

Copywriting Secrets of a Notorious Marketing Genius

*Perry Marshall's Late-Night PajamaJam
with John Carlton*

Perry: I am here with John Carlton. John was unknown to most of the world before two years ago. He is kind of a reclusive guy who came out of hiding. The only people who knew who he was were the top direct marketers and the top mail order guys in the country. Some of the best direct marketers knew who John was but none of the rest of us did.

Two years ago, he decided he was going to throw his hat in the ring and start teaching direct marketing. And that coincided with approximately the same time I came out and started a consulting business and left the Dilbert Cube.

Discovering John was a very important move for me. He has been very influential here as a marketer, but I will talk about that later. But having access to John has been very instrumental giving me everything about half way up off of the ground.

John has almost all the complete respect from the complete company directory of direct marketing industry. You can see that on the web pages and stuff that we going to put up here. He has written copy for people like Jay Abraham and Gary Halbert. Dan Kennedy said he is one of the few writers that he would actually pay money to sit and listen to a seminar.

And, so John, I just want you to say hi to everybody and tell us how you found your way into the strange, wonky world of salesmanship and press.

John: Hi, everybody out there. This was quite a little universe of people you've got going there. Yes, I would like to just get going here and we only have about an hour. I want to cover a lot.

Most people want to know how I got into this. I got into it largely because I did not have anywhere else to go. I am the kind of guy who kept getting spit out of the corporate world. I don't like wearing ties, I have a problem with authority and I just couldn't fit in anywhere.

You talk about the Dilbert Cube. I couldn't even talk about anything worse than that. I was always an athlete that was trying to sabotage businesses that I was in, but I was only thinking of ways to make work more fun rather than profitable.

Anyway, right about the time when I turned 30, my life was going nowhere and I was tired of using the art of trying to make someone else rich, so I went out on my own.

I added to my little arsenal that with take on the world that as a freelance copywriter. I had John Caple's book, *Tested Advertising Methods*. I ordered another copy of that. I had stolen a copy from a copywriter that I had met who refused to help me, so, I stole her copy of it.

I had one tank full of gas in my rattle-trap Toyota, and I had the rent covered for one more month for my 1920's era wooden, dilapidated beach cottage. I had a manual typewriter, which had a sticky "f" key that kept pulling back, and that was it. I didn't have any thing else, I had no contacts or plan B. I didn't know if going out as a freelance advertising copywriter was good or not.

At that time, I mostly was coming from the art side; I was commercial artist; I was a graphic artist but not a very good one because I was colorblind. I got some jobs with black-and-white magazines but once they all went to color, I knew my time was short. So, I went out with a panic and this is very important and it's a story I tell a lot.

I went out on my own like that and knew I had no gun to my head. I, again, had no safety net on and I did not have any plan A or plan B. Now, what I told people is that when you have a gun to your head and you start to panic a little bit, that was the opposite that happened to me. I knew there was nothing for me to do but do the best I could by bringing in the work.

I knew from the reading I had done and from the little bit of research I had done that direct-response advertising marketing was the best way to sell. This is the kind of advertising that goes way back to the dawn of time when the first caveman offered a haunch of methadone to the caveman next to him to trade to have a better view.

It's all about salesmanship; it's all about putting salesmanship into print so you can reach a large number of people. The average

street salesman can only reach one person at a time, maybe a few within the reach of his voice at most.

But when you learn how to translate that salesmanship into the press printed word, suddenly you can literally mail a letter or email to every single person on planet who has access to the mailbox and who has access to the World Wide Web. And, of course, that multiplies your options, and your customer base; everything.

So this feeling of having this gun to my head, of having no other options, of only being able to move forward really did calm me down because I knew I wasn't going to do a couple of things.

I wasn't going to screw around. I wasn't going to try to be creative with what I wrote. I was going to stick to proven direct-response principles, which I had learned through Claude Hopkins' book and John Capel's book and a few others.

I actually took a speed-reading course just before I went out on my own and I read everything in the Dewey Decimal system in the library from 600 to 750, which includes sales, copywriters, advertising and so forth.

It's not quite of impressive as you think. There are not that many good books out there. And when you speed read, if you think you're on a dead topic, you toss it and go to the next one, etc. I went to about ten books like that and it helped me a little bit.

Anyway, it turns out that the idea of having a gun to your head, you're not going to fool around. You are not going to take risks with what you are doing. You are going to stick to proven salesmanship and use the tactics that have been working since the dawn of time.

It turns out that this is the best advertising there is. So by not going out there and doing what 99.9% of other advertisers or copywriters do, which is screw around, what you really want to do is be creative and paint a Monet in Paris. But I realize that I'm so far ahead of everybody else.

I was down in Los Angeles, and they would sneak me in the back door to do the jobs for the advertising agencies that their own creative writers couldn't do because they weren't dedicated copywriters. I just wanted to be a writer and this was the way to pay the rent until I would be discovered as the next Hemingway.

And they didn't really use good salesmanship and press. So that just got me through that toehold. I met Jay Abraham at his divorce party. I met Gary Halbert. I don't know how hip your people are to Gary Halbert. I am assuming that you do your job and you make people aware of these types of copywriting and things like that.

Perry: You know, I probably have these people from my Google course, which is like Google AdWords, direct marketing on steroids but certainly I have...

John: Okay, I will just cover this as I go along. Do you have any questions? Because I want you to cover these grand promises you made and, Perry, so everybody on line knows and doesn't cancel, so we can get to them.

Perry: That's the plan. I'll tell everybody where it is. If you go to <http://www.perrymarshall.com/johnletters>, a page will come up and we've got examples that John has posted for us. And I will add that John does not distribute this stuff freely. He did this for our teleseminar. It's going to get taken down later. So, thank you John. He is going to go into some very specific examples here.

John: I will probably get to those in just a bit. Here we are about 8 or 9 minutes into our call and we haven't even started on the juicy stuff yet.

Anyway, you mentioned three things, before getting to these three ads. You were talking about hooks, salesmanship, Operation Moneysuck and hadn't taken any from balance zero to fabulous success as humanly possible using the lazy man 3-step short cuts. So, I just wanted plow into that. And after I get to the lazy man 3-step shortcut business it will naturally fit into this ad and we can go on.

If you want to interrupt me as we are going along, just jump in but I am just going to start in on it.

First, I think the term Operation Moneysuck is a term that makes people chuckle. But to be honest, it is the most deadly serious thing for any businessman to learn. The earlier you learn it, the better you are going to be. The more you take it to heart, the more profitable your business is going to be.

I'll tell you quickly how this story happened. When I sat in a office with Gary Halbert, we were supposed to go over a bunch of ads

that we were going to write. We had a lot of business so we were going to call some clients. We had some hours to do this.

Just as we sat down, his secretary came in and said, "Oh, my God. Your landlord is on the phone and he is really pissed about something." The copier just broke, the computer just went down and there were 15 fires that were going on essentially.

I thought to myself, "That is it. We are not going to get down to any business here because we have to stop and take care of these little emergencies, but how." Halbert really surprised me and said, "Calm down, back up, get out of the room, close the door, lock it and not another word of explanation." Then he came back and said let's get busy. And, we worked for the next three hours, got a lot of business done and brought in a lot of money.

When we opened the door later, we found the problems had solved themselves and the ones that hadn't weren't that important anyway. So right about then, what I really got jammed into my head was what Operation Moneysuck was about.

If you are the person in the business that brings in the money, then, that is your number one job. Bring in the money steadily; number two, jobs; bring in the money; number three, four, down the line, on and on, etc.

You are not making money when you are fixing the copier. You are not making money when you are on the phone with whoever wants a refund; you are not making money when you are dealing with anything else other than the things you do to bring in the money.

In most businesses, especially, those in the direct-response marketing business, and Perry Marshall is a great example, no one else can accomplish what he does. When he sits down and completes eight hours of crafting new websites, writing new creating new products, all of that stuff is a step towards putting something out there that is going to bring in money. That's Operation Moneysuck.

If Perry is not going to do it, then nobody is going to do it. So the one thing that drives your head is that Operation Moneysuck is sitting down and getting down to business.

It seems obvious once you understand it, but believe me, and I have been in this business for over 20 years, it is not obvious to the

ordinary businessman. The reason most businesses go under is the reason they don't take this seriously enough.

People that open restaurants spend all time worrying about the sign or the menu or even the product, for example, how good does the pasta taste, when really they should be worried about the marketing of bringing people into the restaurant.

Perry: A lot of people are conditioned to school or whatever, to be reactive to things that come up and to deal with them and business does not work that way. You have to be proactive marketing as a proactive thing.

John: You have to take control and you have got to know that nobody is going to do it for you. The overall lesson that I have been involved in, I co-produced something like 40 or 50 different seminars on marketing and in all these seminars we had a topic like the hotseat, like who we would bring up, who has the problems and we would discuss their problem.

I just meet a lot of people who generally told me about their business, told me about their marketing problems. And, what this boils down to is you are paying attention to the bottom line.

People come up to me and say, "You know, I am trying to reach a certain crowd of people who will buy my product but I don't understand that." I say that is just your own problem. What can I understand about that? You need to get down to their level to understand what their needs are really. So, when you talked about taking any venture from zero to fabulous, success will be fast.

That is part of what I am talking about with gun-to-the-head marketing. There are three ways I believe I would like to break it down. My notes are pretty scattered. But I have written at least three ways to combat this.

1. Take any venture from zero to success fast, you are going to do smart marketing. Now, what I mean about smart marketing; this is going to be something, again, that most people don't do. You want to spend one hundred times more times on your marketing than you do in creating or finishing the product.

This kind of shocks people. It kind of shocks some people. They do this ass backwards, they get this great product together, they pool all their money and the world would be beating a path to their door. It is astonishing how this doesn't happen.

Marketing graveyards are littered with fabulous products. We save this one and I exemplified it. It is Beta Max, which was supposed to be better than VHS video. Beta Max was a much better product, 15 times much better than video, I understand, yet because they marketed it so poorly, they lost out. Now you can't even find Beta Max out there. It's all VHS.

So, you want to try to learn about marketing, finding out about the market and finding ways you should be writing your ad, getting your ad set and your marketing campaign all set up before you finish your product.

Now, that doesn't mean that it's ethical that you are going to sell a product that doesn't exist. But the truth is great marketing will sell a nonexistent product. But even the most fabulous product on the face of the earth won't sell a product with rotten advertising.

The way I tell people who are just starting out is to get your product into a state where you can ethically fulfill selling the product using promises you make in your advertisement. It doesn't have to have a lot of bells or whistles in your advertisement. It doesn't have to be fancy.

Perry, you probably told them about Dan Kennedy's slapping together stuff and putting it out, just so you can fulfill the promises you put into the advertising. Once you have done that, then you need to spend all your time on the marketing, finding the right market, finding the hook that is going to get you into the subconscious of heads of marketing and get them to deliver a message that gets them so excited that they can't sleep until they order. And finally, you need to take those orders and take the money.

All that has to start taking place and then, if and when your product shows that it has legs and it is a winner, then you can go back, spruce it up and make it really look good.

Perry: Well, I really have to agree with this because, you know, I spent a lot of time with the high tech world, and a lot of times, companies will spend millions of dollars getting a product polished up and everything before they truly establish any demand for it at all.

I have a chapter in my Google book where instead of developing a product, we will have people write some kind of white paper, some kind of a guide that would help begin to solve a problem and then

advertise that. And if you can get people to come to your site and ask for it, do that.

Why would you do that? Then why would you go and spend a million dollars developing software or something complicated?

John: Perry, I would like to bring everything down to romance because everybody understands romance. This is kind of like being at home and not asking anyone else their opinion, dressing yourself as wildly as you want to and pretending that this is going to wow all your target audience.

You dial your chicks. They're going to go wild if you go to the bar with a yellow clown suit and that's what you have to find out about the product, what makes it go wow.

People know about this stuff. Your best friend will tell you about this stuff. At least take the rubber nose off. It really is that silly. A lot of guys come to me with products and you have to just tell them "no."

The most embarrassing one is when people spend years, spending their hard-earned money on a product. I tell them, "Guess what? Readers Digest gives this away for free. You have just created a product that has been covered in the last three years by Readers Digest, some health cure or something.

I remember one guy who wanted to give me an application. He put a patent for an American Flag Pin on the lapel. I was ready to get it and get the product ready, all for \$25. It already cost me 5 cents to make. He had this all figured out except first, you are not going to get the patent. It could be given away free and given away as formal awards. That could happen. This is an outrageous example, but not an impossibility.

So, let's go to the next part. First, you get smart marketing.

2. Number two, the mistake that most people make when they are marketing is that they want to sell something. We talk about passion in advertising and marketing but just because you're excited do not mean that everyone else is going to be. The key to success with marketing is finding a parade that is in session and go stand in it front of it. Go find the beaten path and find it. Don't try to convince people to buy your widgets just because you said so even though it may be the best buy out there.

Remember that pioneers are the guys lying at the side of the road with arrows in their back. You want to find the paths that are already down there. Do a better version of a product that is selling very well.

They talk about Microsoft being number one and being so much bigger than number two. Number two, even in that crowded market is doing rather well. So, that is something to think about.

You have to educate your market on what you have. You are not only looking at an uphill battle to sell anything, you are looking at a solid wall and you are not going to be able to climb it. Don't even try. If you have something that you want to educate people on just write a book.

Write a non-fiction book, put it out there, sell it through Amazon or something like that and become the new guru of some widget people have never heard before. Don't try to sell it as product in the market.

Perry: Agreed.

John: Number three ties in with the smart marketing thing. If you want to take any venture from zero to success fast, again, use direct-response advertising.

Perry, you were talking about using it on steroids for the Google campaign. People didn't actually understand that direct-response would work for the web. You were one of the first to actually realize it, of course. I am so old now at 50, that I remember when infomercials were kind of new.

I actually wrote some of those info commercials. You could buy time free on cable from midnight until 6 a.m. That would just give it you, hand it to you. They thought it was worthless time; you wanted an hour you got an hour. They wanted content.

We would go into the studio and get studio time for \$50. We would go to a local PBS station that had nothing going on and we would hire a couple of students. We would get a guy with a product, slap him with like a Johnny Carson type setup, where he is sitting there being interviewed by a guy.

That's Jay Leno for you guys that are a lot younger. They would interview him with no prep, no writing and no nothing. I would write up the question and stuff. Then slap it up that film, we would start

filming and at one we would finish when we hit 60, try to throw a pitch in there. If it worked we would keep running it until it didn't worked.

It took about 2 years for the major advertising companies to catch on that people were really responding to this stuff. What was it? It was just the same as long copy direct-response writing. It was just long copy advertising on TV.

It is the same on radio, the web, in print, and the same everywhere. Direct-response advertising really works and it uses long copy as long as you can – not because it works but because you want to explain what you have: to tell your story and offer true credibility, a reason to buy and counter all the objections.

It takes a little time to try to write a really great ad. Giving yourself a limit like 1 page, 2 pages or something like that, is like telling your salesman to go out and knock on a door and say I have a wonderful product for you and tell him he can only say 50 words and that's it.

No matter what the customer asks or how far the sales pitch has gone or how close he is to a sale he has to stop talking. That is not good marketing.

Of course, in Google you are limited in some ways so you have to really pat that stuff down. I think that is why you call it a steroid, but you do want to get them to a site where there is long copy there where you can do all the proof and credibility.

Finally, the most important is to ask for action.

Perry This TV thing really ties in because really what you did was you took a sales presentation that worked in person, and you replicated it on TV in an interview format. What you are saying and I think this is one of the things that we are going to talk about in more detail is, you're taking that same concept and taking it to paper or moving it to a website: it almost perfectly mimics what you would have done on TV or already happens in person.

John: Exactly. In fact, that is an excellent segue to the lazy salesmen 3-step shortcut to your first fabulous money-pulling ad. For somebody who insists that they can't write, someone who insists that they don't understand the concept of direct-response advertising that they don't understand how to get this all done there is a very simple three step way to get this done.

First of all, if you have something to sell and you have never sold it to anybody, this is face-to-face. Let's say you're in business where you are selling stuff face to face or you've just got someone excited about it just sitting in a bar talking about it or anything. Actually, if you have not sold it face-to-face, try to go out there to sell it in print and you are a complete rookie with this, you're going to have some problems.

The may want to go out and sell it face to face to get their reactions and find out what gets them excited, find the one when their eyebrows go up or when their eyes go back in their head because you boring them to death.

Then ask for this sale of the item and find out what you have to do to get them to buy. What that encompasses is countering all the objections. For instance the person says that's too much and then you have an answer for that: it pays for itself in less than 3 weeks.

He says I don't have the money right now and you say you don't need the money right now; you can buy it on credit, on 3 payment plans.... He says something like I have to go ask my wife and you say, "Well, try it for free to see for yourself."

It's just all this countering stuff that happens with good salesmen. So, in your business do it yourself or find the best guy in your organization who knows how to deliver a great sales pitch face to face and record him at fever pitch giving this pitch to somebody.

If you are in business where you are selling this on the phone by calling people or meeting with people, record the successful times you have sold this. It may take you 30 times to do this to get it right but it doesn't much matter. Find the best one that you have and simply transcribe it.

What you have got there is the element of a great advertising because what you do is whenever the other person talks turn them into questions. If the guy says, "I can't afford it," in your ad you would say, "Is this too expensive for you to afford right now?"

Whatever the objection the guy brings up just turn into an answer and writes it down. If you have this transcribed you can actually start moving it around and tidying it up a bit. Take out all the ums and ahs and that kind of nonsense and when you have it all arranged into a, "Hi, my name is Joe Smith, I have widgets for sale and I understand you are in the market for widgets. Here is what

these widgets can do for you and how much they cost,” you go up on your sales pitch.

Once you smooth it out you can go and put it on paper, mail it out or post it. You have the essence – not only the essence but you have the broad stroke sales pitch written down on paper or printed on the computer screen.

Perry: Most people tend to have this disconnect where they can talk about something easier than they can write about it. I think you’re sort of implying here, mentioning here that there is no such thing as a situation where you ever actually sat down with a real person and tried to sell them your idea that might be an indication that the idea is not ready. But, really that transcription can be that whole core of that sales letter or website or whatever.

John: It would be, yes. We can even work it the other way. I of course don’t do that anymore. All these tactics are so ingrained in my system that I just start at the top of the letter and write all the way through it. I don’t recommend other people do that. I have been doing this for twenty years.

If you take some of my letters, you can actually reverse it. You can take one of my letters that I wrote, not show it to a good salesman in that same business and listen to him talk. You would be astonished at the correlation between what I wrote and what he decided to tell that person face to face.

Perry: You know, I totally agree when you start studying, when you start listening and paying attention to really good sales presentations... when you start reading good sales letters there is this conversational rhythm that they all have. Always.

John: You know what that is, you don’t do that. Do you?

Perry: I’m not sure where you are going.

John: That’s the age-old human-to-human storytelling DNA at work. Humans have always told stories. Some of the best advertising out there tells a story. It doesn’t have to be, “I woke up in the middle of the night in the cold sweat and I realized that I had the cure for cancer. “

It doesn’t have to be that kind of a story but, as you go through your pitch whether it is online or in the mail or on radio or on TV, whatever, as you go through that you’re crafting a tale, painting a

pleasing picture inside your prospects head. That pleasing picture must have been to the core of what he wants.

Maybe it's just his greed gland and you can show him a way he can get rich quickly, get the house of his dreams, the spouse of his dreams, to have a better life or better motor oil or not have to change motor oil again and save money. Things like that.

You are crafting a sales story. The more successful you are at crafting a story and this is something I try to get most of the people I teach how to write copy to do, I ask them at a seminar, "You woke up at 6 o' clock and between that time and getting here at 8:15, what happened to you? "

Tell me a story. Most of them can't do it then after I get them to work it out after while they will say "Well, there was this kind of interesting guy in the elevator...who was a biker or something."

Even in the most mundane presentation of things in their lives there is a story to tell. So, the best people at telling stories like this – and I come from a long line of storytelling bullshit artists – essentially, is that I grew up with uncles who did not want to leave the table. They would light a cigar at the table and just start off on a tale. My cousins and I picked up on the same thing, and to this day we can just go off.

Sometimes they are boring even if you are interested, but guess what: that is direct-response advertising. You want to collect the hot names of the people who are interested in what you are selling and then sell things to them. How do you do that?

You tell them a story that hits their emotional sweet spot, their passionate core. In other words, take bowling: If you are going after bowlers, they will read 25 pages on bowling if they are passionate, because they are interested. It may bore you to tears, and if that is true you probably shouldn't be in that market. The point is what bores one guy is meat and potatoes to the next guy.

Perry: When you say, how proven world-class copywriters really use hooks and killer salesmanship, this is the essence of what you are talking about right now?

John: Exactly, when I talk about a hook, I have here an early ad that I wrote called the, "The Amazing Secret Discovered by a One-Legged Golfer." It allows normal golfers to hit drives 100 yard

further or something like that. The point was the unusual position of this just started a story right there in the headline.

First of all, the story of a one-legged golfer sets your mind abuzz. Of course, this was all true. I had to dig for this, that's a whole other story but I don't think I should get into this right now. The short part of it is what separates the good writers from the bad writers is the hook in your story.

The hook is how I hook people who I want to come into the story to the sales pitch. How do I find a way to hook them and bring them in, much like you are fishing? Now, I don't care if I offend, bore or lose people who are not going to buy. I don't care about that. I don't care if people say, "I am not interested in this. "

I am not after anyone who doesn't golf with this story and I am not after someone who is so good that they don't need to add 100 yards to their drive. I am not after someone who is so country-clubbush that they would never buy a videotape instructional thing. No, they are going to hire the club pro.

I am not worried about those guys. We call that going after the foxes and forget about the dogs. So, what you want to do is focus on the guy or the woman who is going to buy your product whole new, get inside of their head, and go after them that hook because it is easier to find when you're doing that.

For example, there is a large number of golfers out there. I have written a lot of golf excerpts for clients and about 90% of them can't break 90 on an easy course. Yet, if you read the golf magazines or watch the golf channels, you get the idea that most golfers are athletic, agile, and have the game down and are able to spend 20 hours a week on the range practicing and they buy the best equipment. Not true.

Half the people out there that are in clubs are because their father left them in the will. They can't practice, they lose balls and if they can't find the ball on the 9th green they are not going to be able to play the 10th green.

These people are very open to the idea that quickly or overnight in a single lesion they can suddenly become a hundred times better than they are now and start golfing really well. They are very receptive to that stuff. There are a lot of them out there.

Perry: So, you're dealing with the hard reality that most of these guys are mediocre, are overweight, they have old clubs....

John: They have arthritis, which is a problem.

Perry: They have a fantasy about the magic trick that gives them the sensational day on the course.

John: I couldn't have put it better myself. I am going to steal that!

Yes, you want to tap into that fantasy and sometimes they don't even know that, that fantasy is there.

I wrote the first ad in golf that kind of shocked everybody. It was like 3 pages long and in all the biggies like Golf Digest. These are very staid, conservative publications and this thing about a one-legged golfer with 3 pages of solid copy, no photos, just 3 columns each page solid copy in about a 11-point type.

These guys had never seen this stuff before and I just whacked them over the head with everything I had. The thing went nuts for about 8 years.

If you've watched the golf channel they just ripped off my ads directly and put it on an infomercial.

Perry: Let me back up the step, because people can miss this. You wrote a 3-page ad, ugly as sin, right? You stuck it in the middle of some sort of pompous 4-color corporate magazine and it ran for how long?

John: Anywhere, from 2-3 insertions a year for about 4 years. Then, it ran once or twice a year for the next couple of years. Each time it ran, it would do very well. Of course, that is an advance tactic. You pay attention as to how well the ad runs. The first time it ran I'm guessing 20 to 1. So, for every \$1.00 the ad cost they got \$20 dollars back.

Of course, they immediately put it back in and because people had seen it and ordered it they had shaved off the top, but the next one still pulled in about 10 to 1. Most advertisers consider it a success if they can pull 1.3 to 1; if they can get a \$1.25 back for every \$1.00.

When we are doing this outrageous kind of advertising we are really hitting a home run. The reason it was a three-page ad is because it started out as a direct mail letter. The magazine ad is

equal to about 3 pages of manuscript copy. It was like a 9- or 12-page letter, which I edited it down, a little bit.

My clients had done this before in a couple of other markets and they swallowed hard because we are talking about a 6-figure ad buy there.

Perry: Oh, wow!

John: They swallowed really hard but they knew that they stood a good chance of doing it. It was proven over and over to them again. Of course, the mail worked very well, so they thought, "Why mail slowly to the golfers market? Just put it into the magazine that golfers read and go for it that way."

Perry: How would this translate out onto the web?

John: With the web you are not paying for ad space so, the idea that you would inhibit the amount of copy that you write to cover all the sales points you need to cover is insane. Are you using single scroll pages most of the time?

Perry: Oh, yes, absolutely.

John: I can't really claim to be the first guy, but I will tell you I was the most vocal guy about that early on. I wrote one of the first ads for the web back in 1993 and I fought really hard to make it a single scroll. All these guys wanted links and this stuff.

Perry: Yes, because they wanted everybody to click next, click next...and you said "No! No!"?

John: I said no. Every time you put a link on your webpage you have invited the gods of technology to screw with your sales process. They'll have to wait, but why would you want them to even wait for a second?

Imagine a guy reading a letter and he is starting to get excited but not quite excited enough to buy yet. Now, imagine you walk up and you pull one of the pages back and say "O.K wait...1....2.....3....4.....now, continue reading." That makes no sense at all.

When people are reading a great sales letter they're not in a rational state. They are in lather. People don't carefully read a great sales pitch; they rip through it, roar through it. They are jumping

around, skipping around and sometimes they will go back to the p.s. or they will look at the signature to see who wrote it. They will look at the order form and buy.

I have sent out direct mail letters missing the middle 4 pages by accident, and it didn't hurt the response at all. Because I had hooked them by the first few pages and most people are just roaring back to the order form. They didn't even realize 4 pages were missing.

Perry: Isn't it interesting how people think so hard about how to come up with this clever thing because people are going to analyze it. You're saying no...no...no we are going to tell them a story. We are going to find exactly where their itch is and we are going to scratch it, get them up to lather and then we are going to say "Buy something."

John: The best kind of writing is just you and me sitting down, having a beer and talking about something that really gets your jack up. You should be writing to one person at a time even if your letter or webpage is going out to millions of people a day. You're writing to one person; it is just you and one person reading.

You are doing all the talking because you are doing the writing. This is not interacting but in a way it is. You are inside their heads. You want to predict what questions they are coming up with. You are going to predict when they are going to say, "I really don't want that. It is too expensive."

You want to predict and counter those things. You really want to think about how that face-to-face thing is going to work out. You are just talking, you are talking about something that you both are really passionate about.

I try to convince people of the bar scene where you're in a bar having a ginger ale or whatever and some guy comes up and sits next to you. He complains to the bartender that he has a business where he needs widgets and all the widgets are sold out or out of town. He says, "I don't know what I am going to do." And you say, "You know what I happen to know how to get widgets from Japan for about half the cost of American Widgets?"

He would turn to you and say, "Really?"

Right there, you have your foot in the door and you have a few seconds to start establishing your credibility and making your case to hold his interest.

That is what it is like in a good direct-response ad.

Perry: In my sales letter, I am imagining that I am talking to this other person. Then he asks me, "But wait a minute, Japan is 8,000 miles away." And you say, "Yes, I know..." And you say....

John: Exactly, that is a good way to put it. You can just say, "...and that is why you should buy from Japan."

"Isn't Japan a long ways away? Wouldn't that hurt delivery time?"

"Not at all because with DHL and so on....."

I do want to put one tiny ad in there. When I talked about two guys sitting down talking about this it is not a calm and rational discussion, it is more like two guys hopping up and down. You want your prospect to be so invigorated by what you write, by what you are telling him that he can't sit still. He can't go to sleep tonight if he doesn't order, and if he does order he is going to lay awake thinking, "Wow, this is so great. I am so glad I made that call and ordered the stuff."

Perry: Do you want to talk about some of these examples that you have here on the web?

John: If you guys could pop over to the first example: "Testosterone."

Perry: Yes, it's at <http://www.perrymarshall.com/johnletters>.

John: Yes, I'm sure you have already talked about the National Enquirer being a good source for to buy this stuff.

Perry: I have talked about like cosmopolitan and some of these magazines.

John: They are the same thing. Cosmopolitan has some of the best blurbs on the front cover. What they do is they offer outrageous, fascinating, challenging headlines that make the stop and go "What?!" They use power words. They use words that have an emotional power to them.

This first one, testosterone that we are talking about, I picked this one to put up because it is a good example of a very straight and simple translation for a sales pitch.

I didn't record or copy somebody doing a sales pitch but I knew what the sales pitch was by talking to the client. This is for bodybuilders.

By the way, because these products are for markets totally outside of what you are in, for the people listening here, that makes no difference whatsoever.

This is all about making the sale. I could use the same techniques and even the same language, the same everything, the same strategy, for almost any product or market under the sun. So, this stuff is all cross-fertilization. It does not matter what the product is.

This was a letter that went out, and one of the things that I would like to point out is that it is personalized. These are actually my manuscripts that I sent to the clients. These are not the way they ran, but they are pretty close.

Perry: They paid real money for those too?

John: Yes, big time. This is what I delivered. When I was down in L.A., I actually flirted about a week in a half with becoming a screenwriter. One of the first things that I received was getting a hold of a screenplay that actually sold. I realized that that was how you did it. It just broke it down for me.

It's very important to understand how writers write.

The personal vision is very important and you are limited with the personalization that you do on the web. You can do outgoing email with personalization. Any time you can, you had better do it. Personalization in a letter or in an outgoing email will increase response about 30%. That is not hard-core, that is what I hear from people that I have talked into about personalizing a letter that they have put out as that dear friend. Very important...

The reason that I included this letter first of all in personalization it would say, "Perry, I desperately need your help." This is actually a tactic of a letter. It is called an "I Need Your Help" kind of letter. It is another version of "I need to ask a favor from you."

This would be to someone you have probably bought from before and you are going back in. If you look here, what I have done is I have a huge promise in the single sentence in the front: "If you will grant me one simple favor I will let you in on the biggest breakthrough in bodybuilding in your lifetime..."

Of course, you could change that to “The biggest breakthrough of (whatever).”

Perry: Accounting software ...

John: Yes. What this is, is the huge promise that we talk about. Here is the key to writing an ad if you are not clear about writing great ads. What is the next line that comes up? Here is what this is all about.

I use those phrases all the time and I will show you as we go through this. Here is what this is all about. Now, what I break down after that is 5 USP points; the unique selling proposition that this product is.

This product is positioned as a respected science; it is an intense testosterone that lasts 30 minutes. It is a 250% boost that you can pinpoint exactly in your workout and will get you 3 years of results in the next 2-3 months.

That is one paragraph. That is the core of the product. That is essentially what this product does. That is its feature, its USP position that it does. Now, to a bodybuilder, this is big news.

The next line: “No one else in bodybuilding knows about this exciting new discovery. You can only use this with the new discovery but that is what a lot of people are doing when they are going to market with new stuff.”

Then, what I do and this is the most important thing. Let me explain this to you in the easiest way I know; the story will blow your mind as it did mine. I have 11 numbers and each of the numbers is points of the sales pitch. I actually did this because I was running out of time to reach the deadline. It was such a brilliant way to do it that I done it since then with other letters. This is almost like you could do it after you recorded somebody talking to somebody else making a sales pitch recorded and transcribed.

You just go, Number 1: “A group of researchers in a specialized branch of biology” and so on....

Number 2: “However, the only usage researchers could think of for this new discovery was to create perfume for women...”

Number 3: “In modern times we no longer pick up this pheromone naturally. Too many complications....” and so on...

Number 4, Number 5 ... you can read this later. What it does is that it tells the story and I don't need any fancy writing. I don't need to keep their interest with what we call "the bucket brigade" between us. They know that if number 1 interested them they are going to read number 2, and if that kept them interested then they are going to read number 3.

What you are doing is kind of plunging them deeper and deeper into the story and what I am trying to do is stay in the reader's pocket. So, I am talking about things that are very interesting to bodybuilders, and I stray a little by talking about sexual pheromones.

I want you to jump to the middle of page 3 where it says in bold, "I want to offer you..."

Above that it says, "Here is why I need your help." This is the favor thing. This is where the favor comes in. That is the explanation. We need testimonials from guys. This is what the reason is why; the reason why I am lying to you and offering you such a great deal on a new product that no body else is going to find out about; here is the reason why.

Now, "Here is what I want to offer to you: O.K. if you will get me the testimonial, I will give you this deal. And three years down the road ...so, here is the deal." If you look at that it says here is what this was all about on Page 1.

Then it goes to, "Here is why I need Your Help" and it goes to, "Here is What I Want to Offer to You" and it goes to here, "Here is the Deal."

And, then what is does is goes to, "Here is what to Do Now."

Below that, is how to explain to them to make the call to you and tell you what they want?

Perry: Really, we can take this catch, and we can substitute any new product with any new innovation, anything that just got patented and we can take the same structure and change the words and you have a sales letter.

John: Right. The key thing is that I didn't pick 11 points. That is what it came out to be. It had been 8, 9, 12 or 20 it didn't matter. What separated this from lesser writing is my ability to know what those

hot 11 points needed to be. There were probably 20 or 30 points that the guy had that he could have talked about, but 2 out of 3 I would say were not that interesting or not that crucial to the sales pitch.

I have a little internal governor, which I call the internal salesman – and we all have that; most of the time he is asleep, though – part of my job as a marketing guru is to try to wake up that inner salesman.

The inner salesman wakes up like this: when you are a refugee and you have not eaten in 3 days, and you see a guy with a loaf of bread, and you talk him into giving you half – your inner salesman gets wide awake!

Knowing what to add to the sales pitch and what is irrelevant to the sales pitch. It isn't that hard to do but you have to be awake. You do the "So what?" test. Every time you do a point, you say, I want to put in point Number 1: Widgets made in Japan are made with teak instead of oak.

But you think, can the reader at that point say, "So, what"? If he can, that little tidbit can't go in. As soon as the reader says, "So what?" you have lost him. You cannot bore the reader or have him ask questions like, "Why are you telling me this?" Don't go off on tangents.

With a gun to your head, you do not go off on a tangent!

Once you light that little core fire in the burning heart of your prospect, don't leave it. Keep fanning it. You keep getting after it until it is a raging fire because he will not order until it is.

I tell people at seminars, "Imagine your prospect as this huge blobby mass sitting on a couch that wouldn't move to save itself if the house burned down."

You have to get this thing to move over a little bit to get its wallet out, to lean over and dial the phone, which is the hardest thing you can possibly do; to call and place the order. That is how hard it is to get somebody to place an order. People do not buy even what they want. They buy what they desperately desire. So you really have to light a fire under them.

Perry: All right.

John: Moving on to the next letter. This is one of my favorites. This is an example of a writer writing about a market that I haven't got a clue about. It happens to be the same client who was doing something else: Leo Klaus, a great guy who was great. He is a great guy.

He came in and said, "Hey, I have this motocross guy. He is a top guide and he agreed to do an instructional video." Well, then I have to get hip in a very short time on motocross so I called this guy and a few other people and I do what I call my "sales detective" job. I'm getting up to speed really, really fast on motocross.

You guys can go over this letter later because I have right down here, here is the story in the headline and the subhead, which is the thing right under the headline. I am heading the major sales points that I believe are there.

Here is what is important on the second page, that first little indented subhead. "Here is something that the fat cat manufactures and advertisers don't want you to know. When you finally learn the real secrets of blending real science and dirty e-pro level skills...you can win running buck naked on a clapped-out six-year-old two stroke."

I have no idea what a clapped out six-year-old two stroke is. I talked to the DMX guy and said tell me what a really lousy bike would be. So that in golf I could say, "you could actually go out and find your grandfathers number 7 head without unraveling and go out and outdrive a guy with a Big Bertha."

What you want to do is find those situations that will keep the reader awake and keep his level of believability almost to the point of where he is going, "Come on!"

What you do is you prove it right away and that is what I do in this letter.

Perry: I just have this image in my head of riding a six-year-old two stroke that is clapped out while I am naked.

John: Well, the whole idea was that the advertisers sell helmets, and pads. So, you have 8-year-old kids out there racing and they will go faster than 5 miles a hour and if they fall over they are not going to get hurt, but they look like the Pillsbury Doughboy.

The whole idea was that people were buying more and more expensive equipment and when you get down to it it's not the

equipment. The point I'm trying to make is that it's not the equipment, it's the skill. And that is what this guy can teach them.

Real quick, because we're almost there here – let's go to the most important letter of the three. Again, you are going to need to leave these up enough for these guys to....

Perry: At least, a couple days, that's all.

John: "If you love golf, you're going to freak out over these dirty little secrets."

This is what is called an example of a blind letter. There is almost no explanation at all on this product. I talked before about the 4 dirty little secrets; I don't even give them a clue what they are. I do tell them what the benefits are of knowing these dirty little secrets.

The pros know them and most amateurs don't but once you do know them you are going to win every bet you make and your buddies are going to hate your guts and are going to start talking about you and say that you cheat while you're teeing off. They're just going to hate seeing you drive, which is the fantasy in every golfer's head: everybody hates you because you win all the time.

Perry: Wouldn't you say that most of the professional advertisers are afraid to acknowledge that motive?

John: That is a good point, excellent point. Most advertisers that are out there do not look on the TV, on the web, the stuff that you read in the papers or in the mail. They do not pay attention to most of that stuff. They are writing from their heels. These people are embarrassed to be the advertising copywriters. They think it is beneath them and that they should be Hemingway, writing novels or scripts or screenplays.

They are embarrassed to ask for the sale. They think it is uncouth or somehow beneath them. They can't take the rejection –

"Do you want one?"

"Well, no, I don't"

"Oh, no! I'm not going to be able to sleep tonight."

If you're in business, this is Operation Moneysuck operating at high full tilt. You're out there making your case, standing up for yourself

saying, "I don't care what everybody else says or what the competition does. I am going to show you why we are better and I am going to delineate it by point-by-point so you understand this very clearly."

We didn't discuss this but each one of these offers has what I call a take-away or limited offer. That means you have to act right now. If you give the reader the chance to put this aside and say "Hey, I'll think about it," then you have lost them.

All good salesmen know that if he walks out the door, no matter how much you know you thought you had him in your pocket or you are going to make a sale, if he walks out you have a 90% chance you will never see him again.

He may decide not to buy at all or whatever. You want to make it in his interest to buy. You want to take away all the risks.

You want to have a guaranteed "Buy it now. I'm not going to cash your check for 30 days ... or, second of all, you can have it for a year and year and a half before you decide if you want your money back. Not only that, I will give you double your money back if you do. And what the heck, I'll let your grand kids return it 50 years down the road, if they want. We'll be in business...we have been in business 100 years already."

Take away all the reasons a guy wouldn't want it. So, he is left with only one option in his head. I want this. There is no reason not to get it. Let's get it.

Perry: Right on.

John: We are at 57 minutes, so, we ought to let these people know what they can do....

Perry: Yes, let me jump in here with a story. Two years ago, I had been in business for a little bit, so I start selling products and mailing out letters and doing all this kind of stuff and most of my efforts were at a break even.

For every \$1000 I sell, I was using \$1000 in postage, advertising and everything. John Carlton comes along and he has this thing called an Insiders Club, which gives me access to get my work critiqued by a real professional. It is really quite a different thing rather than reading a copywriting book and saying let's try this idea.

The first thing I sent you was one of these deals. You said, "Well you know Perry obviously you are a smart guy and everything but this isn't going to work. You told me to scrap the whole thing, start over from scratch, and you said here is the button you have to push in your readers head; here is the frame of mind you need to be in when you do this. Here is what you have to communicate and here is where you have to end up when you're all done.

Just start over and do it like this. I did that and it doubled my response. If I don't let anything major out the door until John's seen the first and there isn't anybody else in the business at John's level where you can do this.

I have to buy John stuff too like everybody else. We are not at some special little arrangement here. I pay for John's time just like everyone else. I just sent him a check for couple grand the other day. But John said I could put together something for my customers and take advantage of John's services.

I think if you're just going to be playing around this is probably unnecessary but however if you're really in business and you really have to sell and you really have a gun to your head, then John's help can really improve by 50% to 100% 200% to what you are doing in sometimes a matter of days.

I have John's information: It's at <http://PerryMarshall.com/carlton> or you can go to the page you were at and go to the bottom link where it says "John Carlton's Insider Club."

You have three different things here. Why don't you tell everybody what they are?

John: I would like to let them find out on their own. By the way, this is an example of a letter that works so well, I barely changed it in the two and a half years it's been up. This will explain to you almost everything that I have to offer but I do have a three-tiered package. You can get a basic course or you can then of course plus a few other goodies or like Perry said most people that are serious about Getting inside the insiders club which we call the big Kahuna or the whole enchilada.

It has a lot of stuff, plus it includes critiques from me. A lot of people said I was going to regret offering that, that people are going to take up all my time but that just is not true.

I have been doing this for two years and I love dealing with people. I should say something, this sounds like I am making it up but I am really not. When I first started out, nobody helped me. I wasn't joking when I said I met my first copywriter in the department of a computer supply catalog in the late nineties. I didn't realize people actually wrote all those words in the catalog and when I met my first copywriter I said, "This is interesting. I would like to write. Can you show me how to be a copywriter just like you?"

She looked at me, blinked, sighed the very deeply and said, "No, I can't it is too hard. You will never do it."

That infuriated me, so I stole her copy of John Caple's book on *Tested Advertising Methods*.

I made a vow, right there and then that when I made it I was going to help as many people as I could. I like to live my life karmically clean. I believe that what goes around comes around. I believe that whatever you put into the world comes back out. I believe this wholeheartedly and I have tried to help people from the side for years and years. Some top writers actually, a few actually in the testimonials; a few even admit that they made millions with ideas from my stuff.

Now, that I am not helping people that are in from the outside, I am getting a lot out of this. I really enjoy it and I wish I had learned that teaching was so much fun a long time ago because it is. This is really a blast, I really enjoy it. I think you can do this while you are becoming ridiculously wealthy.

Get John Carlton's "insider" guide to creating serious advertising copy that will supercharge your business ... even if you flunked English!

He'll teach you how world-class copywriters use hooks, killer salesmanship, the Function of Seduction and Operation Moneysuck to put together wealth-building ads that sell, and sell, and sell again. To get John's guide, just visit <http://www.perrymarshall.com/carlton>.