Yes, I am seeding my new book! If you want to pre-order it, grab it here.

And my first book, *The Advertising Solution* will give you an unfair advantage if you are behind on #5—and it comes with free, priceless resources, at www.TheLegendsBook.com.

6. HUMILITY

I despise arrogance and hubris...which I hope you will call me on through these blogs if you feel it coming from me (which some of you have)...I use “I” way too much in a lot of these posts, I know...but I also try to keep my ego in check.

Whether you see it all the time or not, I strive for humility and I love humanity...and as a writer (OR marketer), I believe this is a good place for all of us to originate...and I can safely say that it has served me well when I stay true to this.

And it is plain to see in every top gun copywriter I have ever worked with.

Confidence in your message and how you choose to teach it is not arrogance if expressed properly and conveyed powerfully.

I talked a lot about the lesson in grace and humility I learned from Gary Bencivenga and Greg Renker after “The Titans of Direct Response” event in 2014—one of the most powerful things that happened to me as a result of that event.

I wrote about that in detail here.

7. PRIDE

Having a portfolio is always important...but I purposely put this last when I speak about these traits to copywriters so they can see the other more important attributes they should strive for well before showing all of their previous winners.

And it gives marketers a chance to know the writer before they know the writer's work.

Clearly the more you write, the more lessons you will learn on the field of play—and the larger your “portfolio” will be.

But hunger, curiosity, confidence without arrogance, passion, direct marketing knowledge and humility all come before that beautiful website showing off your samples.

One more thing I want to share now that you have read this post to the end:

Look at each of the 7 traits and you will see what I discovered—that they are also prevalent in all of the best *marketers* you will ever meet too.

Hunger to make your products the best; curiosity to explore all media and to study successes and failures from others (e.g. swipe files); confidence that your product is best-in-class and it is easy to differentiate; passion that what you are selling fits with your life's mission; knowing the fundamentals of measurable (direct) marketing; humility to know what messaging and positioning is congruent with who you are and all you represent; and pride that you can't wait to show the world what you have created.

SECTION THREE: INSPIRED BY MARKETING/COPYWRITING LEGENDS

#8: Dean Jackson/Eben Pagan/Todd Brown/Nicholas Kusmich/Mark Ford/Bob Burg: “Fishing without bait” (February 2019)

I’m all for killer offers and compelling calls to action (CTA’s)—but it was obvious during the Titans Mastermind meeting two weeks ago in Miami that the marketing landscape is changing quite a bit and almost on a daily basis. And I think it is for the better.

We had an all-star cast of guest speakers assembled: Dean Jackson, Eben Pagan, Todd Brown, Nicholas Kusmich, Mark Ford and Bob Burg.

Special guests also included A-list copywriter Clayton Makepeace and direct marketing legend Richard Viguerie.

And of course the Titans members themselves are all world class marketers, committed to multi-channel direct response, which made for another epic event.

To give you a peek inside, I’d like to share some key lessons we learned at the event from the guest speakers.

A theme that came up time and again throughout the two and a half days we spent together is that you can’t talk about compelling offers without talking about compelling copy, content and congruence.

Relationship marketing has taken over in new and exciting ways and it’s not enough anymore to just put your fishing pole in the water with a hook and some bait.

It takes so much more to play a long game in direct response marketing today.

Dean Jackson gave us an image in his opening presentation that I could not get out of my head:

Imagine you are in a boat on a lake “fishing for new customers” and instead of catching fish (i.e new customers) , they are jumping in the boat on their own when they

are ready to engage with you...or order your product...or join your mastermind...or whatever you might want to do together.

And when they jump into your boat on their own, they also have a much better chance of staying in the boat longer assuming they can breathe outside of water. 😊

I'm taking the metaphor too far—sorry. But I hope you see the distinction:

They jump in your boat *when they are ready*—assuming you have reminded them regularly you are always there for them and occasionally letting them know what you have to offer.

Instead of fishing in a traditional sense, pole in hand with an effective “hook” and delicious “bait” at the end of it (i.e. an irresistible offer), you instead shine a light over the lake *all the time* (i.e. communicating regularly and powerfully without selling) therefore creating a relationship over time on their terms and not always on your terms.

I guess we can say when the fish (i.e. students) are ready, the fishermen (i.e. teachers) appear.

We can relate this to something I mentioned in a recent post (and Dean repeated it for us at Titans):

“There are two times. Now and not now.”

And I will add my personal favorite on top of that one:

“Not everything we do, in marketing (and life) is a revenue event...but everything we do is a relationship event.”

I am by no means saying that we should be completely passive with our marketing messages—urgency and deadlines and timed launches and making offers at live or virtual events are all important to have in our tool box.

But it's clear that in today's competitive and distracting marketing environment—which has way too much noise, is full of overflowing in boxes, and exposes us to way too many pictures of food and vacation spots on Facebook—patience can be a virtue.

I know this sounds counter-intuitive (i.e. “don’t ruin a great offer with a CTA”) but it is fascinating how much we kept coming back to this theme with so many world class marketers in the room.

Dean was not alone with this observation—you will see in some of the other highlights from this most recent Titans Mastermind meeting that there are other variations.

Following Dean we heard from **Eben Pagan** who is a pioneer in online marketing and made a name for himself practicing and then teaching –as evidenced by the many marketing stars of today who point to him as their mentor.

Eben is known for never standing still and he is always re-inventing himself...and in fact, he has a new product he’s working on that covers that very subject since he believes that without constant re-invention, life is far less compelling and impactful.

When you ask this visionary about “marketing” he coyly says, “I haven’t been interested in marketing for over 10 years.” (Although Eben knows how important marketing is to make sure he can fully share the knowledge he is absorbing in areas such as “mental models,” “futurism,” “collaborative romantic partnerships,” and “visionary art”).

Two huge takeaways from his talk:

1) When reading up on anything new, instead of just Googling it, go to Google Scholar. This is information you can *really* trust. Eben reminded us that 90% of all the scientists that ever lived are alive today. Did you know that? I didn’t. Let’s access them more because we can.

2) You need to have “self-esteem as a creative visionary.” I touched on this in my post “12 Notes”—that is, it is less important what you “invent” and far more important

what you share with the world in your own way. But Eben went much deeper on this, reminding us that protecting our self-esteem is critical to keeping our confidence level as high as possible as entrepreneurs and business leaders—even when we often feel like we are only re-doing and re-hashing work from others. Our unique creativity is everywhere all the time and we need to take pride in it.

Todd Brown, who is on the cutting edge of all things online marketing, dissected a blockbuster promotion he created that stayed with the theme of delivering as much valuable content as you can before you are even thinking about a CTA or asking for money from prospects or structuring your offer.

It was a unique take which he labels as “Narrative Lessons”—and while on the surface this is also a bit counter-intuitive, it's consistent with what we are seeing in the marketplace today from top marketers.

Throughout his case history, he proved how narrative often trumps offer and CTA—and he talked about this methodology “not disqualifying anyone from the promotion.” I loved how he phrased that.

One thing he said in particular was such an important reminder to all of us who write any kind of copy:

He said it is much easier (and more compelling) to write *dialogue* inside a narrative piece of copy.

And there were so many more gems as Todd performed “copy forensics” in real time.

Here are some notes from Todd's presentation taken by Titan member Eric Bakey, a copywriter, entrepreneur, military veteran, total badass and as you can see, an accomplished cartoonist too:



After Todd spoke, **Nicholas Kusmich** took the stage and gave us a blueprint for maximizing the effectiveness of Facebook advertising.

And true to our theme, he focused on both desirability of the content you should offer along with ease of consumption of that content.

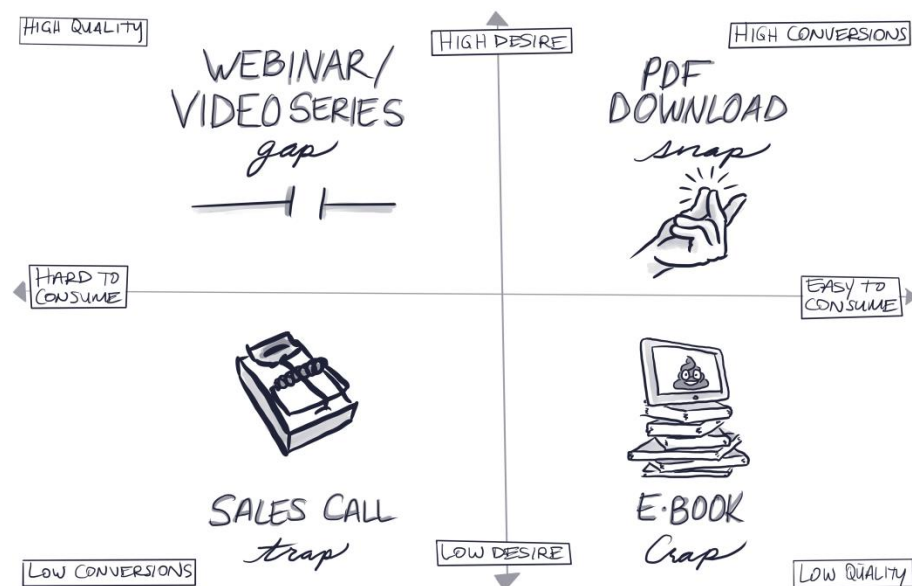
Once again offer and CTA were not front and center in terms of "selling."

He stretched us to think out of our boxes since so many of the direct response skills we know and love are having trouble being applied to a platform (e.g. Facebook) that is not currently "accepting those skills."

Simply put, if Facebook doesn't like the claims you make or the initial aggressive offer you construct, you're not going to be on Facebook for very long.

He drew up the model below (with a creative assist again from Eric Baky).

Nicholas is solving the Facebook puzzle for what we should do to achieve the highest desirability—while also creating the easiest content to consume (and content that will not be rejected).



He made the case for PDF downloads as the best vehicle to offer on Facebook but there was a lot more to it...but clearly the theme of over-delivering on (the right kind of) content was paramount.

Later that day we heard from **Mark Ford**, one of the architects of the publishing giant Agora...and when we got into a discussion about "hiring slow and firing fast," he asked everyone in the room a question:

"Can you think of a time you fired someone and after you let them go, you thought that you should have waited longer to fire them?"

I know this is the toughest thing we do in business and most of us are too nice so we fail to "fire fast."

Mark brought that home for us.

Mark is an author of many books and three of his best—*Ready, Fire, Aim: Zero to \$100 Million in No Time Flat*, *Persuasion: The Subtle Art of Getting What You Want*, and *How to Speak Intelligently About Everything That Matters*—were given away to all Titans in attendance. I recommend all of them highly.

And I also shared with everyone four of Mark's favorite quotes:

On flattery:

"Flattery works. At least it does so on me. I am equally pleased by insincerely given compliments as by genuinely felt ones."

On curiosity:

"The thing we most want to know is often the thing we've been told we don't need to know."

My mentor Marty Edelston has a nice spin on this one:

"The only things worth talking about are the things you can't talk about."

On teaching new skills:

"The behavior or skill I most want to teach others is usually the one I've only very recently acquired."

On success:

"In retrospect success looks like luck. Looking forward it looks like hard work."

One of our members commented about the time Mark spent sharing with us:

"Mentoring from the builder of a billion dollar powerhouse. Priceless."

Our final speaker was **Bob Burg**, author of *The Go-Giver*, which has sold over 850,000 copies worldwide and has been translated into 22 languages.

Bob came back to so many of the same themes from earlier in the event, and one in particular that is paramount in his work:

He stresses that we should always *provide exceptional value first* which makes selling anything later on more natural (and a lot easier).

That led us into a discussion about whether you needed to be a “nice person” to truly be a Go-Giver—and surprisingly, you don’t.

While we agreed that it’s probably better if you are a pleasant person, the key is first and foremost to deliver value to others as your top priority.

We talked about the “mercenary marketer” who can deliver exceptional value at the highest level and at the same time ethically extract every dollar he or she can, making “warm and fuzzy” only a bonus in the process.

This also started a conversation about how to be the right kind of “giver”...one that does not get taken advantage of regularly but is still about contribution first all the time.

It’s a tricky balance saying “no” as a supreme giver—and it’s also important “how you say no” and how you set up boundaries for some instances when you say “yes” conditionally.

Here are some phrases I use that I shared at the meeting and in my post, “How to keep your right arm”:

1. “I can’t do that right now but if anything changes I will let you know.”
2. “I will if I can” (although this one keeps the loop open... #4 is better)

3. "While I charge \$1,000 an hour, I don't want to charge you; however for my time, I would like you to donate the equivalent of my fee to a charity of my choice" (obviously shows commitment to the conversation...and respect for your time)
4. "While I don't like charging you for my time, overload doesn't serve anyone and I will do a disservice to you if I say yes. I am honored that you asked me but I have to respectfully decline at this time."
5. "I'm willing to set up that call but please send me your three most pressing questions in advance of the call so we can use the time most productively. And I have a hard stop at ___."
6. "My assistant (or I) can give you a half hour from 1:10 to 1:40 on Thursday." (Using a specific time and not on the hour will have both parties respect the time even more)

Those are only some ways you can say "no" (or set up a "conditional yes") nicely.

If any of you have any additional suggestions I can add to the list above (and then share with other readers), please email me.

Full disclosure: Since I keep these phrases on my phone as a note with the heading, "Keeping my right arm," I am also always looking to add to the list so this request is bit selfish too. 😊

To wrap this up, let's head back to that aforementioned lake (and climb inside our boat)—and connect the dots.

As you survey the lake and its inhabitants, always think about being in service and contributing to others first...and saying "yes" as often as you can (without giving up your right arm).

In addition, feel free to put away the fishing pole and your tackle box on occasion—and instead, pull out a huge spotlight to shine on the water consistently with generosity and heart (e.g. with great content and value and as crazy as it sounds, no “offer”).

And then be patient.

The fish are *always* jumping –under the surface and below the surface; but more often they are jumping at their pace rather than yours.

#9: Lester Wunderman: “Being Direct” (January 2019)

“Over lunch, a colleague’s young nephew asked me how we tweeted before the Internet. Pneumatic mail tubes and a lot of stationery, kid”

-Lester Wunderman on Twitter 3/25/12

We lost one of the pioneers of direct marketing last week, Lester Wunderman.

His book, *Being Direct: Making Advertising Pay*, was one of a few “bibles” I read early in my career.

And if he hadn’t stolen that title from under me (20+ years before I thought of it!), it would have been the title for my new book for sure.

I have often lamented that I wish guys like Gene Schwartz, Bill Jayme and Dick Benson could have had the opportunity to strut their stuff online but unfortunately they were all gone before this Internet thing caught on (and I really believe it will be hot)! ☺

However, Lester Wunderman is proof positive how a direct marketing original (heck, the “father of direct marketing”), and the definition of an “old schooler,” can embrace online marketing.

Unlike many of my other mentors and heroes he was able to do that since he lived until he was 98.

For those of you who never heard of Lester Wunderman, he was the chairman emeritus and co-founder of what became the world’s largest direct marketing ad agency.

According to his obituary, “He never graduated from college, had no formal training in advertising and got into the mail-order business on a two-for-one offer: one salary split between him and his brother. It proved to be a big bargain for Madison Avenue.”

His brother Irving was a gifted copywriter who I had the privilege to share a few meals with in his later years and I learned a lot from him in a very short time.

Also from Lester's obituary:

Long before anyone had ever heard of internet sales or interactive communications, Mr. Wunderman was widely credited with coining the term "direct marketing." For decades he championed an industry that sent personalized ads to preselected people for products and services that they might actually want to buy, as opposed to the scattershot approach of general advertising for the mass audiences of printed publications and broadcast media."

He also invented or brought into the mainstream things like toll-free telephone numbers for ordering, postage-paid subscription cards, buy-one-get-one-free offers, and "loyalty reward programs" for brand buyers who came back.

He was quoted in an interview recently when looking back on his early days (days when he figured out how to make advertising pay):

"Direct marketing was out there. I didn't invent it. But it had no definition and no strategy."

Studying the life's work of a man like Wunderman is not just a stroll down memory lane—studying him, and others like him from his generation, is an inquiry into "original source," or where bedrock principles come from; and that inquiry is the best way I know of to apply those principles as "marketing science."

I even devoted an entire chapter of my new book to "Original Source."

Perry Marshall and I talked about it as well in an interview which I have been told has helped many online marketers better apply their new technology on top of core eternal truths (which only made them better).

The interview is part of my post "Where babies come from" and if you listen to the interview, hit me with an email and let me know what you think.

I also love that Lester Wunderman didn't just watch the TV show *Mad Men* (about the advertising industry of the 1960's)—he was one of them.

Here's a tweet from Lester (one of many he sent weekly and over multiple seasons as he devoured *Mad Men*, rating each episode on a "1 to 5 martini scale" which relates to how much those guys drank every day):

"I liked this episode of #MadMen better the first time, when I lived it"

Not only was he telling the truth but that the guy was tweeting in his 90's is pretty cool too.

He was not living in the past, either—he understood that the Internet was the ultimate direct marketing medium and rather than run away from it, he embraced it (as I said earlier).

Here is another of his tweets:

"Enjoying the nostalgia of #MadMen, but the golden age of advertising is here and now."

I'll use Lester's "wunderment" (new word!) as being anecdotal evidence that my heroes would have felt the same way had they lived as long as he did.

Lester spoke often in his later years about that "here and now golden age of advertising" being about technology and marketing techniques he never could have dreamed of, even while he almost invented direct marketing; but I think he would also believe that human beings are still human beings and no matter what the technique we use, communication, connection and relationship trumps all.

In tribute to the passing of this legend, and "being direct" with you, I want to talk specifically about "your damn emails."

(I'm quoting Senator Bernie Sanders from a presidential debate he had with Hillary Clinton in 2016 when he said that everyone was sick and tired about hearing about her "...damn emails..." which had some controversy around them as many of you recall).

I am not interested where your email server resides nor does this have anything to do with politics...it was just a great line and it is what I thought about when reading Wunderman's tweets and the notion of "being direct."

Specifically I am interested if you are being as direct as you can by paying close attention to your (damn) emails.

That means reading them and maybe even *responding* to them too.

If Lester Wunderman can tweet in his 90's can't we communicate with folks who write back to us (or reach out to us) as a general rule of thumb?

It amazes me that so many marketers who are all about list building and creating funnels to sell products and services (and many make millions of dollars with thousands or even millions of followers) often forget that "lists are people too."

Why am I bringing this up?

First of all I am hurt.

I send too many emails to gurus, thought leaders and even folks I would call friends and get zero response.

Do they hate me? Maybe.

Do they get too many emails? Of course they do.

Do they think email is old technology? Possibly.

But if they are not responding to personal emails from a nice guy like me, I wonder how they are dealing with emails from their larger audience.

That is, if they are treating me like that, how are they treating their bigger tribe of students, followers and what truly is their "online family?"

Interesting side note—I received an email from one of these weekly posts from a reader (and friend) asking why I do these posts in email (and then post to a blog page) rather than as a blog post so everyone can see other comments and create a discussion.

There's a bit of that on my blog page but I made a conscious decision early on to make email my primary medium to encourage return email so I can communicate one-on-one with many of you.

However, that is a personal preference and not necessarily best practice.

Best practice is probably a blog...but whether email or blog (or tweet or postcard or voicemail or anything), making sure you interact with those who want to interact with you (within reason and time constraints of course) is the point I am getting at.

I try to respond to every email from these posts even if it takes me a couple of weeks; and I know the best-of-the-best bloggers are in there with their readers every step of the way, commenting and sharing which not only shows you care but it also proves you are not a robot.

It's also a way to segment or “sift and sort”—that is, a way to figure out who you can help in different ways and what new products and services you might consider offering in the future.

In short, it's the most direct and personal way to survey and learn.

After all, you really can't have a relationship with someone unless you start up a conversation up in the first place.

I know that boundaries need to be considered here too which is different for everyone.

But I encourage you to set your boundaries in a way so that you don't lose touch with all humans worth interacting with who might get lost in an auto responder series.

Since I believe that email is still the best way to create one-on-one relationships most intimately and efficiently, I am focusing mostly there; but reading and then responding is not unique to one medium.

There is also gold in emails from any person who takes the time to communicate with you—and if you open them and read them carefully, looking for key words and nuance, you would definitely find that out.

I'm sure many of you do this regularly.

Even when you are sending thousands of emails to a large audience, all automated, you would be amazed if you take the time to try and respond to every one (or most or many) of them (even if not immediately) with an attempt to go beyond "all auto responder all the time," what you will learn.

And dare I say sell better too?

Quick idea: When sending out a mass email, ask a question or encourage feedback or try to get a response.

And if you do that, figure out a way to respond one-on-one as much as you can.

Also, read responses for clues on how you can take a relationship deeper right away.

We are so obsessed with automated funnels (which are necessary as we grow)—but when I see a response from someone that begs for a deeper conversation I jump at the opportunity, sometimes leading to nothing except good cheer, lively banter and a smile—but sometimes leading to something that most funnels can't do as well.

I recall receiving an email once from someone receiving one of these posts on a Sunday that had some wording and sophistication about marketing in his response that led to a back-and-forth correspondence which eventually led to an enrollment in my highest level mastermind group.

I know there are sophisticated automated funnels that could do this...but the human touch adds so much to the experience. And the higher the price, the more deserving of that human touch.

Another tip: Before simply accepting a Linked In request or even a Facebook friend request, start a short dialogue first before superficially connecting.

I know you can't do this every time but it makes a difference when you can establish common interests at the outset.

Short of engaging with every email or contact request, when you can open yourself as much as possible, it can be magical.

I'll leave you with neat story about opening and reading an email when there was probably no reason for this person to do so...and what it led to.

Many of you know that I am an avid baseball umpire—for varsity high school games and high level tournament Little League too.

One of my buddies wanted to surprise me with a gift so he researched the major league umpires who live within a 50 mile radius of me—and he actually emailed three of them personally.

He asked them if they would be interested in having lunch with his friend who is an “umpire groupie” (and an experienced amateur umpire himself) despite being a marketing/business guy “in real life” which has nothing to do with baseball.

I know that major league umpires are far from big time celebrities to you...but they are to me. Regardless, the motivation for any of these three guys to respond to a stalker-like email is pretty low (or so I thought).

Surprisingly one of them did respond, saw that my friend was legit and I ended up having lunch with major league umpire Phil Cuzzi which was the surprise gift from my buddy (at the famous Four Seasons Restaurant in New York City).

He brought me a signed cap...I gave him a marketing book he will never read I assume...but that day we became lifelong friends.

It has also led me (and my buddy) to support his fundraising efforts for ALS where we have contributed thousands of dollars over the years and we look forward to a huge annual event he hosts every year.

Oh...and I get to text him when I see him working a game on TV and I can live vicariously as a major league umpire through him....even when he is throwing someone out of the game for arguing balls and strikes.

I still can't believe he opened that original email.

I told my buddy that he was smart not to introduce himself as a Nigerian Prince.

#10: David Ogilvy: “Confessions inside his Rolls Royce” (December 2018)

David Ogilvy has my back.

How do I know?

Well it says so on the mug I drank my coffee from this morning!



Also, Dan Kennedy assured me in his endorsement of my new book Overdeliver (due out in April), that Ogilvy would still have my back if he was around today:

“Ogilvy was right when he ranted to his own agency’s staff that only the mail-order people knew what the hell they were doing, and were Ogilvy alive, he would applaud Brian’s work here.”

Needless to say, Dan made my day with that one since he and Ogilvy are heroes of mine. They are two men I acknowledge often...more on that topic in a moment.

Now that we’ve established that Ogilvy has my back, I want to use him as a launching pad as we embark on our 2019 adventures together.

The subject line refers to one of the most famous headlines Ogilvy ever wrote (and also pays homage to his monumental book, *Confessions of an Advertising Man*)—and I was able to find a copy of the original ad for you:



The Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud—\$13,995

“At 60 miles an hour the loudest noise in this new Rolls-Royce comes from the electric clock”

What makes Rolls-Royce the best car in the world? “There is really no magic about it—it is merely patient attention to detail,” says an eminent Rolls-Royce engineer.

1. “At 60 miles an hour the loudest noise comes from the electric clock,” reports the Technical Editor of *Test Magazine*. These mufflers tune out sound frequencies—acoustically.
2. Every Rolls-Royce engine is run for seven hours at full throttle before installation, and each car is test-driven for hundreds of miles over varying road surfaces.
3. The Rolls-Royce is designed as an owner-driver car. It is eighteen inches shorter than the largest domestic cars.
4. The car has power steering, power brakes and automatic gear-shift. It is very easy to drive and to park. No chauffeur required.
5. The finished car spends a week in the final test shop, being fine-tuned. Here it is subjected to 98 separate audits. For example, the engineers use a stethoscope to listen for axle whine.
6. The Rolls-Royce is guaranteed for three years. With a new network of dealers and parts-depots from Coast to Coast, service is no problem.
7. The Rolls-Royce radiator has never changed, except that when Sir Henry Royce died in 1933 the monogram RR was changed from red to black.
8. The coachwork is given five coats of primer paint, and hand rubbed between each coat, before nine coats of finishing paint go on.
9. By moving a switch on the steering column, you can adjust the shock-absorbers to suit road conditions.
10. A picnic table, veneered in French walnut, slides out from under the dash. Two more swing out behind the front seats.
11. You can get such optional extras as an Espresso coffee-making machine, a dictating machine, a bed, hot and cold water for washing, an electric razor or a telephone.
12. There are three separate systems of power brakes, two hydraulic and one mechanical. Damage to one system will not affect the others. The Rolls-Royce is a very safe car—and also a very lively car. It cruises serenely at eighty-five. Top speed is in excess of 100 m.p.h.
13. The Bentley is made by Rolls-Royce. Except for the radiators, they are identical motor cars, manufactured by the same engineers in the same works. People who feel diffident about driving a Rolls-Royce can buy a Bentley.

PRICE: The Rolls-Royce illustrated in this advertisement—Ex.b. principal parts of entry—costs \$13,995.

If you would like the rewarding experience of driving a Rolls-Royce or Bentley, write or telephone to one of the dealers listed on the opposite page.

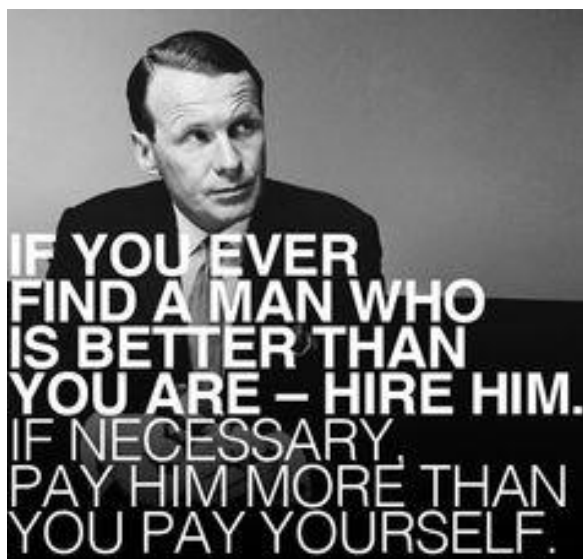
Rolls-Royce Inc., 10 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y., Circle 5-1144.

March 1959

I am not going to critique the ad today (nor am I a qualified to do that)...but whenever I think of David Ogilvy, maybe sitting alone in that quiet car, or at his desk, or even on the set of “The David Letterman Show,” I think more about his humility rather than his fame and fortune.

I’m sure he had a healthy ego—at least partly due to the fact that he has been deemed the “Father of Advertising”—but there is so much in his writing that tells me he understood that one of the keys to life was surrounding yourself with people smarter than yourself.

I found this quote from him which supports that thesis:



I love this Ogilvy-ism is that you don't get very far, even in a quiet Rolls Royce travelling at 60 miles an hour, without having people in your life who can lift you up to be your best and who are "...better than you are..."

And that premise should be good enough for us too in order to practice this brand of humility as standard operating procedure in our lives.

I labeled this as "Confident humility" in the past, the last time I quoted David Ogilvy—and talked about the thin line between confidence and arrogance.

I also love the quote above because it's a philosophy that all the great direct marketing companies embrace as it pertains to copywriters (in particular).

I've spoken in the past that it never bothered those companies to pay copywriters more in royalties for a winning promotion than what they paid any of their full time employees in salary...including what the owners of those companies took home as well.

You always must pay to play—and pay even more to play with the best.

Which leads to today's theme, going a bit deeper than "Confident humility":

If you can combine *supreme* confidence in yourself with a huge dose of humility (and not a hint of arrogance), you will have a wonderful life and career.

Using this formula, the best-of-the-best will flock to you and always want to work with you and for you—and not just because you are paying them the most money.

Since I believe that has been my prescription for success (he says without arrogance!), it led me to the most difficult task during the writing of my new book—*the acknowledgements section*.

The good news is that I have been around long enough to meet so many amazing people in all areas of direct marketing, copywriting—and everything related to this wonderful industry—and in that section I had an opportunity to acknowledge all of them.

The bad news is I didn't want to forget anyone—and I know I probably did.

One thing I realized while compiling the list of acknowledgments is all that “meeting and greeting” (and so many meals!) was a lot less superficial than I thought...every person I mentioned in this section of my book (it's well over 500, and as I said, I know I forgot at least a few), contributed something meaningful to me.

And hopefully I did enough for them to make *their* “acknowledgements section” someday.

Which also leads me to something else—an end-of-year exercise I highly recommend you do—one that will be a lot more fulfilling than making a bunch of New Year's resolutions you have no intention of keeping anyway:

Write the acknowledgments section of YOUR book right now, based on your life to this point...even if you never have any intention of ever writing a book.

I think you will be surprised (and also feel incredibly blessed) when you see how many people have contributed to your success...and also how many lives you have changed for the better as well.

You may even have a “George Bailey moment” while doing this— and if you don’t, go watch the classic film “It’s a Wonderful Life” immediately—and *then* write your acknowledgements.

Another bonus of doing this exercise will be to keep your ego in check as we begin the New Year—but hopefully it will also give you additional confidence too.

On keeping your ego in check, heed the warning of the great John Caples who knows that if you don’t do this, your own hubris will creep into your work (as he warned marketers and copywriters with in this famous quote):

“The most frequent reason for unsuccessful advertising is advertisers who are so full of their own accomplishments (the world’s best seed!) that they forget to tell us why we should buy (the world’s best lawn!).”

The young copywriter I spoke about in “Confident humility” is a perfect example of an ego *not* in check.

On giving you additional confidence, if you do this exercise you will have a written document (i.e. “your complete list of acknowledgments through 2018”) reminding you how many people have *your* back.

I’ll proclaim like everyone else to lose 10 pounds as a New Year’s resolution...but while I know that I will forget about that declaration by January 15th, I also know that I will *never* forget about all the people who participated in getting me so “fat” in the first place.

You know, the “good fat,” like avocados...and enabling me to stand on the shoulders of giants.

Warmly,

Brian

P.S. I would like to wish all of you, everyone in my online family, a Happy New Year.

I hope that 2019 is your best year ever.

Your support, advice, ideas, and feedback throughout the year is such a blessing, and although I cannot acknowledge all of you by name in my new book, I will do that here.

I love spending my early Sunday mornings with you—and look forward to doing it every week again in the coming year.

A big, appreciative acknowledgment to YOU.

And your input is always welcome all year round...those of you who email me know that I respond to every e-mail (even if not immediately).

And one last Ogilvy quote on why it is so important for you to go forth this next year (and every year) with supreme confidence:



#11: Dan Kennedy: “O...to O...to O...” (December 2018)

“The most dangerous number in business is one”

At our [Titans Master Class](#) event last April, and then again in a meeting in August, marketing icon Dan Kennedy emphasized “the danger of one of anything” in our businesses...which goes like this:

“One is a very bad number, anywhere you find it ... [for example] if one media produces a disproportionate percentage of your customers...you are subject to being summarily put out of business.”

You can extrapolate this to so many other aspects of your business life where you could be vulnerable:

- One** marketing technique to get new customers
- One** winning promotion
- One** primary customer
- One** prospect
- One** key employee
- One** company you've applied to for a job
- One** product (or service) that you sell
- One** skill you are good at

And as Dan said above, **one medium**—and that is where we will mostly focus today. I find myself repeating some version of this as often as Dan does whether I am coaching someone new to direct response marketing or having a group discussion with seasoned marketers.

In light of the dangers of marketing in one medium, where the pitfalls are obvious and getting more dangerous every day, let's focus on the myriad of opportunities available when we expand our thinking—which includes *both* online and offline media.

Note: Part of what I am sharing today is an excerpt from my new book, [Overdeliver](#), which comes out next April.

Despite all of the challenges around attribution (i.e. “where did that order *really* come from?”)—and calculating an accurate lifetime value (LTV) of every new customer—the opportunities available to us by combining online and offline media are too rich to ignore.

Online to Offline to Online (or offline to online to offline, or any combination that fits for your audience) is a concept worth exploring.

To define “O to O to O,” let me state it this way:

Always be aware of the life cycle of every customer entering your world. They can start in either “O” (online or offline), then be directed to the alternate, and then pulled back to the original source where they started.

This is why we are living in the most exciting time (ever) to be a marketer.

We currently have, at our fingertips, the most efficient and state-of-the-art technology which we can combine with the fundamentals of direct response marketing learned over decades of testing.

For example: Bringing a highly qualified buyer or prospect from a direct mail piece or a print ad into an online funnel will certainly create customers with higher lifetime value (LTV), especially if the promotion uses longer and engaging copy.

Marketers I talk to regularly who work primarily online, and who have customers originating in various types of offline media like direct mail too, have told me that offline to online customers have a higher LTV than customers whose first engagement with them is online.

And the marketers who have figured out that starting online doesn’t mean they have to be exclusively online during the life span of a customer, have had incredible results by adding offline media and physical products on the back end.

I recently heard from a very skilled online marketer who had only sold his training videos digitally in the past—and he recently added as an additional format, some of those instructional videos as text inside a spiral bound book (yes, words on paper).

In addition to giving them digital access to the training as in the past, he customized the training based on their specific needs and shipped a hard copy of the game plan to his students.

Then to give them “360 degree access,” he added QR codes with each lesson inside the physical book so that students could point their smart phone at any specific lesson they wanted to focus on and they could watch any of the videos on their phone at any time.

Why not give your customers a choice in the way they consume your content?

It's true that you could just make the digital content super-mobile friendly and not bother sending the book...but the book adds even more to the overall value of the product and the experience...and adds choices of consumption and use.

I spoke about this in more depth in [“Your smart phone will not reverse aging”](#) where I maintained that people under 30 years old still like to receive, open and read physical mail.

And contrary to popular belief, they don't need a GPS to find their mailbox.

When you differentiate by selling in places and with formats none of your competitors are using, there are some huge benefits.

And this can help enormously whether you have a product or service that is a commodity or a specialty.

The example above of O(nline) to O(ffline) is all about using direct mail and physical product on the back-end of a winning offer from email or the web to create more intimacy and value with those customers.

An example of O(offline) to O(nline) can be found by studying numerous health offers (e.g. for newsletters and nutritional supplements) geared toward an older audience, who often prefer to engage initially through direct mail but can often be moved online easily if they prefer.

I've seen other examples where shrewd marketers who do all of their prospecting online create programs and sequences offline with personalized notes, lumpy packages—they spare no expense once they know how much a new customer has spent with them (and can potentially spend with them in the future).

Cross-sells and upsells to your best online customers don't have to be 100% digital. Your best customers—those who buy the most product or are repeat students, patients etc. (and therefore spend the most money)—sometimes deserve more than just another email.

This is all about meeting the customer where they want to be met...with a variety of formats, copy and accessing any and all media where you can connect more deeply with your customers.

And don't forget about direct response television, space advertising or inbound and outbound telemarketing to weave in and out of different kinds of offers, whether they start online or offline.

The breakthrough really comes when you get consumers to transfer from one medium to another.

When you can use lots of different media, you're in a better position to monetize in a variety of different ways.

And the odds of you being put out of business because you are beholden to one medium or platform are considerably lower too.

Another example: Many marketers who you would probably classify as "online only"—that is, they send traffic to a landing page — offer a free physical copy of their book for shipping and handling only. I know many of you are aware of this kind of funnel.

They send that book all over the world, possibly losing money on the “first sale.” (Actually many can still breakeven with this technique). But that doesn’t matter since they are in a perfect position to play a multi-channel long game.

Shipping a book means they now have a physical mailing address in addition to an email address.

These savvy direct marketers initiate an opportunity online to get into the direct mail business...without abandoning their email channel.

It’s always an “and,” not an “or,” when talking “O to O to O.”

Having the physical address of their customer means that they may be able to make offers in “snail mail” that no one else is making in their space—since most online marketers don’t have direct mail (and other offline media) on their radar.

And even if you have never shipped physical product on the back end, if you are selling digital products with a credit card, you have captured postal addresses...it’s a huge asset you definitely want to look at more closely.

Are you aware that while email is an “opt-in medium” (i.e. you can only email folks who give you permission) direct mail is an “opt-out medium” (i.e. you can mail to them until they tell you they no longer want to hear from you)?

Here’s one more thing to add to your “O to O to O checklist”:

If you have a digital product only right now, can it be converted to a physical product?

I was privileged to consult with a company that created life-saving health material which was all digital—although they figured out by creating physical product versions of all of the content, the overall perceived value of the offering increased significantly—and it allowed them to charge a higher price for the full package—and the lifetime value of their customers also went up too.

Multi-channel encourages multi-format.

These marketers practicing “O to O” know their numbers (i.e. costs of physical over digital)) and they also know how much they are willing to invest for a long-term customer... and that makes it easier for them to do it online or offline, using techniques and strategies that truly give them an unfair advantage.

Short version: Don't be scared of paper...ink...binding...printers... postage. I promise you they are not evil. And getting cozy with physical product and print is a differentiator in a totally digital economy.

Other marketers who make their initial offer on television, radio or even at a live event, (whether a book, course or something else) have another offline gateway into their ascension program with the ability to use multiple channels and platforms, online and offline.

I heard about a marketer just yesterday who is selling a diet and nutrition program exclusively with radio ads...and while vulnerable today to the “dangers of one,” the potential is huge.

TV is an obvious next step for them but so are many online channels because they have developed audio files and scripts which are working on radio—that is, they have already done the heavy lifting on creative and copy offline to set them up for a bigger future online.

Of course my first recommendation was “time is of the essence”—multiple channels are waiting—being in only one right now puts them at risk. However, their current assets and ability to go multi-channel smoothly and fairly quickly reduces that risk considerably.

You must also know how much you can afford to lose in any new medium, and for how long. That's a topic covered in a different chapter of my book.

It varies in every medium but can be (and must be) calculated.

Multichannel marketing may not be all that complicated but knowing your numbers and allowable costs intimately gives you the most flexibility and it is the key to building a business for lifetime.

With this approach, your customers can be communicated with in all the places that they spend their time (online and offline) and it also protects your business against unpredictable events that you can't control.

It makes you a more robust marketer and opens up all kinds of opportunities that you just can't access when you're only focused on a single channel.

I began with *"The most dangerous number in business is one"* and I will end there: This has never been truer than in today's world of infinite marketing opportunities, so many of which have a very low cost of entry.

Facebook being less expensive than other online media (and most offline media) doesn't mean you should ever use it exclusively. Or that you should use any other medium exclusively, cheap or expensive.

I've quoted Bill Bernbach, the great advertising "mad man" many times in the past:

"Adapt your techniques to an idea, not an idea to your techniques."

Just because a particular audience you can buy into is big...or cheap...or both...is not the sole reason to use it.

Regarding Kennedy's notion of "one" being the most dangerous number in business goes way beyond "one medium" but in terms of media:

You want backups and Plan B's everywhere.

Having technology at our fingertips is awesome but it is not a panacea for everything.

And always keep an open mind.

#12: Robin Robins/Dan Sullivan: “Pass the salt” (November 2018)

Two years ago on Thanksgiving I was sitting at my dining room table with 20+ relatives—including my Mom (who is a spry 93), my wife and kids, siblings, cousins, nephews and nieces—and there might have been a stranger or two who wandered in because they heard the legend of my late Aunt Elaine’s sweet potato casserole (the recipe handed down to us, complete with marshmallows, pineapple, cherries and whatever extra gluten and sugar could be added).

At some point during the meal I looked around the table, feeling grateful for my family and their health—but noticed most (if not all) of the under 30 year olds were looking at their smart phones under the table.

I went out to the other room where my phone was, came back, and texted one of my nephews (the youngest of the “kids”):

“Could you please pass the salt?”

The response was exactly what I was looking for: First, I got to adequately season my stuffing *immediately*; and I also woke up the room to put down their phones and go for some lively banter instead.

And my Mom was the happiest of all since she doesn’t own a smart phone, doesn’t know how to text and can talk about anything and everything as long as someone will listen.

I know we might have lost some of that Thanksgiving glow since Thursday—it’s now that time of the four day weekend where we assume we can take a rest for another year from being thankful and grateful—but as I do every year, I want to remind you that being grateful on Thanksgiving should never be confused with New Year’s resolutions you never keep.

Unfortunately, “Thanksgiving resolutions” seem to last a day (until you push someone to the floor grabbing a sweater at Target which is half price for Black Friday); and New

Year's resolutions (e.g. to lose weight) seem to last around a week (two weeks if you're lucky).

But I maintain that "being grateful all year 'round" is way easier than losing 10 pounds by January 15th.

And since it's already three days after Thanksgiving (and two after Black Friday), my guess is that you are already back to arguing with your spouse over some minutia, yelling at a colleague for being less than perfect or bickering with some other family member over nothing in particular ...but hopefully you are at least communicating powerfully and not just via your smart phone.

Back on your phone, unfriending folks with different political views might be giving you satisfaction too (FYI—that's also a sign that you are not being grateful).

Offline or online, I will make the assumption that your "Thanksgiving glow" has now worn off...maybe just a little or maybe completely.

Mine has not although I'm still sleepy from all the tryptophan (and that sweet potato pie didn't help either in terms of weighing me down).

Regardless of where you are today, the timing of this post on the Sunday after Thanksgiving is intentional.

Simply put, being grateful is a 365-day proposition.

Another spin on gratefulness, beyond smooth communication with those we love, is inspired by Dan Sullivan, the top coach in the world for entrepreneurs.

Dan makes the distinction between a "gratefulness cycle" and an "envy cycle."

I've shared this story below before and I hope you don't mind if I tell it again...and given all the new members of my online family, many might have never heard it.

And as I begin, think about the distinction between "gratefulness" and "envy"...that's the theme.

In 2014 I was one of the keynote speakers at the GKIC Info-Summit (one of the leading conferences for information marketers and direct marketers alike) which always features one of my heroes, Dan Kennedy.

When I received a standing ovation after my presentation, I was very surprised (and of course very grateful).

I couldn't resist delivering a self-deprecating joke (which may have had more truth to it than I want to admit) given the fact that so many speakers at this particular conference speak and then sell products, services (or both) at the end of their presentations—and I did not.

I told them as they stood and applauded:

“Are you giving me a standing ovation because I delivered such incredible content or because I simply didn't sell you anything after my speech?”

While I am a very effective direct marketer and dealmaker, “selling from the stage” is not even close to one of my core competencies.

But no one can take away that standing ovation...it was a huge win that day and something I was grateful for the next morning as well...and I am to this day.

That is far from the end of this story.

The next morning my good friend Robin Robins took the stage at Info-Summit.

Robin is the top guru/trainer/coach for IT professionals and a savvy marketer.

She proceeded to deliver a killer presentation about how to create sponsorships for live events—with power, integrity and maximum return—and then she “sold” (note quotation marks) a program for everyone so they could easily implement everything Robin had learned on the topic and what she taught that day.

Frankly, I saw it as more of a gift to the audience than something she was actually “selling.”

This goes back to a theme I talk about often, usually quoting Jay Abraham saying something like, "It's your moral responsibility to give your audience what they need and what you have to offer."

It seemed like she wasn't even trying that hard...she was just being herself...and she sold more product than anyone at the conference by a wide margin.

I think it might have even been an all-time record for sales at Info-Summit...a conference known for crazy sales results from people who are known as the best salespeople from the stage.

People were lining up at the back table before she completed her presentation and before she even told them the price.

So what does this have to do with "gratefulness vs. envy?"

First of all, it would have been so easy for me to feel inferior to Robin, even envious.

Just 12 hours after I got a rousing standing ovation, speaking on the same stage she did, she sold materials to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Mine was a standing ovation while hers was a "running ovation" (to the back of the room for order forms, everyone with credit cards in hand).

But what I felt was anything but envy.

All I could think about was how grateful I was to be in Robin's inner circle—someone she considers a peer—and someone she would share her wisdom with for the asking.

I couldn't wait to give her a hug and tell her how proud I was to be her friend and how much I learned by watching her do what she did with such mastery.

Money may be how we keep score...but frankly, being aligned with the best, watching them excel and showing why they are the best, and then being able to learn from them, is what makes us rich.

I know that some of the other speakers (and folks in the audience who sell from the stage as part of their livelihood) were more envious of Robin's windfall (i.e. the money) than they would ever like to admit.

Rather than being grateful that they were given a PhD in how to sell from the stage with total class, they felt competitive.

I could tell that some of them were even pissed off.

In fact, I was sitting next to a guy who was mumbling under his breath some version of "I could have done that" or "She's not that good" etc.

However, anyone who went to being grateful for Robin's crash course in selling (which she did with such grace) were rewarded in a much bigger way.

I know it sounds corny...but train yourself to try on and then think deeply about gratefulness whenever envy starts to creep into your consciousness.

If you seek out and spend time with game changers and folks achieving at a high level, I know it's easy to feel envy.

The remedy when you feel like the dumbest person in the room is to think of yourself as "100% student." That will hopefully keep the envy out and the gratefulness front and center.

I also recommend that when you are in rooms like this, have a rule:

No inferiority complexes allowed.

You would be astounded with the stories of "inferiority" I have heard from guests at the over 150 "Boardroom Dinners" I hosted over the years.

Those dinners attracted people who have the most impressive resumes and C.V.'s, people who are as accomplished as anyone in the world in their fields; yet they often mentioned to me that they didn't feel they belonged.

It doesn't matter how accomplished you are...anyone can fall into this envy trap.

And if you are feeling envy while sitting in a high level mastermind, at a dinner with experts, or anywhere where you feel you don't belong, a requirement is to change your mindset quickly and turn your envy to gratefulness so you are not wasting your time or your money being there.

One trick to snap yourself out of it, while first seeing yourself as a student, is to realize you are not simply in a room of smart people (even if you think they are all smarter than you) but rather you are in a room of people (all peers) getting smarter together.

I can't think of a room that's better to hang out in.

Don't let feelings of envy ruin it.

Getting a little corny again, it is all about being the best "you"—and to only associate with the best "them"—and then be grateful that you can contribute to any room that will have you.

Especially if it's a room about achievement and success.

Dan Sullivan calls this an abundance mindset rather than a scarcity mindset.

From Eleanor Roosevelt to sum this up:

"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."

Being present and communicative (and not bringing your smart phone to the dinner table) was lesson number one; and not falling into an envy cycle, which starts with being grateful, is lesson number two.

And those two lessons are for every day throughout the year...and if you like, double down on both for Thanksgiving.

Let's check in on that a year from now.

#13: Gene Schwartz/Gary Halbert: “10,000 hours or 33 minutes?” (November 2018)

There are so many ways to become a master in all you do.

In his book *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell lays out the “10,000 hour rule” which is the principle that 10,000 hours of “deliberate practice” are needed to become world-class in any field.

For you math types, he's calculated that as simply a matter of practicing a specific task that can be accomplished with 20 hours of work a week for 10 years.

I know...that's 10,400 hours...so consider the extra 400 as a head start in year 11 towards “Grand Master.” Or I guess you can take 2 weeks off a year from mastery if you prefer to be a slacker. 😊

It should be noted that there are as many folks who think this theory is a golden rule as there are who think it's not completely valid.

I went down a rabbit hole on Google on that...not recommended.

I won't get into an argument about the exact number of hours it takes...but I think we can all agree that it's not 10 hours or 100 hours or even 1,000 hours to true mastery.

To be great at anything takes significant practice, repetition and study.

There are three quotes I use when I speak to copywriters about this and they are all from Gary Halbert.

But I think these quotes could pertain to anyone in marketing—and probably many other fields and professions too.

The first quote I will share is how he connects hard labor to becoming great (speaking to prospective copywriters)—and I think he also used this quote to get the attention of those who dare think copywriting is a commodity and something you can just “pick up in your sleep” easily:

"I have suggested that you do one hour's worth of road work every morning right after you get up for six days a week."

I marvel at what it takes to be a *great* copywriter and it's not easy. Halbert knew that as well as anyone.

That quote also reminds me of a story from one of my mentors, Adolph Auerbacher (business builder of the iconic magazine brands *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Ladies Home Journal* in the 1960's and 70's).

When his staff at their cushy offices in midtown Manhattan got complacent or lazy he would remind them how "easy" they had it; and then he walked the biggest culprits to a window to watch construction workers at a job site (and there's usually one outside multiple windows in most skyscrapers in New York City at any particular time).

He would then have no need to explain what "hard work" really was.

And this was especially effective in the middle of the winter when it was 72 degrees inside and minus 12 degrees outside.

Another Halbert quote was specific instruction he gave to every writer who thought they had the stamina to work with him (and to eventually be as good as him):

"Get yourself a collection of good ads and DM pieces and read them aloud and copy them in your own handwriting."

Gary isn't the only copywriting "professor" who gives this out as an assignment to students.

I remember the young writer who heard me quote Gary about this "technique" at a live event where I was speaking—and he also heard me say that the first three chapters of Gene Schwartz's *Breakthrough Advertising* might be the most important 47 pages to read to become a world class copywriter—and he combined those two thoughts and invested time, paper and postage to let me know he was listening.

He proceeded to send me via snail mail the first three chapters of *Breakthrough Advertising*, all 47 pages, *handwritten* on dozens of pages of legal pad paper, telling me he was starting to put in the time and effort to become a top gun copywriter.

Don't underestimate how much more you can retain by writing and re-writing rather than typing and re-typing. In fact there is real data on how your thumb and forefinger are connected to your brain differently than a keyboard. I give you permission and I do recommend you go down *that* rabbit hole on Google.

And one more quote from Halbert on writing and discipline and becoming a master:
"I don't know exactly what I am going to write about today so what I am going to do is just keep putting words down on paper until I start to get some direction."

And there you have it...the 10,000 hours rule according to Gary Halbert...and if you are as talented as Gary, you might just be able to get by after only 5,000 hours of "road work," handwriting winning promotions and never getting stalled by something silly like writer's block.

Now I would like to give you Gene Schwartz's take on this...and a way to chunk down those 20 hours of work for 10 years into 33.33 minute segments.

Gene was more than just a copywriter which I have talked about a lot in the past—and he is mentioned often in my new book, *Overdeliver*. *(Click on the title in the P.S....there's a pre-order page!)*

But writing copy or just getting something done towards mastery in anything needs a system...and Gene had a beauty which is so simple (and I found this summary of his "33 minute/33 second process" online):

- Choose one (bigger) task you want to work on that requires focus and concentration
- Turn off all notifications and anything that could distract you
- Set a timer for 33 minutes and 33 seconds (and I know Gene used an old fashioned egg timer for this task)

- Don't stop and don't do anything else till your timer goes off
- When the timer goes off, take a break for 5-10 minutes
- Reset the timer for another 33 minutes and 33 seconds and repeat

I have probably read all the time management books you've read...maybe more...and there are variations of this in many of them; but if this one worked for the greatest copywriter of all time, I'm all in.

And here's why it worked for Gene (and I editorialized a bit below based on what he told me and some observations that I read online in forums from advocates of the technique and from a writer named Rachel Miedema—all of us are big fans of "33.33"):

- The time slots give the impression of a deadline and you will work a little faster (and certainly more concentrated) than you might otherwise.
- Even though we think we can multitask, we really can't. Focusing on ONE task for 33 minutes helps us therefore to concentrate and thus do better. If you want to read more why we can't multitask I recommend reading the work of Ned Hallowell, the world's top expert in this area. I have mentioned him in the past in previous posts about "Vitamin C(onnect)" and one called "Driven to distraction." The latter subject line is the title of his most famous book.
- Because you get breaks between two slots, you will be less tempted to check your email or go on social media while you are working (Tip: for maximum effect, allow yourself to only go "online" after three "work periods"). Gene would like this one despite passing away well before he could leave a digital footprint himself. I think he would write killer subject lines too! We are just lucky he left us as much as he did in print, video and audio.
- It also works well with tasks that seem daunting, because you only "commit" yourself for 33 minutes. It's less of a hurdle to start on something you've been postponing that way.

- It's a great idea to get up from your chair after the 33 minutes and do something else, something physical. Another idea is to do small chores on the breaks.
- Research supports that working in time blocks with pauses in between is far more effective than trying to stay concentrated for hours in a row.

While the 33 minutes limit is fairly arbitrary, who are we to question Gene?

I know I made a huge jump here from mastery of your craft to preventing writer's block, going from the macro to the micro.

However, you can never go wrong following the words and actions of Halbert and Schwartz.

Here's a better summary:

Master your craft 33 minutes, 33 seconds at a time, 20 hours a week for 10 years.

And then re-set the timer.

#14: Jim Rutz: “10 more commandments (now 20 in total)” (October 2018)

Being a movie buff, whenever someone refers to the story about Moses receiving The Ten Commandments, I picture Charlton Heston delivering some pretty good rules of thumb to live by.

But wait...there's more.

Having just completed the final editing of the manuscript of my new book, *Overdeliver: Build a Business for a Lifetime Playing the Long Game in Direct Response Marketing*, I will begin today keeping my promise of sending you sneak previews from the book (which I guess might lead to you not buying it when it comes out).

No wonder my pal Joe Polish calls me “The Director of Sales Prevention.”

I'll hold back a little of the “good stuff” but I am excited to share some of the best material in advance of the launch.

One of the stories/lessons in the book (from the chapter on “Creative & Copy”), is a portion of a blog post I am most proud of since it profiles and memorializes the “mad scientist” of all copywriters, Jim Rutz (who was also a great friend and marketing partner).

The piece was titled “The copywriter closest to God”—and I am not being sacrilegious when I say that...I really believe it when it came to Jim.

You might want to read [the most recent version of it here](#) before reading what I have for you today—which is truly another “Ten Commandments” called “Rutz's Rules for Writing.”

Violating any of these won't have the same repercussions as breaking one of the original Ten Commandments...but if you want to be a great copywriter or marketer, ignore them at your peril.

I found these in Jim's archives and they will be included in a new product I will launch next year around the same time as my book:

Read This Or Die: The Lost Files of the Craziest (and Most Brilliant) Copywriter Who Has Ever Lived

That's a working subtitle... "Read This Or Die" will definitely be the main title since it refers to the headline of one of his most famous and successful promotions.

In the subtitle, I wanted to call Rutz the "Ballsiest" copywriter who has ever lived but that's not a word.

Then again, "Overdeliver" is not a word either...so I might go with that after all. I need some help from you (if you want to play):

If you send me a subtitle suggestion for the product, I will send you a copy of the "Read This or Die" promotion as an advance look at this amazing swipe file we are putting together.

Rutz's "Ten Commandments" for writing are below—and I have made some notes of my own (preceded by "BK" and in italics)—Jim taught me so much and as I read through Jim's rules, I realized how much he lives on in all that is taught today by the best living copywriters and trainers and teachers of copy.

He left a huge imprint on me, that's for sure.

Rutz's Rules for Writing

1) The #1 sin in ad mail is being boring, and over half of it richly deserves its quick death by wastebasket.

What is always boring? The predictable. You must surprise the reader at the outset and at every turn of the copy. This takes time and toil.

BK: I'll add a corollary regarding length and boredom...no sales letter can be too long or too short...just too boring.

2) Never write to a crowd.

Crowds don't write checks, or even read. Individuals do. Write to your brother, sister, or best friend, never to a targeted prospect.

BK: I think Jim would have loved to toil in the world of online marketing...being able to slice and dice his copy to more sub-segments economically and efficiently than he ever could in direct mail.

That he was able to "write to individuals" even when direct mail made it more difficult to do that was part of Rutz's genius. The swipes in the "Read This Or Die" product will prove this time and again.

3) Don't be a jerk.

The GOLDEN RULE as applied to ad mail: It's more important to do the reader good than to get his money. Yes, getting his money is what you do for a living. But when his money becomes more important than his welfare, you've turned into a hollow shell and declared war on the human race.

BK: Once again, Jim would have had a field day online, giving away lots of stuff and doing "...the reader good..." while being patient for the money.

One of my other mentors, Gordon Grossman, used to lament that with direct mail being so expensive, anything you did in physical mail had to "sell something."

But living in our world today, we just need to make sure everything we send, in every medium, “achieves something.”

Jim understood that as well as any copywriter in history, even pre-Internet.

4) Spend half your writing time on concept, teaser, offer, headline, and first paragraph.

Up to 90% of your rejections will be caused by those elements, not the many pages that follow.

BK: All of the great copywriters I have ever worked with knew how to write “teasers” (what we called “fascinations”) well before they learned to write full blown sales letters. Read this if you want to learn more about this technique. It’s a profile of someone else I call a “mad scientist” of copywriting in a different way than Jim.

And then there’s what David Ogilvy said about headlines: “On the average, five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy. When you have written your headline, you have spent eighty cents out of your dollar”

And finally, Bill Jayme cut right to the chase when he said that the outer envelope (i.e. headline) was like the “...hot pants on the hooker...” –and I am sure he would say the same today about subject lines.

More about Jayme in the P.S.

Rutz would agree on all of the above.

5) Your reader is not stupid. He or she is as smart as you are.

...they are just not paying attention!

So make sure you get that first, then talk to them like adults.

BK: Ogilvy waxes poetic about this too: "The consumer isn't a moron, she is your wife."

6) Competence will make you a living. Creativity will make you a fortune.

Why? Because few other writers are willing to sweat any more than is absolutely necessary. Truly creative perspiration is rare.

BK: Gary Halbert could chime in on this one with a technique to sweat profusely (i.e. produce "creative perspiration"): "Get yourself a collection of good ads and DM pieces and read them aloud and copy them in your own handwriting."

It's a start to get to what Jim is talking about. He always preferred pen to paper to fingers on a keyboard—and in the words of his sister Ginger (who is the reason we will be able to bring you all of Jim's work since she saved it all): "Picture Jim, sitting on the floor, his back against the sofa and feet under the coffee table, with a legal pad and a green pen, to later on in his career, peering into a CRT. He fought it all the way—he struggled."

7) Light humor and wit are terrific salesmen.

Without them, some products are sunk. With them, you will soon be sitting in your very own beachside condo in Belize.

BK: In a video that will come with the "Read This Or Die" product, copywriting legends who were also mentored by Jim Rutz, John Carlton, David Deutsch, talk at length why Rutz is so hard to emulate...and how he got away with "light humor and wit"—what we labeled as his "whimsy"—and he used it more successfully than any copywriter we have ever studied.

You often hear that there is no place for humor in direct response copy...Jim broke that rule more than any other writer. Dissecting how he got away with it is worth our time—that's a big reason why I want to get all of his archives in one place and then make them available to you.

*Here's a whimsical headline Jim wrote when writing an ad looking for a bride:
"Knight in Shining Armor Seeks Damsel...Distress Optional"*

8) Any hack can make a product look desirable. If you aspire to greatness, make it look irresistible.

Of course, that means you have to pick and choose your clients. Some products are sow's ears. But given a decent product, you must-prior to writing-answer the question: "What could make this thing look irresistible?"

BK: All of the great copywriters, including Jim, talk about the clients they "refused to work for" like it's a badge of honor. Jim also taught all of his copy cubs to assess opportunity cost with every assignment and never check your ethics at the door. If it doesn't feel right to you, it's probably not right.

9) Learn to stand up to your clients.

Even the most sophisticated clients in the world may be too close to their product to understand it.

You will frequently find it misnamed, wrongly positioned, poorly offered, incorrectly priced, or intrinsically flawed and needing revision. Tell 'em. The truly great clients will agree—and love you for it!

BK: Jim's view here is similar to what Dan Kennedy teaches—that is, don't just "write copy for food"...be a trusted advisor in addition to writing kick ass copy.

10) God will not let you starve because you refused to promote a product that is unethical, harmful, or at odds with the greater good of society.

BK: Never compromise your ethics since you didn't leave them at the door (see #8 above).

I hope these insights from the world's "ballsiest" (still not a word) copywriter will whet your appetite to read and study everything Jim Rutz wrote (and admired).

In the product we will not only have packages and promotions he wrote himself but also the packages and promotions he admired most and used as "furniture" in his house (you'll have to read "The Copywriter Closest To God" to appreciate that comment).

Remember, if you want to send me ideas for the subtitle for the Rutz product, I've got that ethical bribe waiting for you (the "Read This Or Die" swipe).

And even if you don't have an idea for the subtitle, please send me an email anyway with **"I want Rutz"** in the subject line so I can get a sense of how many copies of this product I will need to print up initially.

In addition, if you email me, you will be the first to know about it when it's available (early 2019)—and I will add you to a special list so you will receive a first mover discount too.

And now an 11th commandment:

11) Be bold, take chances and stay crazy (and brilliant and "ballsy") like my good friend and mentor Jim Rutz.

#15: Dan Kennedy: “Tuesday with Dan” (August 2018)

If you had a one day business trip that included a four hour delay on the way there (for an hour and half flight) and a 6 hour delay coming home (including a re-route and an extra stopover due to a cancelled flight), I'm sure you would ask, “was that really worth it?”

That's what happened to me during my trip to Cleveland from New York City last Tuesday.

And I'm here to tell you that this trip was worth it despite the hassles and delays.

That's because I got to spend the day with Dan Kennedy.

I understand that Dan can be an acquired taste for some...but no one can argue that if you had to pick one person in direct response marketing who more people trace their initial (and ongoing) education to in this wonderful business, it's Dan Kennedy.

The idea that he is “old school” and not up on what is happening in the marketing world today is a story only told by those who have never spent time with him or followed his work.

It's true that he does not suffer fools gladly and he expects a lot from his clients. And it's also true that he doesn't have a cell phone, he doesn't do email and the only way to communicate with him is via fax.

Spoon-feeding is not his specialty but he always plays full out when he's with you and his expensive consulting fees are only costly if you are not listening to what he is telling you.

He sees so many “offline opportunities in an online world” (which was his theme when he presented to Titans Master Class last April).

However, that doesn't mean he dismisses the online marketing world either (i.e. don't think for a minute he's not on top of what is working right now, whether it's online or offline).

He simply sees more flaws than most when it comes to advertising on Facebook, for example, (especially if you are too dependent on it or any single medium for that matter...more on that below).

I loved the time we spent last Tuesday talking about Amazon as a “search engine” where miraculously, people often buy stuff (imagine that) rather than simply look for free stuff (e.g. Google).

And just because you can only communicate with Dan via fax doesn't mean he exists in any kind of time warp or that his world view and experience should ever be ignored; in fact, I think he is as sharp as ever.

During our day together, we explored dozens of marketing universals—and I want to share a few of those with you today.

Ignore these at your peril—and even if you have heard them before (and hopefully you have and live by many of them too), I will wager that at least *one* of them will get you thinking a little differently or more deeply about something you are currently working on.

Let's see...

Marketing by walking around

Those of us who run businesses and manage people have probably heard about the benefits of “management by walking around.”

It's the opposite of sitting in an office all day, ivory tower or not—and it's about getting out and being with the people who are working with you and for you—which leads to more synchronicity, team building and cooperation.

You just get more done, more efficiently, by communicating regularly (and in person) with your staff.

And the same principle holds true in marketing.

In this case, it's not your employees who you need to be interacting with and observing constantly...it's your customers and potential customers.

In my new book, I will have an entire chapter discussing “customer service and fulfillment as marketing functions”—and in it, I will talk about the things you can only really learn, for example, by assigning “secret shoppers” inside your business, listening in on customer service calls and of course, doing both qualitative and quantitative research.

It astounds me how many marketers today talk about how much they know about their audience (their “avatar”) yet they never spend time with them in real life situations.

You just might find out more about your customers and potential customers by hanging out where they hang out (which could be online in a chat room or inside Amazon book reviews—or even offline at the local Wal-Mart).

Look for overrepresentation in your audience by occupation, interests and region

One of the key takeaways from “marketing by walking around” is that you inevitably engage in what I call “Intuitive list segmentation”—without a computer or a statistician.

You will observe things, some obvious and some not so obvious, by walking around and interacting with your customers, learning more about what they really want from you and how they want you to communicate with them.

And then you can add on to that knowledge using available outside data, doing overlays of your existing customers, to find out if they over-represent in a particular line of work or reside in particular regions or neighborhoods.

All of this will inevitably lead to future list selections and advertising opportunities no media buyer will ever be able to find for you. Not to mention ideas for messaging and copy.

Different audience targets demand different promotions

After you spend more time walking around on the outside and also finding out where your audience is showing up in bigger numbers than average, it's time to cash in on all of this knowledge.

Marketers cannot live by one control alone...and this has never been more apparent than in the world of online marketing.

Anyone who is practicing "one size fits all creative" to a diverse list universe in any medium is not just lazy...they are also leaving a lot of money on the table.

Not taking advantage of every *piece of data you know about the prospects you are talking to*—addressing them with as much personalization as possible based on *all* you know about them—is a marketing crime of the highest order.

The power of 5's and 10's

Once you have your messaging to specific list segments dialed in, doing as much aggressive price testing is one of the most important things you can do.

Don't let anyone tell you how overpriced or underpriced your product or service is...direct response marketing gives us the ability to never guess and therefore we should always be testing.

And follow the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the thousands of price tests that have come before.

I lived most of my entire marketing life in the world of business-to-consumer marketing where you would never charge \$30 when you could charge \$29.97.

"Supermarket pricing" almost always trumped "flat pricing."

In addition, I would always test as many ways as possible to get to that final price, with the biggest breakthroughs coming from using installments.

Probably a “duh” for most of you...but read on.

A great example from my past was using 3 installments at \$9.99 instead of one payment of \$29.97 which almost always increased the response rate and also total revenue.

As part of the brainstorming process, we would always come up with new and creative ways to express the total price in installments.

And now add to this the rule of 5's and 10's which Kennedy reminded me of...i.e \$4.99 is a better expression than \$5 and \$9.99 is way better than \$10; or \$499 is better than \$500 and \$999 is better than \$1,000. I'm sure you also know this already but I just want to make sure.

(But here's a side note about installment billing you might not know: Don't be scared—marketers have been doing this forever with lots of data about how many people still pay in full at the outset; and also that over 90% of the people will pay installments two and three once they pay installment one)

In addition, setting up installments that also follow these rules can lead to a total price that is much higher than what you may currently be charging.

For example, something that costs approximately \$1000 (where you are probably charging \$995 or \$999) could be represented as three installments of \$499...if you think the product or service is worth a lot more but you need a way to make it easier for the prospect to afford it over time.

This example is only illustrative of the kinds of tests you can brainstorm using the rule of 5's and 10's and also adding installment billing to the mix.

The most dangerous number in business is “1”

I'll end with this classic Kennedy...and it's never been truer than in today's world of infinite marketing opportunities, so many of which have a very low cost of entry.

Facebook being less expensive than other online media (and probably most offline media) doesn't mean you should ever use it exclusively. Or use any other medium exclusively for that matter.

I've quoted Bill Bernbach, the great advertising "mad man" many times in the past:

"Adapt your techniques to an idea, not an idea to your techniques."

Just because a particular audience you can buy into is big...or cheap...or both...is not the reason to use it.

And of course this Kennedy notion of "1" being the most dangerous number in business goes way beyond "one medium"...you don't want one of anything in your business.

You want backups and Plan B's everywhere.

My biggest takeaway from my Tuesday with Dan:

Continue to learn from the best no matter how smart you think you are.

Sitting with Kennedy for a day last week made me realize how much I don't know...and also how much I have forgotten.

But it also makes me realize how smart I am for sitting with Kennedy for a day.

SECTION FOUR: INSPIRED BY MOVIES/ENTERTAINERS/PEOPLE:

#16: Annie Hall: “Don’t go it alone” (February 2019)

Having a dream job or career that never materializes completely is no reason to abandon that dream.

I know many people teach that you should never compromise and only pursue that one thing you were destined to do.

However, being a little more pragmatic, and without telling you to forget about your highest aspirations, I would like to give you another take.

I recall that when I was a senior in college I had three career paths that were speaking to me:

1) Becoming a professional baseball umpire (I even applied to “THE school” for Major League umpires)

2) Becoming an English professor (which went as far as receiving an offer to join a PhD program at Idaho State University)

3) Becoming a movie critic (which included acceptance to New York University's graduate school in film criticism)

(Oh...there were two other professions on the list...not my list but on the list of “preferred jobs” from my parents...CPA or attorney).

Clearly I pursued “none of the above” as a lifelong career.

But I have no regrets.

I can happily say that I pursue *all of the above* (except the accounting and law stuff) in so many aspects of my life today:

1) I am not a Major League Umpire but I umpire baseball at a high level in my spare time (varsity high school and tournament little league)

2) I don't teach English...and while I may have stopped reading Dickens and Melville, I now read lots of non-fiction instead; and as you know, since I assume you are reading this right now, I write and share marketing propaganda with you every Sunday.

Maybe you would have preferred that I majored in accounting rather than English?

By the way, my justification to my parents regarding why majoring in English was a good idea at the time:

"I will learn how to read and write."

Mission accomplished (I think).

3) I am not writing movie reviews for a living but like so many of you, I go to the movies regularly...and although I am not asked to post reviews anywhere significant, I am very confident that I am the best film critic in my own mind.

That just reminded me of a job candidate years ago I interviewed for a job to run a Trade Books Division for the company and he told me his "main qualification" for the position was:

"I read a lot."

So...I am a legitimate movie critic because "I go to the movies a lot."

Better yet (I think)—I look for lessons from the big screen when the lights go down (and after chomping on a bag of popcorn) that I can apply to my lifelong passions of direct marketing, copywriting and entrepreneurship.

More on movies and marketing in a minute...but I want to finish the point about doing what you love, whether you get paid for it or not, and even if there is "something else" that pays the bills.

I didn't share all of my "broken dreams" above to force you to take a stroll down memory lane with me...but I wanted to emphasize that no matter what vocation you

have chosen (or will choose), I encourage you to figure out ways to incorporate *all* of your passions into your daily life whenever and wherever possible.

Looking back I know that it would be a lot easier today if over dinner, when asked what I do for a living, I could simply say I am an accountant or a lawyer.

It's just so easy to say it and have them get it.

Difficulties arise when I even hint that I am some kind of "consultant" in direct marketing—I can see the wheels turning in the minds of who I am talking to that I am really just...well...*unemployed*.

But before they start feeling sorry for me that my profession is impossible to explain and obviously can't be lucrative (e.g. "I run masterminds"), changing the subject to my passions of umpiring, writing and movie watching seems to always end the pity party.

And of course I am not unemployed...hey, I write for you every Sunday.

Back to gathering marketing lessons from great cinema...

When I wrote "Sharks, aliens and dinosaurs" I explored the world and the movies of director Steven Spielberg and why we need to go deep rather than wide as copywriters and marketers.

In "Too many notes" I began with recounting a scene from one of my favorite movies ever, *Amadeus*, to highlight the need for always keeping ideas "in the parking lot" even when they are not immediate priority.

And those of you who have watched any of my videos, you have seen movie posters of *Pulp Fiction*, *It's a Wonderful Life* and *Midnight Cowboy* behind me –how's that for an unlikely triple feature?

I have referred to those films in the past and what we can learn from their script construction and expert storytelling.

Today I want to talk about the film that won the Academy Award for Best Picture in 1977 (to honor the Academy Awards season that is upon us now).

Annie Hall is that movie and it is Woody Allen's most acclaimed film.

I know...the same folks who have no idea who or what *Annie Hall* is are now asking:
"Who is Woody Allen?"

Suffice it to say it is a movie worth checking out if you have never seen it.

And whether you ever get to see the film or not, I would like to tell you about a "Syndrome" that I came up with inspired by **Annie Hall**—something I have seen play out too many times.

I believe "*Annie Hall Syndrome*" (note that I capitalized it trying to make believe I invented something) can derail your emotional health and your career...and it is something that you can easily avoid with a simple shift in your mindset.

The trap begins when you think you have "learned enough" or that you have all the knowledge you need right now to go forward and achieve maximum success.

Here's how the Syndrome played out in **Annie Hall**:

Woody Allen's character in the film is that of New York intellectual Alvy Singer...and Diane Keaton plays his flighty, naïve and somewhat unsophisticated "la-di-da" girlfriend, Annie Hall. (Those who have seen the film know about that phrase.)

Annie's exposure to modern culture is virtually non-existent when she arrives in New York and meets Alvy– and then begins both a romantic and also a student-teacher relationship with him.

As their relationship develops, Alvy exposes Annie to classic books and authors she never heard of, cultural endeavors she has never experienced before, and inspiring films she has never seen.

There's a scene early in the film when he takes her to see ***The Sorrow and the Pity***, a four hour documentary about World War II which they discuss and debate...something that would have been impossible before Annie met Alvy.

And the relationship goes deeper from there...as Annie's eyes are opened to a world she never would have thought imaginable...learning about so many things she "didn't know she didn't know."

Without giving away all that happens in the rest of ***Annie Hall***, at the end of the film when Alvy and Annie are no longer together, Alvy goes to see ***The Sorrow and the Pity*** by himself...and to his surprise, Annie is there, dragging her new boyfriend to see the film with her.

And the concept (and "Syndrome") is this:

Never underestimate what you have learned, are currently learning, and can still learn from those who are your mentors and teachers.

Or put more simply:

The day you stop learning is the day you can probably hang it up for good.

Now in the film, Annie left Alvy for a host of reasons so adding the complications of a romantic relationship needs to be stripped out for our purposes today.

I simply want to focus on when the student becomes the teacher; and that the best teachers can never stop being students.

Obviously there is nothing wrong about the student branching out and expanding...however, the trouble starts when the student thinks they no longer need the teacher (or *any* teacher) on their lifelong journey.

Of course you can “outgrow” a teacher or mentor...however, I implore you to recognize the contributions of all your teachers...*forever*.

I emphasized this when I encouraged you to write the “acknowledgments section” for your book as a New Year's resolution in “Confessions inside his Rolls Royce”...and that suggestion applied even if you never intend to write a book.

(FYI: There is a reference to It's a Wonderful Life in that post as well...love that film...and I have spoken with my friend Ben Settle about doing a webinar on the Director of that classic—and many other landmark films—Frank Capra...more movie lessons coming soon)

I've seen some version of “Annie Hall Syndrome” ruin many promising careers or it was the root cause of unbecoming hubris with a shortage of humility, a terrible combo that leads to less personal fulfillment in the long run.

Many people flounder later in their careers simply because they get to a point where they think they no longer need to learn new things— or they lose the desire to continue to grow—because they are full up with all that they ever needed...or so they thought.

I maintain that you will **never** have all the knowledge you need until the day you die...and it is the hunger to always learn more and continue to strive to be the world's best at all you do that will fuel you.

Being a student for life will keep you passionate and enthusiastic forever.

Case in point:

I am a member of 6 different mastermind groups...some are expensive to join and some have no direct costs involved...but all of them are a huge investments of time and effort, and in some cases, they cost a lot of money to join too.

Regardless of where they fit on the time/cost spectrum, I approach all 6 groups with 100% focus and I always strive to play full out in each one of them as both a giver and a recipient of knowledge and advice.

A big mistake I see often among other members: Assessing the effectiveness of those communities or associations in those groups solely on "how much money you made," or "deals you made" (with other members)—or "what you got or didn't get," sometimes at the expense of the learning and sharing.

This is especially prevalent in high end mastermind groups where people pay a lot of money to join...but it also exists in one-on-one relationships when no one pays a dime...and I take some poetic license and use *Annie Hall* as an example of that. And this is not a sales pitch to use for anyone with a mastermind group...but it is a sales pitch to avoid jumping to conclusions regarding the notion that "I've got what I need from this relationship and I can move on now."

Of course you may be ready to move on from certain relationships...but I implore you to not jump too soon.

Life is always about playing the long game.

I'm not the first one to say this (or believe this) but it is worth repeating:

The best teachers are also lifelong students.

The best students never jump ship too soon (even if they eventually leave their teachers).

And when (if) students leave, they never forget their teachers.

#17: Amadeus: “Too many notes?” (January 2019)

One of my favorite movies of all time is *Amadeus*, which if you haven't seen it, is a fictionalized biography about Wolfgang “Amadeus” Mozart which follows Italian composer Antonio Salieri's rivalry with Mozart at the court of Emperor Joseph II.

One of my favorite scenes in the film (actually one of dozens that are so memorable) is this dialogue after Mozart presents a brand new piece of work (which is extraordinary of course) to the Emperor:

EMPEROR: Well, Herr Mozart! A good effort. Decidedly that. An excellent effort! You've shown us something quite new today.

[Mozart bows frantically: he is over-excited.]

MOZART: It is new, it is, isn't it, Sire?

EMPEROR: Yes, indeed.

MOZART: So then you like it? You really like it, Your Majesty?

EMPEROR: Of course I do. It's very good. Of course now and then – just now and then – it gets a touch elaborate.

MOZART: What do you mean, Sire?

EMPEROR: Well, I mean occasionally it seems to have, how shall one say? [he stops in difficulty; turning to Orsini-Rosenberg] How shall one say, Director?

ORSINI-ROSENBERG: Too many notes, Your Majesty?

EMPEROR: Exactly. Very well put. Too many notes.

MOZART: I don't understand. There are just as many notes, Majesty, as are required. Neither more nor less.

EMPEROR: My dear fellow, there are in fact only so many notes the ear can hear in the course of an evening. I think I'm right in saying that, aren't I, Court Composer?

SALIERI: Yes! yes! er, on the whole, yes, Majesty.

MOZART: But this is absurd!

EMPEROR: My dear, young man, don't take it too hard. Your work is ingenious. It's quality work. And there are simply too many notes, that's all. Cut a few and it will be perfect.

MOZART: Which few did you have in mind, Majesty?

EMPEROR: Well. There it is.

The Emperor reminds me of someone who didn't renew my Titans Master Class mastermind group a couple of years ago because he said that there were "too many good ideas" (or "too many notes" I guess).

He added that he was frustrated that he couldn't find the time to work on (or execute on) all the amazing things he was learning.

I was not insulted nor did I try very hard to keep him in the group—and I promised to help him in the future which I have.

Ironically, the two biggest initiatives he decided to focus on most intently when he left (and now with no distractions from any other good ideas getting in the way) could be sourced directly to two presentations given by guest speakers at Titans Master Class.

So in a way, my work was done here—but I couldn't help but feel I had failed him—and I was a bit glum.

What bugged me was *not* that one of my flock had left me; rather, I was *saddened* that maybe a core principle I learned growing up as a direct marketer had a fatal flaw.

I always believed that you can never have too many good ideas.

Of course if you are a “quick start” entrepreneur, and I know many of you are, it's easy to get overwhelmed...and that's why you must have a system to catalog, store and have at the ready as many new ideas as possible all the time.

And you don't have to work on all of them immediately.

Maybe I failed this Titan by not stressing enough that he could save some good stuff for later.

I've heard this quote from a number of friends and entrepreneurs regarding the fact that there are only two times:

Now and not now.

This helps a lot when I remind myself that there is nothing better than working with entrepreneurs but that they can also be a little nuts when it comes to never hearing an idea they don't like.

Over the last four years I have interviewed hundreds of entrepreneurs and business leaders for my two mastermind groups, Titans Mastermind and Titans Master Class.

Everyone I interview has two things in common:

- 1) They are all best-in-class, multi-channel, direct response marketers
- 2) They are all incredibly successful at generating excitement (and profit) in a specific area they are passionate about

Knowing that, I ask the same question of every one of them after spending some time talking about the history and trajectory of their businesses:

"What is holding you back in the growth of your business?"

Almost all of the answers I receive can be put into three buckets:

1) "I have too many ideas and I don't know which ones to focus on first." I heard over and over some version of, "I have more good ideas than I know what to do with; it's the implementation that screws me up." Like the Emperor hearing "too many notes."

2) "I don't receive enough candid feedback and constructive criticism on all of those new ideas that I can really trust." Although the follow up question would be, "Can you (the entrepreneur/owner/leader) hear the opposing view?"

3) "I don't receive enough new ideas from others." Of course this could add to the list of "too many ideas" and also might relate to the entrepreneur having some selective hearing too. Reminds us of Emperor Joseph II again doesn't it?

Too many ideas

This is a problem we all face whether we are entrepreneurs or senior executives.

And the real definition of this problem is that "too many" means "not enough time or resources to get the best ones done."

It's all about that constant battle to create the right balance between idea generation and getting the essential ideas into the pipeline if appropriate (and then staying focused).

Having the right staff is essential.

So is knowing when to say "no for now" and making it a possibility for later (i.e. "not now").

The country's foremost expert in Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) Ned Hallowell, believes that there would be no entrepreneurs if this "affliction" called ADD, that affects so many of us, did not exist.

Shiny objects definitely serve a purpose as they pertain to innovation; but they also create some frustration.

Therefore ADD is far from being a stigma...it's a strength...although it clearly can get in the way of productivity.

Ned (and many others) also believe that controlling and resisting the urge that all entrepreneurs have to chase every shiny object (immediately) is crucial to achieving their greatest success in business.

There is no quick solution to this problem but most of the entrepreneurs and leaders I interact with regularly understand that if they can get the right systems (and people) in place for implementation (which in most cases is not their strong suit), the results can be extraordinary.

Plus they need to create a "garage" or "storage locker" for all the good ideas they can't get to right away but ideas that should never be lost.

Over these last four years, this has been a major theme and something we discuss regularly among the members of Titans Mastermind and Titans Master Class, business by business; and it's also something I work on with all of the businesses I consult to regularly.

One trend I've seen in my masterminds and the ones I am a member of is that the entrepreneur/CEO/"rainmaker" joins the group with a key "number two" who can prioritize the ideas, sort them, and put them in the right place priority-wise—and help with the execution (or store them for later) once everyone returns home.

Not receiving candid feedback

Being able to tell the emperor he or she has no clothes (or that they know nothing about great classical music!) has been a problem forever.

And the problem arises from employees not wanting to rock the boat *and* the leader not really listening for subtle (but potentially powerful and useful) criticism.

It's been my observation that a little extra open-mindedness and a true open-door policy from the entrepreneur or President can be game changing.

If you are the CEO, always know that everyone is looking for ways *not* to be in conflict with you...and surrounding yourself with "yes men/women" will not lead to the results you really want.

You instinctively know this but rarely do we get introspective enough to do something about it.

Having the ultimate power to hire and fire at will always leads to getting a lot less truth...but you must work to get the truth...and make sure your team knows that they will not be penalized for telling the truth (or giving their contrarian opinion).

And if you can't hire folks who will speak up, you better be in groups (Vistage, Young Presidents, Entrepreneurs Organization, Strategic Coach, high end masterminds etc.) to get your dose of honest feedback.

Many leaders believe the opinions of "outsiders" way more than the folks close to them on the inside...not a mistake in itself...but getting *both* perspectives will lead to chasing after fewer bad ideas and pursuing more good ones.

I've always said that your true friends are the ones who will tell you if you have something hanging out of your nose, if you have spinach in your teeth or if your idea sucks...and in all of those instances, if telling the truth is going to work, love also must never leave the room.

I would recommend that you demand this of friends and family in your personal life...and also demand that of the folks that would die on a sword for you in your business as well.

It's not easy...it takes time to build that trust...but it is so worth it.

New ideas that may not be yours

This is the area that fascinates me the most.

I already said that most entrepreneurs I interact with have more ideas than they know what to do with and they know it's the new (big) ideas that drive exponential growth.

But here's the issue that comes up time and again from business owners:

The belief that every good idea worth pursuing needs to be their own.

This is the toughest one for entrepreneurs to accept and to even recognize it's happening...since no one else had the "big idea" to get the party started in the first place (i.e. launch the company).

But I have seen so many businesses fail in the long term because the founder didn't recognize great ideas from others in the organization readily.

Finding what I call "the second rainmaker" is helpful (which could be that "number two" I referred to earlier).

Having a key number two to give you new ideas (and still another key partner to help prioritize and implement) is by far the biggest void I find in the companies that have the most difficulty making the next big jump in revenue and profit.

In entrepreneurial businesses I encounter, most (if not all) of the "best ideas" come from one person...the person at the top of the food chain.

In addition, as mentioned previously, those leaders rarely have someone in their company that gives them candid feedback to every brilliant idea they have (which

happens about every 15 minutes or so); and they also rarely have no one else in the organization coming up with new ideas that they can build on.

How lonely is that?

In almost every case, the CEO/owner does not have a "second rainmaker."

I know that when you have a mission or vision that is so much a part of your DNA, it is sometimes hard to hear other folks who might actually share that same mission/vision...and are actually ready (or "deserving") to contribute at a much deeper level with their own ingenuity.

Please read my post "From intrapreneur to entrepreneur" which talks about my personal experience regarding growing idea generators from within...and also making sure you are working to be one of those internal rainmakers if you are *not* the owner/CEO/founder.

Recognizing talent, hiring them and growing them...and then actually listening to them (and their ideas)...is what will lead to the most exponential growth in your business.

There is a risk that your second rainmaker might then add even more shiny objects to the idea mix... but who is to say that one of theirs can't replace one of yours?

Having been lucky enough to be a "second rainmaker" in a company where I shared the vision of the founder at the deepest level...and then definitely got heard...all I can say is that it is doable.

To summarize my prescription for success in any entrepreneurial company that successfully moves itself to what author Peter Senge calls a "learning organization":

1) Make sure, as the leader, you are doing only the things you are best at and the things only you can do better than everyone else. This is the wisdom of entrepreneur

coach Dan Sullivan. The core premise of what he teaches is that it is critical to only work in your “unique ability.”

In addition to Senge's book and everything Dan Sullivan has written , I also highly recommend the book Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less by Greg McKeown.

2) If you are like most of the entrepreneurs Ned Hallowell talks about—and you have no shortage of new ideas but can't get them all done—figure out a system to know a good one from a bad one. That is, choose wisely by making sure you have people around you who tell you the truth about your ideas, good or bad. Reward them for candor and don't punish them for honesty.

If you can't hire for this, get it from key peer groups on the outside.

And if you are part of the staff, be that honest person once you have earned the trust of your superiors.

Top down or bottom up, be transparent that there will be no room for yessing everything to death.

3) Once you have the implementation and feedback loops handled, get yourself a second rainmaker. I know that is not an easy button/easy hire and it's a long term play. But it is best if you can have one at your side.

If you can't grow a second rainmaker, you still need to find one.

Go to outside experts or be part of a mastermind group to help you make rain (i.e. consultants and colleagues who want to be your partners, not just creators of chaos). Do that at a minimum.

And if you are the “intrapreneur”, working closely with an entrepreneur, look to be a rainmaker for them...always.

If it sounds like I have all of this handled myself, I don't.

As a result of this very long post I just re-wrote this on a post-it note and hung it at eye level on my computer monitor:

Refrain from doing things someone else can do better, find great implementers who complement your tendency towards shiny objects, find employees and friends who tell you the truth and don't think that you are the only one who can make rain.

There's water (i.e. ideas) everywhere...some is streaming as new thinking from the spectacular people you are surrounded by and some is coming from the sky (which actually originates in your brain...weird gravity thing).

But whether the water is coming from a fire hose held by others or it is rain you are making on your own (and hopefully with a powerful "second rainmaker"), stop complaining and just buy a bigger umbrella.

#18: Jerry Weintraub: “When I stop talking you’ll know I’m dead” (December 2018)

I want to talk about your “voice” today...both literally and figuratively.

And I hope you didn’t find the subject line too jarring...it’s actually the title of a book by Jerry Weintraub.

If you never heard of him, he was a pretty big deal in Hollywood over many decades: He was the first person to persuade Elvis Presley to go “on the road” touring, he was responsible for some of Frank Sinatra’s biggest events, he discovered John Denver, and he co-produced the monumental film “Nashville” with Robert Altman...and so much more.

He was an amazing man with a colorful and meaningful story to tell. I highly recommend the book.

And unfortunately, he did “stop talking” not too long ago— but not before leaving a tremendous legacy and so many lessons, mostly because he chose to “talk so much.”

If I piqued your interest to read more about him, please *do not* buy the book in any form other than audio. As I listened to the book, I realized that there is no way I could have gotten half as much from his story without listening to him read it himself.

You see, Jerry was a poor kid from the Bronx (New York City), from humble roots, who ended up being on the inside with some of the biggest names in show business. An unlikely journey for sure.

Why would we want to hear from anyone else but him tell such a story?

Hearing him tell that story in his own words—and voice—adds a richness and authenticity that you will never get by simply reading the book.

I was thinking about this a lot this past week while recording the audio version of my new book [Overdeliver.](#)

Here I am during the 14 hours of recording, which was sometimes painful (especially when I read a passage that I wanted to re-write if I still had time!)...yet it was exhilarating:



I also found some "last minute typos" which should still be correctible—but I couldn't help but think, "Done is better than perfect."

Even though I am no Jerry Weintraub—not even close—I recall when I was negotiating the contract for my book I thought about him and listening to *When I Stop Talking, You'll Know I'm Dead*...and I had it written into my contract that no one other than me could read the audio version.

And there was no argument when I told my editor and publisher my preference for doing the audio version myself—they know how much more powerful it is when an author reads their own work.

While going through this long and arduous process this past week, I also recalled all of the books I have listened to over the years *not* read by the author—especially autobiographies and non-fiction.

Of course if the author is not alive at the time of publication, you can't force him or her to read the audio version.

But all of those books read by a third party or “professional reader” lost so much in the translation.

Not hearing from the author directly with all their passion behind their story—which would also show us *why* they were writing the book in the first place based on their inflections and what they emphasize —was not as impactful.

Although I have to say Jeremy Irons reading *The Alchemist* is probably almost as good as Paulo Coelho reading it.

However, I think it's different for fiction, even if the fiction is such a monumental work as is the case with *The Alchemist*.

Or maybe I just like Jeremy Irons' voice too much.

At the other end of the spectrum is the author being the *only* person who could ever read their work—like Jerry Weintraub.

I've also been told by Reid Tracy, CEO at Hay House, my publisher (Reid is the most knowledgeable man on the planet on selling books in today's complicated and diverse marketplace) that audio books are the fastest growing segment; and today it is a requirement from most if not all publishers that an audio version gets produced at the time of publication.

Just another reason not to leave your voice to others even if it's a "professional."

More people than ever will listen to it so why shouldn't they be listening to you?

And this is one case is where being an amateur is a plus.

Now this is not a blog post solely about "making sure you do your own audio when you write a book."

That's the literal side of "never giving up your voice"...but there's more that's not as literal:

1. Be bold with your voice and use it to differentiate yourself (whether you ever write a book or not)

2. Be consistent with your voice and don't allow incongruences to interfere with what you are trying to accomplish.

I talk a lot about "congruent marketing"—which ties into this bigger theme about your voice.

For example, in email marketing, I've seen copy and offers sent to lists from a specific personality that are so disconnected from the audience that you know the email was written by someone else; or it was being sent to make some quick cash; or it was sent to fulfill a commitment to mail (i.e. "reciprocation"); or it was sent for some other reason that has little to do with serving the audience or the customers on the list.

I knew of one online guru who had close to 50% unsubscribes from his list—a list that took years to build based on trust and integrity—because he sent an offer to it, with his endorsement, that was not consistent with anything he sent regularly to them and therefore not in his true voice; and to add insult to injury, it was on a subject his audience actually had disdain for.

This idea of never losing (or giving up) your voice is as true for regular communication as it is for selling other people's stuff...promoting for an affiliate that is not congruent with

your voice and your mission could dissolve years of goodwill you have built with your online family who has learned to love you and trust you.

I bet you are waiting for me to quote Will Rogers now so I will:

"It takes a lifetime to build a good reputation, but you can lose it in a minute."

When you change your voice or allow a different "voice" into the picture you may not only confuse your audience, you could repel them too.

And trust can be lost forever...and in a heartbeat.

If you are playing a long game, and I hope you are, never abdicate, even in a small way, who you are and who you want to be in the world; and there is no reciprocation that should ever compromise how you want to treat your best customers...and specifically how you talk to them and interact with them.

And that goes for prospects or even suspects (who you eventually want to turn into prospects and then customers).

I bet you are now waiting for me to give you this classic quote, one I'm sure you learned in elementary school—as it pertained to all of the new friends you made on the playground and now all the new friends you make online:

You never get a second chance to make a great first impression.

And I will add to that, *be incongruent at your own risk.*

Not every marketer needs to be super aggressive nor does every marketer need to be meek...but what you must do is market congruently (and with consistency) so that no one can ever say that you are out of integrity with who you are, what you believe, how you express yourself and what you sell or market.

One last observation that I would like to share which on the surface contradicts this notion of “never giving up your voice”...but it's important because I have seen such amazing positive results from it.

I know of many big names with big followings who have told me that when they hired a copywriter to learn to “write in their voice” it changed their business for the better.

That is, it saved an enormous amount of time for them since they were not professional writers and in some cases, writing was painful for them.

However, the one caveat is that they do not allow one piece of copy to go out the door without reading it, editing it and making sure it is 100% congruent with their voice.

There can be slip ups when you outsource even to the best ghost writer.

Actually, you can screw things up even if you don't outsource any of your messaging—you can still make mistakes with congruence when you write everything yourself.

But either way, if it happens, your tribe will notice (as I have seen firsthand).

No matter how much you write yourself or have others write for you, edit carefully and test thoroughly (e.g. read everything aloud, preferably to someone who knows you very well) before you hit the send button.

To my wife's chagrin (sometimes) I read these posts aloud to her before I send them. I know she has saved me many times from incongruity...and even sending a bad joke or two.

Remember that it's always *your* voice and no one else's.

Until you “stop talking,” you are unique and a category of one.

#19: Winston Churchill: “The Titan who saved the world” (December 2018)

Believe it or not, the Titan I want to talk about this week is *not* a direct marketer...or is he?

I quote him often and written about him before...and I just came across a quote from him that I had not heard despite reading so much of his writing (although it's disputed whether it's really his—I still love it):

“However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results”

This quote is (possibly) from Sir Winston Churchill.

What's great about Churchill is that there are multiple sites now letting us know what *he didn't actually say*...because he said so much in his lifetime that is quotable.

While he's pretty far removed from the usual suspects I talk about in this space, I think about him often.

I believe that without his decisive actions and leadership during the most dangerous period the world has ever known, none of us in this country (and those of you in many other countries as well) would be pursuing our dreams, with complete freedom, in direct marketing (or anything else for that matter).

I am convinced that he is the single most important figure in that war—the man who is more responsible than anyone as far as saving the world from total disaster.

Without his resilience and courage, I'm not sure things would have worked out the way they did.

And knowing that he was committed to looking at “results” (whether the quote above is 100% accurate or not) should also warm the hearts of direct marketers everywhere.

I was an English major in college but if I had to do it over again, I think I would have majored in history...and since graduating (never to pick up a Dickens novel again), my particular historical passion has been World War II.

I look for any excuse to think about Churchill...finding a new quote is one way—and then this week it was watching tributes to “a date which will live in infamy” (December 7th), the day the United States entered World War II.

The last time I talked about Churchill with you was when I was watching season one of “The Crown” (on Netflix...highly recommended...John Lithgow plays Sir Winston in the show).

Anyway, since there are so many life lessons to be learned by studying Churchill, I want to talk about him again today.

I also love the fact that we can usually connect Churchill’s philosophies to business (and even marketing).

Another quote I recently found:

“Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm”

Having just completed my new book, Overdeliver, I relate to this quote more than ever—the toughest pages to write in this new book were the sections about the biggest failures in my career.

But with Churchill as inspiration, I realized that sharing them openly and without excuses would be helpful to so many more marketers than just telling everyone what an awesome marketer I am.

I made some awful mistakes...and as my friend and world champion dog agility trainer Susan Garrett always says:

“You win or you learn.”

A few years ago, I fulfilled a lifelong dream when I toured the “Churchill War Rooms” in London.

In the “photo album” in the P.S. below there’s a picture of me with my hero during that trip.

I highly recommend you visit if you ever get to London...there's also a Churchill museum in the same building which is awesome.

Both the War Rooms and the museum give tremendous insight into how this man was able to accomplish all he did...often under relentless pressure to make life and death decisions every day during the war to end all wars.

This man understood leadership like no one you will ever study in history.

And he did it most of the time with a scotch in one hand and a cigar in the other.

He was super human—and human—all at the same time.

The fact that he lived until he was 90 kind of debunks a few things we know about drinking and smoking too.

I have a feeling his mindset and how he “engaged with life” was the key to his longevity despite his vices; and thinking more often than not about making an impact and creating a legacy for the ages helped a bit too:

“The positive thinker sees the invisible, feels the intangible and achieves the impossible”

His philosophies around leadership also serve as business lessons on a very deep level.

I want to share two biggies that have resonated with me over the years.

First, on courage...

“There is nothing more exhilarating than being shot at without result”

Sounds like the “marketing wars” we participate in every day, doesn’t it?

Or how you declare a huge commitment before you really know how you are actually going to execute on that commitment (like “throwing your hat over the fence not knowing how you will retrieve it”).

The top coach for entrepreneurs in the world, Dan Sullivan, has been known to say:

“Courage is a crappy place” (although I think he has also used a different word than “crappy”—starts with “sh,” has two “t’s” in the middle, and ends in a “y”—but this blog is rated PG)

It means that as entrepreneurs and marketers (and even world leaders), we must embrace courage as our friend even under the toughest circumstances.

When we talk about Churchill’s brand of courage, it goes to an entirely new level.

This is a man who might have saved all of humanity from one of the most evil forces the world has ever seen...by not only “dodging bullets”...but by acting decisively and proactively in the face of that intense enemy fire...while so many others just gave in or gave up.

And as far as “The Battle of Britain” goes, he was dodging bombs and not just bullets—that turned much of his beloved country (and the city of London in particular) into rubble.

He came out the other side stronger than ever with more resolve and optimism to go forward.

A second big lesson we can learn by studying Churchill:

The importance of being tough but fair.

This is a Churchill premise that hopefully resides deep in the fabric of how we all do business in the world.

I have written previously about, "It's not always about the money" (when I first told you about the legend of Gene Schwartz) and "The Power of 100-0" (when discussing negotiation).

Both of those posts may have made it sound like money doesn't really matter...or that I was being flippant about making a good deal (or the right deal).

But that is far from the point.

I absolutely believe you must understand all of the issues around money when making any business decision—so you can make the best decisions regarding how important money (or price) might be in the overall deal or negotiation...and what a fair deal really looks like.

And my absolute favorite Churchill story illustrates this concept beautifully:

According to legend, Winston Churchill once asked a "socialite" if she would sleep with him for 1 million Pounds.

When she admitted that she would, he offered her ONE Pound...and THEN she objected:

"Winston! What sort of woman do you think I am?"

Winston then replied:

"Madam...we have already established what you are; now we are just haggling over price."

When you read Churchill's quotes and stories, it is crystal clear that he had a knack for cutting to the chase, "calling the question" and getting to what really matters to create forward progress.

My mentor and a Titan in his own right, Marty Edelston, was like that too.

One of his favorite quotes, which I think Churchill would have been in agreement with, was:

"The only things worth talking about are the things you can't talk about."

When I eulogized Marty at his funeral in 2013, I told everyone he was like Vince Lombardi...the football coach who was incredibly tough to play for and known for being a difficult taskmaster...often leading his players to curse at him under their breath regularly.

From that eulogy:

"When you play for coaches who are tough like Lombardi (or Marty), you often feel more pain than pleasure; but when you look back on the most valuable lessons (and traits) you picked up by being dealt with in a tough yet fair way, you never regret a moment of that relationship. I know I owe my own mental toughness to the tenacity of Marty and him being a demand for excellence 100% of the time."

I have a feeling that Churchill was one of those "tough but fair guys" as well.

Interesting to note that in Churchill's situation, not executing on excellence 100% of the time, could have led to the end of the world. Just a little more pressure to make the right call.

All of this "tough guy talk" will eventually lead to winning football games (Lombardi); to building nine figure businesses (Marty); or winning World Wars (Churchill).

Back to football (and that's American football for all you World Cup fans).

My favorite team since I was a little kid is the New York Jets who were originally called the New York Titans.

Given that the Jets haven't won a championship since I was 10 years old (and I am no longer a young man!), I'm sort of glad they changed their name since "Titans" is my new go-to moniker for "greatness" or "top of the heap" and it represents the kind of people I want to follow into battle.

The Jets?

I am just stuck with them for life at this point...and paying for season tickets is far from "following them into battle" (and it is also an incredibly painful check to write most years).

Unfortunately they are not Titans. But I remain hopeful.

I follow the work and teachings of Winston Churchill because he knew how to get everyone to follow him into battle...which is something all of us should emulate. He was a Titan of the highest order.

Thanks for letting me share some revelations I've had over the years studying one of the most colorful and important people in the history of the world.

And I bet Churchill could go into the locker room right now and get my Jets to play better.

Warmly,

Brian

P.S. My Churchill "photo album" follows or what I call, "Where's Winston?"

Travel around the world and you will find him everywhere.

Here I am with him at The International Museum of WW II in Natick, Massachusetts...looking a little waxy I know...and Winston is not looking his best either (and he's really made of wax)!



Here I am with my hero in London.



And here I am with him after he showed up during a walk through a park in Budapest, Hungary.



I even made my kids pose with him when we found him hanging out in Copenhagen, Denmark.



We all owe a debt of gratitude to Sir Winston Churchill.

As a tribute to him, never pass up a photo op—he makes himself readily available to the general public these days—and I'm pretty sure he wanted you on his team, following his lead.



#20: A Star is Born: “12 Notes” (October 2018)

“Music is essentially 12 notes between any octave – 12 notes and the octave repeats. It’s the same story told over and over, forever. All any artist can offer this world is how they see those 12 notes. That’s it.”

-Bobby Maine (played by Sam Elliott) in “A Star is Born” (2018)

Not everyone can be Thomas Edison.

But I don't believe you have to constantly invent new products to make a huge impact.

Maybe that's my way of justifying my existence despite never inventing anything new.

However, when I think that I must be a loser because I haven't invented anything new, I also know there are many other ways to be innovative.

I realize that it's entirely possible that the story and experience I can put on a concept, a rule of thumb or an eternal truth just might be the key for someone else to understand something important that they didn't understand previously.

How *you* see it so others can see it clearly...that is a form of innovation too.

While inventing different ways for more people to understand important things might not be as directly utilitarian as inventing the light bulb, it's a contribution we all can make to the world—and it's our responsibility to do it as often as we can.

Sharing our 12 notes over and over again with new stories and experiences is never repetitive to those hearing those notes for the first time.

I was fortunate to be a guest speaker at a mastermind last week hosted by marketing icon Perry Marshall.

Perry has actually invented a lot of new things over the years and he encouraged all of us to, “Invent something the world can't live without.”

My corollary would be: "Invent a framework so others can understand something that they previously did not understand...and once they understand it, they can't live without it."

When I look at the manuscript of my new book and see a chapter on "RFM" ("Recency/Frequency/Monetary") and another on "LTV" ("Lifetime Value"), I am well aware that I didn't invent those concepts; but I am also well aware that there are thousands of marketers and entrepreneurs who need to know those concepts, and excuse the hyperbole, it is information they can't live without in relation to their businesses.

I can't tell you how many events I have attended over the years—with marketers and/or copywriters and/or all sorts of entrepreneurs who were there to expand their knowledge and yet they were missing some basics of human behavior that are required for the kind of growth they all desire.

So many marketing "rules of thumb" are actually truths about how many people respond and buy and they haven't changed for centuries—yet many are not taught in a book and they are certainly not taught in school.

I know about some of this stuff...intimately. Didn't invent it—just lived it.

Either I can be the messenger for more people to understand those concepts or someone else can be...and we never know if it is our story or someone else's which will create the epiphany (and usability).

And be OK not being the messenger for everyone—but never be complacent about sharing early and often—since I guarantee you will be the messenger for someone.

A copywriter friend of mine who heard me speak about "12 notes" and the quote that opened this post told me he wished he had heard the quote earlier in his career so he didn't have to go through the pain of figuring this out for himself.

He was recently asked to be a featured speaker on the topic of "writing faster and writing better." As he prepared for the talk, he said he kept thinking, "I don't have any

new inventions or revolutionary ideas to share. I've learned it all from Gary Halbert, Gary Bencivenga, and so many others.

He told me that thinking about sharing under the "12 notes concept" will give him so much more confidence in the future that what he talks about is relevant despite not being "authored" by him—and his stamp will still be all over it. He will be the musician playing 12 notes on any given day.

He added, "From now on, I'll keep your insights close to my heart to stop me from doubting myself."

Funny...he said "your insights" like I invented them. Clearly, I did not. I was an effective messenger of those insights though.

I hadn't thought about all of this in the context of self-confidence—but once again, we can't all be Edison but we can all be heroes with our stories.

It's how we tell our story inside those 12 notes that makes all the difference.

I know this is a lot shorter than usual—I am preparing this week for my Titans Master Class—and the plan is to play some new variations of my 12 notes next week.

My new song will be based on what I learn from the likes of Jay Abraham, Perry Marshall, Ben Settle, Ryan Lee, Barbara Hemphill, Chad Collins, Justin Wykowski, Ben Simkin...and all of the Titans Master Class members.

There are certainly some inventors in that group...and all can play 12 notes on multiple instruments...and I promise to be a good messenger based on everything I hear.

#21: Ed Sheeran: “Being young has nothing to do with it” (October 2018)

A few weeks ago I attended an Ed Sheeran concert.

If you don't know who he is, and you are over 50 years old, you are not alone (as I found out before, during and after the concert).

At 60, I was in the top 1% of the oldest people there...which was awesome.

I love his music, his demeanor and despite my daughter thinking it was a bit silly that I was attending, I could tell she was super jealous too.

And I'll believe whether it's true or not, that she gave me a few points for being just a **little** cool.

The show was great and I highly recommend you check him out if you get an opportunity to see him live.

Now that doesn't mean I am sending you an affiliate link or anything to attend his next show.

Believe me, Ed Sheeran doesn't need me to sell tickets for him...he's doing just fine, thank you.

I just need to tell you this story.

I don't know about you but I hear too often for my taste people making excuses for young entrepreneurs and less experienced business leaders not “getting it” as it pertains to acknowledging and compensating people properly who have helped them achieve great success in very short periods of time.

Those who want to give the benefit of the doubt in these cases, use as the excuse:

“They are young and just don't get it yet.”

I learned at that concert that age has nothing to do with “getting it.”

Ed Sheeran is 27 years old and he gave me a new perspective on the relationship between age and wisdom.

The warmup band for Ed (I'm so cool I am on a first name basis with him) was Snow Patrol—I've heard of them before, I have a couple of songs from them on my iPod and my wife and I were excited when they were announced.

Near the end of their set, they thanked everyone for supporting them in their career which we learned spanned 25 years.

Did you know Snow Patrol had been around that long? I didn't.

And then they thanked Ed Sheeran profusely for having them on tour with him.

Interesting...the star of the show was 2 years old, mainly eating and pooping, when his backup act was already rocking and rolling.

Shortly after Snow Patrol was done, Ed Sheeran appeared, with amazing energy, as he leaped on to the stage, playing non-stop music for 2 hours.

At some point during *his* set he paused to mention that when he was "young" (I guess like 5 years ago when he was 22?), it was Snow Patrol that took him on tour with them when he was more of a nobody and just starting out.

I heard similar gratefulness in his voice, to what I heard from Snow Patrol's lead singer.

I also heard a 27 year old who "gets it."

That he understood at such a young age that you have to be on the shoulders of giants to get so far (and so fast!) was refreshing. And he also understood that there are countless ways to sincerely reciprocate along the way.

I don't know if Sheeran is a great guy or not...he didn't tell me...but what he showed with his actions said something that could never be expressed with words.

Through his behavior it was clear how much he understood gratefulness and appreciation and that he also knows that acknowledgement of others is part of the success formula...and that formula is not just for rock stars.

I left the show thinking about how painful it's been to write the acknowledgments section of my new book—not painful because of the love and support I've gotten throughout my career from so many people—but painful because when I hand in the final manuscript, I fear I may forget to mention someone significant.

Ed has it easy right now—he's only had 27 years of accumulated support and wisdom contributing to his success—but his life will get much more complicated assuming he lives the rest of his life with the philosophy of never forgetting how he got there (wherever he ends up getting to).

His relationship capital account will far exceed his bank account by a wide margin if he keeps playing the game this way.

I wish him well and will follow him for so many reasons...two in particular:

I want him to keep making great music that I know millions will enjoy *and* I also want to see how he keeps paying it forward.

And I now have a different appreciation for Snow Patrol, a group I liked and now a group I will love and respect forever—and I don't care if they ever record another song in the future.

Again, they didn't tell me what great guys they are either but what they showed to the audience by being there and playing full out (and hopefully it was sincere), was a brand of humility and grace we can all emulate.

So thanks for allowing me to do some "thinking out loud" on this topic (pun intended if you know Ed Sheeran's music)...click on that link and let me know if you think Ed is the bomb (like my daughter does).

I know 50,000 people at Met Life Stadium thought he was just "perfect"...and I know Snow Patrol was content to keep "chasing Ed Sheeran" even while they are also"chasing cars." (You know who they are now, right?)

Warmly,

Brian

P.S. You didn't expect rock videos this Sunday morning did you?

Hope you clicked on the music of Ed Sherran and Snow Patrol above (and that you didn't wake up anyone in your house).

The other thing I couldn't help think about given this multi-generational kinship talked about above was something I said in a previous post which I sent on my 60th birthday and titled it, "Too many of my mentors are dead". I re-wrote an excerpt here in the context of today's post above:

My mentor, Marty Edelston, often said to me, in order to be sure that I had the right idea about aging:

"I love getting older since it means I am only getting smarter."

And if he was still alive today, he would once again explain the difference to me between "60 years of experience" vs. "one year of experience for 60 years."
What that means:

Knowledge and wisdom are cumulative assuming you are a lifelong learner.

Marty was a lifelong learner and he taught me to think that way too, which at its core means always having insatiable curiosity, always hanging out with people smarter (and often older) than yourself and never letting your ego get in the way of learning.

And it's OK to gain wisdom from those who are younger than you too.

While there are prodigies who can make huge differences for thousands by the time they attend their first prom (or even if they are a "late bloomer" like Ed Sheeran at 27!), most mortals like you and I need some age (and wisdom) to get there...and not just doing the same thing year after year.

I am often the oldest person (by chronological age) in many of the rooms I hang out in these days (and even sometimes in a large football stadium too).

However, in those rooms I am usually hanging out with some of the most phenomenal marketers in the world—which is something I am proud of and I no longer make jokes about everyone in the room being young enough to be one of my kids.

A better perspective: I am getting my Ph.D. in areas of marketing from others who may not have put in the hours or years (yet)... but they have achieved expertise way beyond what I know in their short time on earth about one thing or many things.

Maybe Snow Patrol will let me join their band? ☺

#22: Wilt Chamberlain/Rick Barry: “Shooting underhand” (September 2018)

I love the story about one of the most intimidating athletes of all time “feeling like a sissy”—and the lessons we can learn from it.

Wilt Chamberlain, arguably one of the best basketball players of all time, a gifted and skilled player who also happened to be over 7 feet tall (affectionately called “Wilt the Stilt” by many), struggled throughout his career shooting free throws.

For those of you not familiar with basketball, a “free throw” is a shot you take when you get “fouled” by another player and you shoot with no one trying to block your shot or trying to stop you by playing defense—it’s just you and the basket.

Chamberlain was known to make shots from all over the court, with opposing players draped all over him, with relative ease, often with a very high degree of difficulty...but when faced with a free shot, he often shot miserably.

He tried everything to shoot free throws better including seeing a psychiatrist (and he even told a story where the psychiatrist actually shot better at the free throw line than he did). There’s actually film of that [in this video](#) since I needed to verify that one.

For one season, however, Chamberlain tried “shooting underhanded” (which is not the norm, it looks a little silly and it has often been called “granny-style shooting”).

However, Chamberlain had his best season shooting foul shots this way although it caused him to remark that shooting this way made him “look like a sissy.” He abandoned the practice despite the improvements.

Now let’s look at Rick Barry, also a hall-of-fame player like Chamberlain, who only cared about scoring more points at the free throw line and looking like a sissy didn’t seem to be a factor.

I found this on The Google:

[Barry] maintained a 90% free-throw accuracy throughout his career, which was the best in NBA history back in 1980. During the 1978–79 season, Barry only missed nine (9) free-throws out of 169.

And he did it by throwing granny-style.

As strange as it looks, granny-style, or underhanded, shooting has actually proven to be a very accurate free-throw style. Nevertheless, players rarely resort to it.

Rick Barry famously helped Wilt Chamberlain improve his disastrous free-throw record during the 1961–62 season with his unusual scoring style. By using the granny shot, Chamberlain sank a career-best 61% of free-throws that season, and even made 28 of 32 free throws in one game.

But the next season, he stopped, and his free-throw record dropped accordingly. According to Malcolm Gladwell, he later admitted that he “felt like a sissy” when shooting underhand.

One of the lessons from this story is obvious:

You can do amazing things if you don't care about what others think.

But I would like to go a little deeper and add a marketing lesson which I talk about often—what I call “congruent marketing,” which takes into account what others think...but through a different lens.

And while this example sort of contradicts my principle on the surface (i.e. to Wilt the Stilt, shooting this way was not “congruent” with how he saw himself on the court), I will make the case that “shooting like a sissy” was completely congruent for him (if he thought about it like a marketer).

And for the record, I am not calling a guy who could step on my head and crush me a “sissy.”

The man was a warrior on and off the court all time time...relentless, passionate and ruthless.

For an athlete, those characteristics are synonymous with “winning at all costs”...so wouldn't getting every point possible toward victory always be consistent with that premise?

Despite Chamberlain feeling that shooting underhanded was *not* consistent with his persona and stature, we all would probably agree that his fans, and fans of the teams he played for, would only embrace him being able to score as many points as possible any way he could get there.

Think about this as you communicate with your fans, your tribe and anyone who looks up to you for leadership, guidance and ways to win.

As long as you can always make the case for congruency and how you are presenting yourself and your vision, no one will ever question your methodology...it will be much more about results inside of that congruency.

I am not saying you shouldn't be concerned with what others think; but being aware of what they think in the context of everything you do and everything you believe is a subtle distinction which I hope makes sense.

I have told you some cautionary tales in the past about online personalities allowing affiliates to make inappropriate offers not aligned with their values (and the expectations of their audience) only to lose subscribers and the confidence of their online family.

In those situations, the audience might ask, right before they hit the unsubscribe button:

“Why would you offer us *that*?”

I went through the same process throughout my career as it pertained to new product development when making a decision to “make or buy”: “Making” a new book or newsletter was easy when using the content our audience loved us for and was used to; but “buying” someone else's content and putting our name on it, always begged the question:

"Would our audience expect this from us (i.e. will they see it is as congruent with our brand)?"

That's way more than "you can do amazing things if you don't care what others think."

Instead it's, "You can do amazing (and many more) things if you pay very close attention to being congruent and consistent with your brand."

What your audience thinks (which will be positive) will follow from that.

In marketing, you always have to care about if your audience will see the wisdom and the logic of everything you do.

I think if Chamberlain thought about this through the eyes of marketing and his brand, on the court and off, he would have seen that shooting free throws underhand would have made him anything but a sissy.

How something really makes you look has more dimensions than what is in your head and what the outward appearance looks like.

Always think about the ultimate goal and why people want to follow you in the first place.

Transparency and congruency *always* make you look good...and it's a prescription for a richer life with everyone you interact with.

And you will score more points this way too.

#23: Millennials: “Your smart phone will not reverse aging” (September 2018)

I have spent most of my marketing career targeting a “mature” demographic (55+ would be on the young side, 65+ more the norm, and 75+ not out of the ordinary).

And hardly a week has gone by without someone lecturing me about the dangers of having an audience that is “too old.”

Some even went morbid reminding me that my best customers were close to the grave—meaning that we better go after a younger audience or die a painful death ourselves.

However, I always addressed this worry in a different way (and I still do):

“We don’t have to get younger...we just need to be ready for the new 50 year olds when they are ready for the kind of information we provide.”

In addition, when anyone warns marketers I work with today about their vulnerability because they are targeting seniors, I don’t dismiss them.

But I remind the critics that this audience has, in abundance, more of what we all want our potential customers to have:

Time and money.

And with the average life span of most Americans only getting longer, there are many more “young 75 year olds” than ever before. The reports of their death have been greatly exaggerated.

However, I am not naïve either.

Many seniors are on fixed incomes and many are not as “spunky” in general as they get older which could make them less active buyers.

But then again, not everyone under 50 is super rich...and many people under 50 are less spunky in terms of their attention span.

Making sure your audience can afford what you are selling needs to be handled in list segmenting at any age; and grabbing their attention is still about great story and copy at any age too.

Despite being loyal to my senior audience (and respecting my elders), my defensiveness led to curiosity (and some research) into the other end of the demographic spectrum.

I became fascinated with "marketing to Millennials" since I knew so little about it.

With so many people telling me that I was missing the boat by not exploring this market further, I needed more info.

This group is defined on Wikipedia as:

Millennials (also known as the Millennial Generation or Generation Y) are the demographic cohort following Generation X. There are no precise dates when the generation starts and ends. Researchers and commentators use birth years ranging from the early 1980s to the early 2000s.

Both of my kids are part of this generation and I define it more simply:

"I will never hear from my kids if I don't text them."

E-mail is so 1999.

I learned that in general, Millennials (which have some similarities to "Generation X") have less time to be engaged with long copy...and less money to buy stuff too. Nothing too revolutionary there.

And I don't have to give you any numbers regarding the ownership and use of smart phones by this generation...and clearly there is no turning back.

I always love reading how the best marketers (especially those targeting a younger audience) always focus on how their online promotions and designs will appear on mobile.

But every trend has a counter trend.

My direct marketing sensibilities always go to three basic questions:

- 1) "Who is buying?"
- 2) "How are they buying?"
- 3) "What do we need to know going forward to be as effective as possible with our marketing messages so they continue to buy in the future?"

My kids (and young adults like them) are buying *something*.

In my case they are mostly using MY credit cards.

And it might be the case that if marketers are not selling to them through a text message (or something equally short and sweet), good luck getting their attention.

But I will go out on a limb and repeat that there are some counter trends we should pay attention to.

Multi-channel marketing (i.e. looking at all media, online and offline) and multi-platform selling (i.e. the precise way we communicate with prospects) need to be looked at more closely going forward...as does the future messaging for this up-and-coming audience.

Simply put, 20 year olds today will be 50 year olds thirty years from now. Trust me. I did the math.

They might have more technological dexterity than the 50 year olds of today when they get there but I believe they will still be human beings with similar needs and emotions (i.e. some things do not change from generation to generation).

Again, I won't argue the point that there is no turning back from smart phones and technology running our lives and the lives of the generations coming up behind me...but let's never lose sight of the benefits of diversification and making sure we are ready to meet the Millennials where they will need to be met once they are all buying stuff with their own money.

Dare I say too that the "stuff" that we buy now... and "stuff" (maybe in a different form) that our parents and grandparents buy/bought as well...is also "stuff" those 20 year olds of today will eventually need too.

Believe it or not, every Millennial in their 20's or 30's today will someday (sooner than they think) need to think about estate planning, retirement savings, life insurance, college funding for their kids and yes, even their clogged arteries.

And if they look like us when they are 50, many will also be pre-diabetic and facing all of the aches and pains of aging.

Also (believe it or not), their mortality rate will be 100% just like every generation who came before them.

A smart phone does not reverse the aging process (as I indicated in my subject line).

Simply put, financial and health issues are only two universal subject areas that will have as much relevance in the future as they do today. There are many more.

The challenge for us as marketers will be to deliver information in a form that they are most comfortable receiving it.

It could be on the I-Phone of 2045...but I would suggest that we should keep an open mind on format and design...and still focus on the message and the content being the most compelling (and relevant) we can deliver (i.e. make copy a high priority).

The words and the information will still need to make our audience vibrate through personalization and relevance.

The words and the information must be useful, practical, and applicable and in language that is understandable by everyone.

How we deliver information in the most powerful way to a generation that is totally distracted is the ongoing adventure and inquiry.

A very successful entrepreneur and marketer I know shared with me a key insight after studying Millennials as a marketing target.

He changed his focus to be more about design over copy so his company is prepared for this generation going forward. I think that's both smart and a little dangerous too.

Another respected marketer who has a younger audience talked about moving from 70% of his creative staff being copywriters and 30% being designers to the other way around—also forward thinking but I hope this drastic shift doesn't compromise the quality of the copy.

When today's Millennials come looking for the same, critically important information their parents needed when THEY reached 40 or 50, it will need to be packaged differently ("design")...but it is still critical information they need...and it will NOT be delivered on just "one thing" or "one format" or "one smart phone," or "one funnel."

And the copy still has to speak to them powerfully.

I encourage you to both change with the times and look for counter trends at the same time.

Turning some of those counter trends into "diversification opportunities" could give you an unfair advantage differentiating content, promotion, products and marketing your brand into the future.

Keep an open mind. Don't assume it all has to be delivered like everyone else is delivering it.

Here's one: How can you creatively send physical mail or physical product to Millennials successfully?

You probably think I am crazy for saying that.

But I currently take every opportunity in any meeting when there are folks under 30 present to ask them if they know what a mailbox is, if they check their “snail mail” every day and would they open a personalized, hand addressed, lumpy package before running back to their computer to open up the next email — or to their phone to check what texts came in — during the walk to the end of the driveway to pick up that snail mail.

I know this is only anecdotal research but the response from “under 30’s” wanting more physical mail was 100% positive (or maybe they were trying to appease this “old school guy” in the room?).

I’m not sharing this example to give you an “or” regarding using physical communication over digital communication...just an “and.”

Regardless, it screams diversification if you can figure it out.

The bottom line is that we must be sure to meet today’s Millennials on platforms they can relate to...some will be obvious but some could be counter-intuitive...and it will be different today than it will be 30 years from now.

However we do it, though, compromising the quality of the content we deliver is a non-negotiable...wherever it ends up residing.

We all cringe way too often these days as lazy marketers go for the quick buck and replace proper list selection, well-crafted offers and innovative messaging with technological wizardry.

To that point, I read an article from someone who even went so far as to say that the “40/40/20 rule” is now a “25/25/25/25 rule.”

That is, instead of the success of any direct response marketing campaign, online or offline, depending 40% on the quality and relevance of the list, 40% on the offer being made to that list, and 20% on creative/copy, this marketer said those three things were 25% each to make room for “25% technology.”

I don't want to diminish the importance of technology in the equation, but I will quote advertising pioneer Bill Bernbach here (as I did in my first book and I will in my second book too):

"Adapt your techniques to an idea, not an idea to your techniques."

(More about the 40/40/20 rule in the P.S. below if you have not heard me on it before...)

I know I probably sound like a Luddite (and a broken record) but my gut tells me it's still all about the right message going to the right audience with the right offer.

Your feedback and opinions are always welcome.

Oops....need to go...my daughter is texting me...

#24: The children of Kenya: “Learning to fish” (August 2018)

My recent trip to Africa gave new meaning to what it means to be grateful—and I also learned that “mentorship” is a global phenomenon.

I was moved to tears on more than one occasion watching the kids at the Sanimarco School care for each other in such profound ways—no “Mean Girls” or petty fighting among these students.

They all have a voracious appetite for education and they embrace gratefulness for what little they have in possessions and creature comforts.



How they express unconditional love and support for each other is a lesson for a lifetime and an example for all of us to follow.

When water and electricity are luxuries...and a deflated soccer ball is a prized possession...pettiness, jealousy and so many other emotions many of us obsess about daily are non-existent.



For those of you who were not following these blogs the last few weeks, Titans Marketing was able to donate a classroom to the Sanimarco school in rural Kenya thanks to so many of you who have bought educational products from me or participated in the growth of Titans over the past 4 years.

This was the 12th school built in Kenya by [Village Impact](#). It was a privilege to participate. Please check out their site—they do amazing work.

The classroom is officially “Titans of Kenya”



Two big takeaways from this trip which I hope resonate with you in some way:

On Gratefulness

Many of you wrote to me over the past few weeks expressing a sentiment I felt while I was there too—specifically, “why are folks who have the means to travel and make a difference in a foreign country not doing more right here in the United States where there is more poverty and depravation than we would like to admit?”

It's hard to argue with that point so I won't.

I can only tell you that making a difference in as many places as we can where we can *teach more* (and support education)—which maximizes the number of people we can encourage to “go forth and multiply” (i.e. teach what they learn to others around the world)—is always worthwhile.

I'm sure you know this quote and it is especially applicable here:

Give a Man a Fish, and You Feed Him for a Day. Teach a Man To Fish, and You Feed Him for a Lifetime

The notion of building a school which becomes the focal point of any community, foreign or domestic, is an exponential contribution and it's one that we should always look to participate in whenever we have the opportunity.

And those kids in Kenya are well aware that it was mostly Americans and Canadians who donated that school...and I'm confident that they will all want to come to North America someday to share all they have learned.

Maybe one of those Kenyan students becomes a doctor or scientist and comes up with a cure to some dreaded disease? And who might he or she help first?

Just throwing that out there.

Having said that, only a few miles up the road from my house in Connecticut is the city of Bridgeport where there is a pressing need for more volunteers to help with programs in the schools—and participating there at least partially inspired this trip to Kenya.

I'm sure you have similar opportunities in your communities.

In Bridgeport, my wife goes into the classrooms to help challenged students learn how to read—a program called “Book Buddies”; in Kenya, we went into classrooms to try to make a difference any way we could too.

While I will tell you that the students in Kenya were grateful for the “free pencil cases” we gave out (as kids in Bridgeport would be as well), I know they are far more grateful for *the school itself* and the long term education and stability the new schools will supply for them.

Their gratefulness for being able to attend school every day is about:

“Presence over presents.”

AND

“Learning to fish.”

On Mentoring

One thing that was particularly striking among the children we met in Kenya was how much responsibility is put on each of them, even at a very young age.

That is, I saw numerous kids as young as 12 years old caring for younger siblings, even bringing them to school with them since there was no one else at home to watch them.

And these same students often need to miss school to work on behalf of the “family business” whether it's farming, crafts or whatever brings in revenue to their households.

But it was this caring for their siblings, almost as surrogate parents, that got to me—and put a whole new meaning on a topic we talk so much about here, especially in our business community:

Mentoring

When I had an opportunity to speak in front of the 12 year olds who are the students in the “Titans of Kenya” classroom (through an interpreter although so many of these kids speak fluent English too), I wanted to teach them about mentoring and the importance of passing on their wisdom to the next generation.

Then I realized that I was telling them something they already knew.

The importance of mentors and mentoring was paramount in my life but only crystalized for me when I turned 40— but this is something that is part of their makeup, almost from birth.

I also got to speak with students who are now in high school in some of the schools built by Village Impact years ago, and it was clear that they all come back to the primary schools to teach and encourage...and mentor.

It's amazing how much these kids know about mentorship without ever being taught about it.

All I can say in summary is that I came home believing more than ever that being wealthy is a blessing and not a curse since it is how we can do more—that is, live on what we need (and still take good care of the “prized racehorse”—us!)—and then figure out the most productive ways to give away as much as possible, in money and time, to create the most impact possible.

And I believe it starts with education and schools—which produces the maximum return in terms of gratefulness— but more importantly, it is the key to creating world class mentors so everything gets paid forward in the future.

And the next time I find myself complaining about a flat tire, traffic, a blackout, or not having enough hot water...anything that has no bearing on long term happiness or is simply an inconvenience...I will think fondly on the Titans of Kenya and know they can power through much more than I ever will.



Warmly,

Brian

P.S. I hope you don't mind that I took a little break from marketing info this week.

But I'm sure you all agree, the overlap of "marketing information" and "personal development" is much more significant than meets the eye.

In fact, the publisher of my new book, Hay House, is known as the premier publisher of personal development content in the world; yet they recently created a "business imprint" because they are aware of this huge overlap and wanted to address a need in the marketplace.

Hay House, like all of you, knows that **everyone** needs marketing knowledge.

I plan on making the case with my new book—to marketers everywhere AND anyone involved in the personal development space—that “marketing is not evil” and that making lots of money inside of our mission has no downside.

As I’ve said before, why share your life’s work with dozens of people when you can share it with millions?

The lesson is, I think, that to be a great marketer you need integrity, heart, congruence, conviction and of course some marketing smarts—and when you add being a great humanitarian to that formula, and you are always looking to improve, you will be a “better-than-great marketer.”

As I said in my reflections from Kenya, I encourage all of you to be rich beyond belief (with money *and* personal satisfaction) so you can live a glorious life—and on the money front, give away as much as possible so that others can live glorious lives too.

And thanks to many of you for pointing out that we don’t necessarily have to go to Africa (or anywhere outside of our own community or country) to do any of this great work either.

Just do it where it feels right for you.

I know I am not saying anything all that profound or something you don’t know already—consider it a reminder.

P.P.S. We went on a safari after spending time with the Titans of Kenya and there were some additional lessons learned in the jungle, albeit a little more violent.

Seeing in real time many “circle of life moments”...how animals in the wild have to live day-to-day since they never know when they will go from a happy-go-lucky zebra grazing in the grass to becoming a full course dinner for a hungry lion, is a reminder to live in the moment and do good deeds every day.

And of course we should all eat well and only the healthiest food too!



And then there is another piece of advice learned on safari:

Always watch your step since you never know what might be lurking in the grass under your feet...

