



## BULLET #1

### The Credo Technique

*Stand for something  
and you'll never stand alone.*

Dear Marketing Top Gun:

Welcome to your first issue of *Bencivenga Bullets*, my complimentary e-letter about how to boost your response, online and off.

Tom Watson, Sr., the founder of IBM, said that to be great, a company needs a religion.

Good advice, too, for an e-letter like this.

So in this first *Bullet*, let me share my core beliefs about advertising, and you can see if they match yours.

**First, I believe the purpose of advertising is to sell**, not win awards or applause. This is why each *Bullet* will share a little secret of master

salesmanship, applied to direct response advertising.

**Second, I believe that a single measurement is worth a thousand opinions.** That's why these *Bullets* trade not in opinions, but proven strategies my clients and I have discovered by investing tens of millions of dollars in scientific direct response tests.

**Third, I believe in selling with integrity.** The strongest ads tell the truth dramatically. You don't have to lie, shortchange your customers, sully your good name or cut corners. Treat your customers by the Golden Rule and they will reward you with much more gold.

**Fourth, I believe in you,** in the tremendous untapped power of your mind to achieve anything you truly desire and believe, as long as it does not harm others. So in these *Bullets*, I will serve up bite-sized secrets of great direct response advertising, powdered with some magic sugar, little tips for unlocking your own creativity, productivity and talent to achieve your greatest potential.

If you share these four beliefs, I am delighted we have found each other. You and I are kindred spirits, marketing comrades. Which leads me to:

**Bullet #1:** In your copy, especially your Welcome Letter, never be afraid to say with clarity and boldness precisely what you believe and specialize in. Like the original IBM, have a company religion and evangelize it with zeal.

### **The Credo Technique.**

I call this the Credo Technique.

Credo (pronounced CRAY-doe) is Latin for "I believe."

But it is much more than a technique. It is an expression of your most strongly held core values which serve as a clarion call to gather the like-minded faithful of your marketplace.

You'll find that when you clearly stand for something, you will never stand alone. Indeed, standing for something special in your overcrowded marketplace sets you apart from armies of me-too competitors who try to be everything to everybody, and wind up meaning nothing special to anyone.

Using the Credo Technique is the surest way I know to attract and bond with your kindred spirits, your true believers, your most loyal comrades in arms, your best clients and friends, as I hope I have found in you.

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



P.S. If you know any copywriters or marketers who would enjoy this *Bullet*, just send them an email with this link: <http://bencivengabullets.com/bullets.asp?id=1>

P.P.S. Your e-mail address will never be shared. And if you ever wish to unsubscribe, just let me know and I will vanish from your life like a shadow in the night.

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## **BULLET #2**

### ***A Fresh Box of Bullets***

*(How to Load Up on the Ones You've Missed)*

Dear Marketing Top Gun:

Claude Hopkins, the Aristotle of Advertising, once said:

"Advertising is much like war, minus the venom....We are usually out to capture others' citadels or garner others' trade....We must have training and experience, also right equipment. We must have proper ammunition, and enough."

Proper ammunition. Top Gun, if you want to be a marketing sharpshooter, you need the best ammunition you can get, which is why I have a special box of *Bullets* for you.

They are the *Bullets* you've missed—published before you subscribed. You can load up on them by visiting the *Bullet* Archive at the link below.

Go there now and you'll discover:

- The Two Most Powerful Words in Advertising. (No, they are not "new" and "free" nor any other two words you'd ever guess.)
- The Secret of the Red Shirts. (This little-known technique makes it much easier to achieve anything you want in life, including blockbuster ad campaigns that flood you with orders.)
- The 7-Letter Word That Instantly Multiplies Your Creativity 11-Fold. (Not 10-fold. Not 12-fold, but exactly 11-fold, as you'll see.)

These *Bullets* and more are waiting for you in the *Bullet* Archive. Just click on the link below.

### **Apply the 80/20 Rule To Achieve Breakthroughs Regularly**

Finally, I want you to know I am a strong believer in the Pareto Principle, otherwise known as the 80/20 rule, or the rule of the vital few and the trivial many.

In any human activity, just a small group of factors is responsible for the lion's share of success.

For example, just 20% of the salespeople earn 80% of the commissions.

20% of the authors sell 80% of the books.

20% of your daily activities generate 80% of your success and income.

And so on.

This certainly applies to the factors governing advertising success.

As a result, you don't need to master scores of rules and learn hundreds of secrets. Just a few—the right few—will bring you outrageous success.

That's why I publish only one *Bullet* a month. I won't clog your inbox with a steady stream of the mediocre, to be read and soon forgotten.

I will give you a single, solitary polished gem per month. You don't need more. What you do need is to learn these few *Bullets* well.

If you read, study and apply these few *Bullets* repeatedly, you may well become a giant of our industry. You will grow richer than you ever would otherwise. And you will be happy, because achievement is the key to happiness.

In short, you will succeed by mastering the vital few, while others squander their time on the trivial many.

To discover these vital few, visit the *Bullet* Archive now at the link below.

Top Gun, fire at will.

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



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### **BULLET #3**

## **The Two Most Powerful Words in Advertising. (No, they're not FREE and NEW.)**

Dear Marketing Top Gun:

In this BULLET you'll discover the two most powerful words in advertising and how to use them to explode your response fairly easily and consistently.

### **Which Headline Pulled Best?**

First, to illustrate the secret, can you guess which of these two magalog headlines was the big winner for a financial newsletter?

HEADLINE A: *(next to photo of financial guru, Charles J. Givens):*

**If you've got 20 minutes a month,  
I guarantee to work a financial miracle  
in your life.**

*(caption under photo)*

Charles J. Givens, the self-made \$200-millionaire,  
entrepreneur and best-selling financial author of all time.

HEADLINE B: *(same photo and caption)*:

**The Millionaire Maker**

*(subhead)* Can he make YOU rich, too?

\* \* \*

Which of these headlines absolutely smashed the other in a split-run test, outpulling it by a huge margin and becoming a profitable control for years?

Rather than just tell you the winner, let me describe how you could know in advance, once you understand the two most powerful words in advertising today.

By the way, no BULLET you will ever read will give you more sheer power to boost your response consistently, beat existing control packages easily and create your own blockbuster products than the simple yet profound secret I will now share. Yet I doubt if you have ever read this anywhere, even if you have been a lifelong student of advertising.

### **Conventional Wisdom That's Wrong**

First, you must understand why some of what you have been taught about direct marketing is wrong, or at least outdated and incomplete.

Most of the few great books on direct response were written more than a generation ago by legends such as John Caples, David Ogilvy, Claude Hopkins and one or two others. Most of their response-boosting secrets remain valid, as we will see in future BULLETS.

Their main teaching: benefits, big benefits, are the key to high response.

Makes sense. But there's a problem. These giants wrote this advice long ago when, compared with today, prospects were under-marketed. So, yes, back then, flat-out big benefits and words like FREE and NEW got people excited.

But today, more often than not, these same words and super-sized claims instantly trigger rejection. The problem is, words like FREE and NEW and the big-claim style of advertising they reflect, have been so overused, they have become bright red flags that instantly scream to your prospects, *throw me away!*

As proof, if I were to send you an email with the words "new" and "free," I must misspell them, or your spam filter may bounce my message.

Best proof: just ask yourself, do you get overly excited when you encounter an email or direct mail package trumpeting free or new or some fantastic claim to make you rich, change your life overnight or grow body parts bigger than you ever dreamed?

Of course not.

You have heard such claims too many times. Your own exquisitely sensitive mental spam filter rejects all such messages instantly, as you think to yourself, YEAH, SURE.

And those, Top Gun, are the two most powerful and influential words in advertising today. *Yeah, sure.*

They are the near-universal response of a too-busy world awash in marketing.

These two words are merciless tyrants, mass murderers of response, because they are exactly the words your harried prospects think every time they must slog through the daily, ever-rising tide of advertising claims.

Get rich quick! Yeah, sure (toss it).

Lose weight fast! Yeah, sure (toss it).

Make \$1,000 a week stuffing envelopes! Yeah, sure (toss it).

Elect me and I will make the world safe, cut your taxes and give everyone universal health care. Yeah, sure.

And so on, including almost all of the big-promise messages you were taught to trumpet by the direct response scriptures.

### **A Simple Secret for Exploding Your Response**

As a result, the vast majority of B level copywriters spend most of their days dreaming up ways to pump up ever-bigger claims ... which is why their mailings are almost always beaten easily by the tiny handful of A level copywriters who know this simple secret of successful selling in an overmarketed world...

**Never make your claim bigger than your proof.** And always join your claim and your proof at the hip in your headlines, so that you never trumpet one without the other.

There is no more powerful nor consistent way to explode your response. Surround your claims with stronger, bolder proof and watch your response soar.

And I am not talking just about testimonials, which do help but have become so overused themselves, they have lost some of their magic. I am talking about every method you can possibly find to bolster your proof and credibility.

There are many ways to do this, as I will teach you in future BULLETS.

One of the easiest ways is simply to avoid like the measles phrases so overused, they instantly trigger the *Yeah, Sure* response, phrases such as get rich quick ... lose weight fast ... and, yes, become a millionaire.

Another way is to sandwich your big promise inside an *IF ...THEN*

construction in your headline.

When you say *IF* (followed by a requirement your prospects have to meet), it seems to magically switch off and bypass their *Yeah, Sure* alarm and usher you right in their front door to sell.

Surprisingly, it even works when you make the requirement easy to meet.

And now you know the winner, headline A:

**If you've got 20 minutes a month,  
I guarantee to work a financial miracle  
in your life.**

I know, the promise still seems so big and hard to believe. But that is the power of the *IF...THEN* construction. For some reason, it seems to put the universal *Yeah, Sure* alarm to sleep, like punching in the alarm code when you enter your home.

The formula: a reasonably easy requirement, followed by a strong promise. Think up ways to use this for your own product.

Of course, be sure to pay off in your body copy why and how the benefit can be achieved by such an easy requirement. And if it is not extremely easy, but only moderately easy, that is even better, as it is more believable. Surprisingly, candor is gloriously effective in boosting response.

Anyway, test this *IF...THEN* idea sometime soon, measure the results, and you may be startled by how much it outpulls the typical big-promise headline most ads rely on.

In fact, the headline above was so successful for Givens, his publishers asked me if they could adapt it for another of their products, a weight loss newsletter by Richard Simmons. Against a strong control package that had beaten off all

comers, they tested this headline, keeping all other elements in the package the same:

(Next to photo of Richard Simmons)  
**If you've got 20 minutes a month,  
I guarantee a thinner, healthier you.**

It worked like a charm and handily beat the previous champ. (BTW, notice the absence of exclamation marks, the overuse of which *increases* the aroma of hype and a resulting *Yeah, Sure* response.)

### **The Best Example I've Ever Seen**

The most effective use I have ever seen of this *IF...THEN* technique was a famous ad for a speedwriting course.

I saw it when I was a copy cub, commuting to Madison Avenue by subway. It was addressed to secretaries and ran for many years. As you were standing there, hanging on your strap and swaying with the motion of the train, you'd read this poster just above eye level. The headline was a sentence handwritten in script across a spiral, steno-type notepad. It read:

**F u cn rd ths msg,  
u 2 cn dbl yr incm  
w spdwrtnng.**

When I figured it out...

...I flt lk a blumn gnys!

So did legions of secretaries who responded to this ad for many years.

### **Coming in Future BULLETS...**

...Many more ways to switch off the *Yeah, Sure* alarm and easily get your

foot in the door, which is half the challenge in direct marketing.

In your next BULLET: The most important advertising question you can ask. This, too, is a secret you have never read elsewhere, yet it will make a huge difference in your marketing fortunes. You will see.

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



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## **BULLET #4**

### **The Most Important Advertising Question**

*Ask this simple 5-word question, stand back and watch your breakthroughs—and response—erupt.*

Dear Marketing Top Gun:

In this *Bullet*, you will learn a simple five-word sentence that gives you an almost unfair advantage in boosting your response, outselling your competition and triggering an ongoing stream of creative breakthroughs.

Asking this simple question is the easiest way I know to get yourself and your staff to think outside the box. It can literally make you wealthy and establish your reputation as a marketing visionary with a Midas touch.

This is true whether you're an entrepreneur, infopreneur, copywriter, marketing manager, CEO—anyone with anything to do with marketing.

Shameless overpromising? Not at all, as you'll now see.

Here's the question:

*What are we really selling?*

Just five little words. But let's explore their revolutionary power, first on a basic level, then advanced.

### **A Little-Known Secret of Master Closers**

First, always remember that advertising is nothing more than salesmanship multiplied by a mass medium. This is why it can unleash such powerful leverage in making you rich and successful. It is a persuasive salesperson able to close thousands or even millions of sales at once. And then do it again tomorrow and the next day.

Knowing this, the happiest hunting ground I've ever found to uncover new ways to explode response is to learn the secrets of master salespeople and then apply them to direct response.

What follows is easily one of the most powerful.

Early in my career, a wizened old Copy Chief taught me that one of the shrewdest questions master closers always ponder is, "*What are we really selling?*"

For example:

You are *not* selling grass seed. You are selling a greener lawn.

You are *not* selling boilers and BTUs. You are selling warmer, cozier winter nights at a 27% fuel savings.

You are *not* selling baseball tickets. You are selling memories of sunny

afternoons that a father and his children will cherish forever.

Back in 1781, Samuel Johnson understood this well. When he was appointed to auction off the Henry Thrale brewery, he announced, "We are not here to sell a parcel of boilers and vats, but the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice."

Perhaps lipstick king Charles Revson said it best: "*In the factory we make cosmetics. In the store we sell hope.*"

You get the idea.

Whenever you are marketing *anything*, always ask, "*What are we really selling?*" Don't stop until you've got a long list of answers and test an ad built around each of your best. The difference in response will often astonish you, open up whole new markets as well as lots more opportunities to raise the question again.

### **But We're Just Getting Started.**

#### **Let's Think Even Bigger...**

If you want to grow rich in direct response and perhaps even establish a reputation as a marketing visionary with a Midas touch, just start asking this same question of not just a single product or service, but of *your entire enterprise*.

Some revolutionary examples:

A hundred years ago, the railroads dominated the American economy. If you had asked the railroad moguls of the day what business they were in, they would have replied, "*The railroad business, of course.*"

But had they raised our 5-word question, "*What are we really selling?*", they could have realized they were in the *transportation business*.

And that simple insight could have allowed them to dominate whole new transportation industries that would soon emerge—automobiles, airplanes and trucking, whose revenues would dwarf those of the railroads. But the railroad tycoons never saw these upstarts coming. They were blindfolded by the familiar. They were in the *railroad* business.

Another example:

For many decades, cigarettes were sold on the basis of "rich tobacco taste."

Then some diabolically clever soul raised the question, "*What are we really selling?*"

He reasoned that teenagers don't start smoking to experience "rich tobacco taste." Heck, most teenagers turn green with their first drags on a cigarette.

*What are we really selling?* Why do teenagers start using such an instantly noxious product? Obviously the answer is to look hip and rebellious among their peers. To imitate more glamorous, powerful, individualistic adults. *To project a cooler self image.*

A cooler self image—that's what cigarette makers were really selling. And so was born The Marlboro Man, the strong, aloof cowboy on horseback, squinting into the sunset like Clint Eastwood, his own man, impervious to the demands of society—just like so many teenage boys crave to feel and look like.

Result: Marlboro sales skyrocketed and to this day, decades later, Marlboros remain the world's top-selling cigarette.

Such is the power of this simple 5-word question.

Another example:

When a man named Ray Jacuzzi was getting nowhere trying to sell his whirlpools to physical therapists, he refused to give up.

Instead he asked, "*What are we really selling?*"

Another possibility arose—hot tubs for homes—and that idea catapulted him to stratospheric success.

Another example:

By the 1950s, almost every family in America owned a big square white refrigerator. As long as it kept the milk cold and didn't conk out completely, families were content to let it sit in the kitchen forever.

So how do we sell more refrigerators when everybody owns one?

"*What are we really selling?*"

Hey, we could start selling refrigerators as *kitchen decor*.

Let's produce them in decorator colors and styles to suit every taste and fashion. This way, when people remodel their kitchens, they'll want new refrigerators to match.

That insight quickly became (and largely remains) the driving force behind new refrigerator sales.

The automobile industry had come up with the same simple answer decades earlier. How could new rivals sell cars when Henry Ford dominated the business with his basic black cars? (Ford had boasted, "You can have a Ford in any color you want, as long as it's black.")

His rivals asked, "*What are we really selling?*" What happens if we change the answer from "transportation" to "style"?

Look, we can't compete headon with Ford selling basic "transportation." He has that market locked. But we could start offering cars not just with Henry's basic black color and one-size-fits-all features, but in lots of different colors and models, so that cars can now be an expression of personal style. Then we'd be selling something different and open up a whole new market.

That was the breakthrough—and the way cars are marketed to this day.

So think for a moment...

What are *you* really selling?

Are you sure? What else could it be? How might you repackage your product, or add to it, to trigger new demand or crack open a whole new market? Think big!

Starbucks sells more than coffee. Disney World sells more than rides.

Ask "*What are we really selling?*" often enough and I guarantee this—bold new answers will arise and with them, major opportunities to open new markets and explode your response.

### ***In Your Next Bullet***

Your next *Bullet* will be what I call a *Silver Bullet*, one so special, it will change your life in many positive ways as soon as you start using it. It will startle you with its effectiveness and simplicity. It will empower you to be far more successful, with less effort, in marketing or any other activity you choose.

In fact, this *Silver Bullet* is possibly the most reliable secret for getting whatever you want in life without strain. Yet you have never read it elsewhere, I promise. You will see.

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



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## **BULLET #5**

### **The Secret of the Red Shirts**

*A little-known secret for instantly accelerating your success  
in marketing or any other activity in life.*

Dear Marketing Top Gun:

Today I bring you a rare *Silver Bullet*, a secret so powerful, it can work a profound change in every area of your life, including marketing.

I learned it from Edward De Bono, regarded by many as the world's top authority on creative thinking.

The secret is remarkably simple. In the next 60 seconds, it will empower you to open your eyes and see the world in a new way. It will let you uncover many of life's treasures hiding in plain sight, and can be used to obtain anything you desire far more easily.

I call it...

## The Secret of the Red Shirts

Let's imagine that you and I are sitting in a large stadium, watching a baseball game on a sunny afternoon in mid-July.

I say to you, "Top Gun, look around the stadium. Take a good look and then close your eyes."

You do so.

Eyes closed? Okay.

I then ask, "Top Gun, how many red shirts did you notice?"

You think for a moment and reply, "Why, I really didn't notice any. I was looking at the crowd."

Just what I thought. When it came to noticing red shirts, your eyes were wide open *but you were still asleep*.

Alright, a second chance. Scan the crowd again, but this time, *look for the red shirts*.

You do so and suddenly notice more red shirts than you can count.

Instantly, you have just experienced a quantum leap in your ability to perceive red shirts.

That's cool, you think. But why is this such a powerful secret for mastering marketing ... or anything else in life?

Simple.

For the words, *red shirts*, substitute *blockbuster headline*.

Or *irresistible offer*.

Or *product that will make you rich*.

Or *new report that will sell like wildfire*.

Or *career of your dreams*.

Or *love of your life*.

You won't likely stumble across any of these things by going through life staring blankly at *the crowd*. But you will spot them unfailingly once you look specifically, exclusively and persistently for each.

In short, *intention facilitates perception*.

"Seek and ye shall find" is one of the oldest truisms of life. But it works only when you seek for one thing specifically, exclusively and persistently.

This is why *The Secret of the Red Shirts* takes a minute to learn and a lifetime to master.

The problem is, we all want many things at once. Life is so rich and enticing, we flit from light to light like moths at a carnival. We seek not only red shirts. We desire whole wardrobes, awash in a peacock's palette of colors, and we want them all simultaneously.

But as you saw in the stadium of your mind, life reveals its precious opportunities *one at a time*. To find a red shirt, you must look for a red shirt and only a red shirt, and keep looking for a red shirt until you find one. Then you can move on to yellow shirts, or whatever else you desire in life.

So, Top Gun, what "red shirt" should you be looking for in your marketing campaign? What do you think is the one thing that could most easily double your response? A breakthrough headline? Hot new premium? A lapel-seizing lead for your letter?

Decide what it is, then start looking for it today. And don't close your eyes until you find it.

### **In Your Next *Bullet***

Your next *Bullet* will reveal the 7-letter word that makes it much easier to beat any control ad, in any medium. It's probably the most important word in the history of creativity, but almost no one has ever heard of it.

It will easily multiply your creativity 11-fold. Not 10-fold. Not 12-fold, but exactly 11-fold, as you'll see in your next *Bullet*.

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



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## **BULLET #6**

### **The 7-Letter Word That Instantly Multiplies Your Creativity 11-Fold**

Dear Marketing Top Gun:

The 7-letter word is SCAMPER.

Never heard of the SCAMPER secret?

Top Gun, that's what I'm trying to give you in these *Bullets*, little secrets for exploding response you've never heard elsewhere, instead of the same old, same old.

This one is a real beaut. It will singlehandedly let you generate more breakthroughs than you ever imagined, and you'll do so with an ease that will make others think you must have dropped your hair blower into the tub and zapped your brain to a higher level.

SCAMPER is an acronym created by Alex Osbourne, the father of creative problem solving.

Each letter stands for something simple you can do to get a fresh take on anything—a headline, offer, product, market, layout, anything. It instantly gives you 11 easy ways to multiply your number of new solutions.

Whenever you're trying to solve a marketing problem, just start playing with each of the capitalized words in the following list:

S = SUBSTITUTE (a new, surprising or more contemporary element for a tried and true one).

C = COMBINE (successful elements from two or more different sources).

A = ADAPT (a winning headline, product, offer, etc. from another product category).

M = MODIFY, MINIFY OR MAGNIFY (any element).

P = PUT to other uses (who else can use this and why?)

E = ELIMINATE (one or more of the elements that have always been included, and see what happens).

R = REARRANGE, REVERSE OR REDEFINE (any part or the product, selling process or problem you're confronted with).

### **Three Quick Examples...**

Take the word, SUBSTITUTE.

The Doubleday Book Club became one of America's most successful mail order companies by offering best-sellers with the appealing proposition, Take Any 4 Books for 98¢.

(The number of books and price have varied over the years, but that's the basic offer—an armload of books for a ridiculously low price in exchange for your commitment to buy more later.)

Doubleday wondered, can we conquer lots of smaller, highly profitable niche markets with this same offer?

They substituted other concepts into their winning formula and, *voila!*—built a sprawling empire of new mail order profit centers, including the Military Book Club ... the Mystery Guild ... the Quality Paperback Book Club ... the History Book Club ... the Children's Book-of-the-Month Club ... The Good Cook Book Club ... and many others.

### **Let's Try the Word, Combine**

Many of the hottest money-makers on the internet are sites devoted either to news or pornography. A show called The Naked News combines the two, having good-looking announcers, both male and female, giving straight news as they completely disrobe. (Can revealing their sources be far behind?)

### **How About the Word, Adapt**

One of the most famous mail order ads in history was the Sherwin Cody ad for a course in English grammar. The headline:

Do You Make These Mistakes in English?

The body copy cited embarrassing grammatical mistakes most of us commit, making ourselves seem uneducated and instantly proving why we need the course. This headline was so strong, it was unbeatable for 40 years, outpulling every other ad that the world's best copywriters could hurl against it.

Can you adapt this powerhouse headline for your product? Sure you can. Every time I've adapted this headline to a product I wanted to promote, it's given me a breakthrough.

Just one example among many....

One of the most successful packages I've ever written for the world's most popular health newsletter, *Health & Healing*, featured the headline (you guessed it): Do You Make These Mistakes with Vitamins?

Try this proven headline in your own marketing and discover its outrageous power for yourself. The key to making it work: fill your body copy with common mistakes people invariably make when they don't have your product.

And after you create a new winner with this headline, you can use this same ADAPT process to ride the coattails of many other blockbuster headlines, as you'll see in future *Bullets*. You'll never run out of new ideas to test, and they'll all be based on proven winners.

### **Contest: What Examples Can *You* Come Up With?**

Can you think of any breakthroughs that have used key words in the SCAMPER formula?

I ask because I've pledged to keep these *Bullets* short and fast, which is why I've given only three examples here. Besides, why should I do all the work ... and have all the fun? ;-)

Tell you what. E-mail me any example you can think of that uses one of the words in SCAMPER. I'll share the best submissions in future *Bullets*. If yours is among them, I'll give you credit and send you a surprise little gift.

### **You'll Thank Me for This One Day**

Top Gun, I urge you to start building your own collection of examples that illustrate the amazing power of SCAMPER.

On days when you don't feel so creative...

...Or if you've been working on the same product for years and need to see it with fresh eyes...

...Or when your task is to beat a monster control and everything you come up with seems like a puny David against a menacing Goliath...

...At those desperate moments this precious little acronym will save you. It will instantly give you 11 of the most powerful, easiest-to-use tools anyone has ever devised for playing with ideas and coming up with not just one breakthrough, but many. And any examples you've collected for your SCAMPER Swipe File will make the process even easier, almost automatic.

Of course, don't forget to save these *Bullets* as well, and re-read them often. Someday I'll start taking them down from my site, to prevent their value from being depreciated by over-familiarity, and this itself will teach a valuable lesson in value perception. (When something is always free and permanently accessible, it will inevitably be devalued and taken for granted.) These *Bullets* are too valuable to be treated with such disrespect, and I won't let that happen.

Among all the *Bullets*, please be sure to save this one. I guarantee it will be one of the biggest guns in your marketing arsenal. With this tool making it so easy to unlock your potential, you *can* become a creative genius—without dropping your hair blower into the tub!

### **In Your Next *Bullet*...**

Which headline pulled best for an aspirin company giving away a free sample bottle:

Headline A:

Tension Headache?

Or Headline B:

When Doctors Have Headaches, What Do They Do?

Clue: The real reason one of these outpulled the other by 71% can be found in *Bullet #2*, which contains one of the most consistent themes I want to teach you to keep boosting your response. See if you can figure it out.

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



P.S. If you know any copywriters or marketers who would enjoy this *Bullet*, just send them an email with this link: <http://bencivengabullets.com/bullets.asp?id=6>

P.P.S. Your e-mail address will never be shared. And if you ever wish to unsubscribe, just let me know and I will vanish from your life like a shadow in the night.

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## **BULLET #7**

### **Can You Pick the Winning Headline?**

Dear Marketing Top Gun:

Which headline was the winner for an aspirin company giving away a free sample bottle?

Headline A:

Tension Headache?

Or Headline B:

When Doctors Have Headaches, What Do They Do?

Clue: In *Bullet #3, "The Two Most Important Words in Advertising,"* I gave you one of the most valuable secrets you'll ever read for consistently boosting your response in today's skeptical, over-marketed world. Let me repeat that secret, because in our search for ever more powerful claims, we can forget it too easily. As a general rule...

**Never make your claim bigger than your proof. And always join your claim and your proof at the hip in your headlines, so that you never trumpet one without the other.**

**There is no more powerful nor consistent way to explode your response. Surround your claims with stronger, bolder proof and watch your response soar.**

I advise this not because it's the *honest* thing to do, which is of course commendable. (I sound like Henry Kissinger, who once described an official government explanation as not only acquitting the US of any wrongdoing, but also having "the additional side benefit of actually being true.")

No, I recommend this mainly for its awesome response-boosting power in attracting new customers.

From now on, whenever you face the question, "*Which of these headlines or main themes will likely outpull the other?*", one of the most reliable ways to know in advance, without spending a dime on testing, is to ask, "*Which offers the more compelling proof?*"

This is so effective in predicting winners because your prospects use two razor-sharp questions to cut through their mail: "*Is this of interest to me?*" ... and second, "*Is it believable...or typical advertising hype?*"

Most marketers and copywriters focus almost all their firepower on the first question, overlooking the second, which is why their response falls way short of what it could be.

Your prospects are not morons. They are as savvy as you. From birth, they have been educated about marketing by hundreds of thousands of over-promising messages. Your prospects have become like light-footed dancers

running across a football field full of goose droppings. They deftly dodge over and around hundreds of unproven claims a day. They can spot your hype yards in advance.

This is why the smartest, most reliable way to get prospects to read your message and respond is *not* by cranking up the volume on your promise. That just makes it look like a bigger pile of hype. It is by raising the level of your proof, which sets you apart from the hype, deserving of further investigation.

With this in mind, let's take another look at the two headlines. *Which headline promises the reader more proof?*

Headline A:

Tension Headache?

Or Headline B:

When Doctors Have Headaches, What Do They Do?

Of course, it's Headline B, which ties the implied promise (a headache remedy) to a strong proof element, *doctors*.

When John Caples tested these two headlines, Headline B won by a fat and happy 71%.

It's also a classic formula I've seen used with great success many times, for many health products and services. The single word "doctors" automatically raises response *because it raises the level of proof*.

It worked more than thirty years ago for John Caples. It was a big winner more than forty years ago, as reported by Vic Schwab in his wonderful book, *How to Write a Good Advertisement*, written in the 1960s. One of the 100

greatest headlines cited in Schwab's book is, "When Doctors 'Feel Rotten' This Is What They Do."

And it still works today. This headline's great grandson is chalking up sales big time. The current control for Boardroom's *Bottom Line Health* is, "How Doctors Stay Well While Treating Sick People All Day." The headline combines a promise, proof, curiosity and an immediate reward for reading—a potent combination.

### **What Is Effective Advertising Anyway?**

So there really are few new ideas under the sun.

And that brings me back to something else John Caples said. He defined effective advertising as, "*A believable promise to the right audience.*" Far too many copywriters and marketers focus on just the promise (the flashy, fun part), and ignore the more demanding challenge of building belief. But without belief, nobody buys.

Please mull that over again, slowly enough to let it seep into your marketing memory.

*Without belief, nobody buys.*

And without seeing in your headline a hint of proof, most prospects won't even read your message.

So let your competitors crank up their claims to ever more unbelievable decibels. That's not how you win the game of response. Yelling is not selling. Focus on beefing up your proof, and you'll walk away smiling, a drum major who leads a long parade of customers who were enchanted to find a rare message—and a person—to believe in.

Remember this always—

**Almost everyone in the world, in every field of human endeavor, is desperately searching for someone to believe in. Be that person and you can write your own ticket.**

**Belief** is today's most overlooked yet most powerful key to boosting response to any ad, in any medium. Harness it and you unleash the core atomic power for exploding response. Because the hunger for belief is so vast in every market, so deep-seated in human nature itself, you can tap into it again and again—*infinitely*—to make yourself and your clients rich.

Today, ask yourself how you can make your advertising more believable. Be ruthless—push yourself hard on this. Be a "yeah, sure" skeptic when you read every sentence and see what you'd change to make your copy almost impossible to refute.

Ask yourself, "What proof would I need to persuade a fair-minded jury beyond a reasonable doubt that my copy rings true?"

If the tough objections you raise expose bullet holes in your sales argument, patch them with stronger proof. If you don't, sure as shootin', your prospects will riddle your claims with those same bullet holes of skepticism. *They can't help it. It is their automatic response in a world awash in hype.*

Heed what I say here and you will be startled at how powerfully and consistently you will be able to boost response to almost any advertisement.

### **Coming in Your Next Bullet**

Your next issue will feature a *Silver Bullet*, one so special, it will change your life in many positive ways as soon as you start using it. It is one of the greatest secrets I have ever found for achieving enduring happiness. It is also the most effective way I know to turn virtually any situation, whether in marketing or any other area of life, to your advantage. It has made a profound difference in

my own life, as I will share with you in your next *Bullet*.

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



P.S. If you know any copywriters or marketers who would enjoy this *Bullet*, just send them an email with this link: <http://bencivengabullets.com/bullets.asp?id=7>

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## **BULLET #8**

### **The Secret of How to Turn a Setback into Triumph— in Marketing or in Life**

Dear Marketing Top Gun:

Just as a rising tide lifts all boats, there are some strategies and core personal beliefs so powerful, they will help you succeed brilliantly in all of life, including marketing.

Today I share such a treasure. It's a rare *Silver Bullet*, with enormous power to change your life, make you happier and leverage your success as a marketer, writer or salesperson.

I learned this secret (at least it was a secret to me), from the great Napoleon Hill, author of the self-improvement classic, "Think and Grow Rich," inspired by the principles of business genius Andrew Carnegie.

**The Secret Is This...**

Every adversity carries within it the seed of equal or greater benefit.

If, in the grip of defeat, discouragement or heartbreak, you look for that seed and nourish it, you will lay the groundwork for great triumph.

At first, you may think, as I did, that this may be just Pollyanna claptrap, rah-rah "positive thinking" that collapses, like a cheap folding chair, under a two-ton challenge. But you'd be wrong to think that, as I was.

Over time, I found this *Silver Bullet* proved to be one of life's most remarkable and reliable secrets of success and happiness.

This is because the universe is governed by laws. It is *knowledge* of these laws, and how to manipulate them, that will bring you success, whether your aim is to split an atom, build an empire, write a blockbuster ad or live a happier life.

And applying this secret—looking for the good in whatever setback you encounter—is the master "skeleton key" that will unlock whatever knowledge you need to accomplish your goal.

The universe is indifferent to whether you're a nice person or mean. The rain falls on the just and the unjust alike. The universe surrenders its power to anyone who possesses *the right knowledge of how to harness its laws*, and that's what you'll discover by applying this *Silver Bullet*.

I usually don't get personal in these *Bullets*, but today I will, to help you understand the life-changing power of this secret. In fact, I'll give you two examples, one from my personal life and one from marketing.

### **A Painful Lesson from My Own Life**

Pauline and I were married young, in our teens, and two years later had our only child, Laura.

My life changed forever when I met the doctor in the hospital waiting room, when he came out to tell me the good news: "You're the father of a beautiful baby girl."

Strangely, there was no joy in his face, so I asked, "How are mom and baby doing?"

He replied hesitantly, "Well, Pauline is fine."

Then he looked down with a pained expression, and I instantly knew my world was changing.

As we later learned, after lots of doctor visits and diagnoses, our Laura was born with mental retardation and other medical problems.

Yet the story of our little family is not a tragedy, not by a long shot, due to the always mixed nature of life and the principle mentioned above. As it would take Pauline and me painful years to appreciate, it's not what happens to you that determines your happiness and success in life, but how you respond.

After all, you can't always control what happens to you. But you can always control how you respond, especially if you remember: *Every adversity carries within it the seed of an equal or greater benefit.*

You might ask, "What possible benefit could arise from your daughter being born with mental retardation? Or from a war, for that matter? Or a plague? Or an earthquake?"

Let me speak only from my own experience.

Our daughter, despite her disabilities, quickly became and remains the light of our lives.

What she lacks in brains she makes up in heart.

She has taught us more about how to love and care for others than any religious sermon, Indian guru, new age course or book ever could.

She has brought into our lives a caring and dedicated network of teachers and friends we would have never met otherwise.

She has opened our hearts and turned us into benefactors for children's causes.

She has taught us how to be brave. Can you imagine the bravery it takes to look different, attract attention just by walking down the street or through a mall, speak unintelligibly to most people's ears, encounter so much frustration in attempting simple tasks like tying a shoe or buttoning a blouse, never fit in with the social activities of your peers while growing up, not belong in their classes at school, not understand the jokes everyone laughs at and, at times, be laughed at yourself by ignorant people or other children who see only what's different about you and not what's human and tender?

Can you imagine the bravery it takes to experience all that ... yet still go through life with a smile on your face, acceptance in your heart and a bubbly spirit of joy for those who share your life?

That's just the beginning of what Laura has taught us.

Of course, despite these benefits, I would still have given anything to have allowed my daughter a normal shot at life. And, after all these years, I cannot hear the Straw Man in the Wizard of Oz sing, "*If I only had a brain,*" without thinking of Laura, what might have been, and feeling my eyes well up with sorrow.

The point I'm making is that this principle will never banish all sorrow. Nothing can do that. But it *can* transform setbacks and sorrow into glorious achievements and opportunities for growth on every level of your life—if you'll persistently look for that all-important seed of benefit.

Once I learned to look for the good in a bad situation, I realized there is plenty of good to be found. I have never found an exception to this rule.

Good—even triumph!—can come from anything, as long as you're willing to look for it. This is a rule of the universe, at least in my experience and in the eyes of many of history's greatest teachers.

### **How to Apply This to Marketing**

My biggest successes and advances in direct marketing have universally come from defeat. Earlier in my career, whenever I lost a split-run test against someone else, I hated the experience. I despised it with a passion.

My only consolation for having to swallow such poison was to turn it into medicine—somehow find the good. I learned to ask, "Why was I beaten on this? Why did my copy fail?" Once I figured out the answer, I vowed, "*this will never happen to me again!*" And I was that much tougher to beat the next time.

Michael Jordan and Bill Russell, perhaps the two greatest basketball players ever to step on the court, both had difficulty making their high school varsity teams. But they transformed their frustration into fierce determination and prevailed.

You can emulate their attitude every time you experience a setback in your own marketing. Mark my words—*your setbacks will yield the secrets of your greatest breakthroughs!*

To give you a wonderful example in marketing, let me relate this true story from a book called, "Crackerjack Positioning," by Don Reynolds, Jr.

## The Story of Uncle Jim's Mountain Grown Apples

Reynolds writes...

"An advertising executive moved to New Mexico and purchased an apple orchard located on the side of a mountain. He began to sell the apples by mail order.

"Uncle Jim's Mountain Grown Apples' they were called, and he shipped them with the following unconditional guarantee:

*"If, for any reason, you find these apples unacceptable, just let me know and I'll return your money with no questions asked."*

"One year disaster struck. A hail storm marked all his apples. The taste was not affected. If anything the apples were sweeter than ever. But they certainly weren't as pretty.

"For some reason Uncle Jim had more orders that year than ever before. He was faced with the alternative of either returning all the orders unfilled or shipping the apples and hoping for the best.

"He decided to ship the apples. In each box he placed a card that read:

*"Notice the hail marks on these apples. These are proof of their growth at a high mountain altitude where sudden chills from hail storms help stimulate the natural fruit flavors which give Uncle Jim's apples their incomparable taste."*

"That year Uncle Jim had fewer money-back requests than ever. His action further strengthened his unique position of marketing mountain-grown apples. He still gets orders asking for "Hail-marked apples, if available. Otherwise, the regular kind."

That story embodies so much of what I admire in great marketing:

uniqueness, compelling proof, honesty and an eye for turning a setback into a fabulous opportunity.

All discovered inside the "gift" of a disastrous hail storm.

From now on, search for the good in any setback and see for yourself if what I promise is true: you *will* find the seed of your next great triumph.

\* \* \*

### Parting Shot (A Favorite Quote)

"Only the heart knows how to find what is precious." —*Fyodor Dostoevsky*.

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



P.S. If you know any copywriters or marketers who would enjoy this *Bullet*, just send them an email with this link: <http://bencivengabullets.com/bullets.asp?id=8>

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## **BULLET #9**

### **The Most Persuasive Tool in Advertising and How to Use It**

Dear Marketing Top Gun:

My friends, star marketers Alex Mandossian and Yanik Silver, recently paid me a compliment by calling me, "The world's greatest living reason-why copywriter."

I consider it such high praise because my mentor, David Ogilvy, was in my view the greatest reason-why copywriter of all time. In fact, when asked by a reporter if he was a strong proponent of "reason why" advertising, Ogilvy responded, "*Is there any other kind?*"

Thinking of Mr. Ogilvy (or "D. O.," as we staffers at Ogilvy & Mather called him) has prompted me to once again offend every English teacher whose classes I endured, and inspire everyone else who speaks the King's English to cringe, by penning another of my infamous poems, this one entitled . . .

## The Most Persuasive Tool in Advertising

"How can I sell more product?," is the marketer's eternal question.  
If you sincerely seek the answer, just follow my suggestion.  
When it comes to creating advertising, most advice is for the birds.  
But the greatest secret of success can be found in two little words.  
No, they're not, as some have written, those standbys NEW and FREE.  
Neither are they NOW and SALE, or even YOU or WE.  
No, to open minds and wallets and have prospects eagerly buy,  
The most persuasive words in advertising are simply, REASON WHY.

Whether you spread your message on TV, the internet or by letter,  
You must explain the REASON WHY your product is much better.  
And while you're at it, don't forget that your audience won't believe you  
Unless you give the REASON WHY what you claim is true.  
To close the sale, these two little words once again point the way.  
Just give me another REASON WHY I should act today.

There you have it, clear as day. If you want to sell, here's how:  
Give good reasons for these three questions—why *you*, why *true*, why *now*?  
This little secret works like magic, for all products, in all seasons.  
If you want to sell like a superstar, just boldly state your reasons:  
First, the reason yours is best. Second, a reason to believe,  
And third, a reason to act right now—give these and you'll receive  
More sales than you can imagine, gold and riches heaped on high.  
The world showers you with treasure when you give the REASON WHY.

\* \* \*

Could this be verse? I doubt it! But maybe a couple of quick examples will make the point . . .

Soft drinks are one of the most difficult industries to break into with a new product. The number of times it's been done over history is very, very seldom because people are loyal to whatever soft drink they like.

Not long ago, *Slice* soft drink came out with a campaign that said it's a better-tasting soft drink *because it contains 10-percent fruit juice*.

It gave a little reason in the headline—the 10-percent fruit juice—to explain why it tastes better than the average fruit soda.

And that made all the difference in the world. In a product category that's renowned for a sky-high failure rate among new products, *Slice* quickly captured 7 percent of a \$30-billion-a-year soft drink market.

Today, that same soft drink market is probably worth more than \$50 billion per year. That means that right out of the box, *Slice* created \$2 billion a year in sales on the strength of this one little proof element, *10-percent fruit juice*.

To see how critical that line is to its success, try taking it away, and what do you have? "*Slice*, a better-tasting soft drink." Nothing there but a bland claim.

But because it contains 10-percent fruit juice, if you're a soft drink aficionado, you think, maybe I'll try it. *There's a good reason to*.

Let's look at another example. The headline of one of the most successful direct response ads of all time is:

***How to win friends and influence people.***

Wisely paying off that key word "how," the body copy of this ad gives many, many reasons in support of this powerful headline.

Here's another classic reason-why positioning that built a fortune.

***Kleenex towels absorb 50 percent more  
because they're two layers thick.***

"Well, that makes sense," you say to yourself. You can buy into the promise because it gives you its proof element, its reason why, right in the headline.

***Half Off Sale!***

We've all seen half off sales and, by and large, they slide off your mind like water off a duck.

But give it a reason why and look what happens. Imagine if you say instead:

***Fire sale! 50 percent off everything in our store  
because of our recent fire.***

See what a difference that makes?

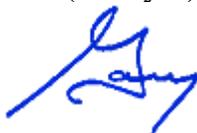
If I'm going to buy a stereo, I don't care if the box smells a little smoky. The reason why—the recent fire—gives me a rationale to buy into it, a believable explanation of why I might really get 50 percent off, rather than just another garden-variety, totally unbelievable and unmotivating "*half price sale.*"

Take a hard look at your most critical marketing materials, especially any that are underperforming. Ask if you are giving reasons why in each of these three areas:

1. Compelling reason(s) why your product is superior to other solutions your prospects might choose, including doing nothing.
2. Compelling reason(s) to believe that what you say is true.
3. Compelling reason(s) to seize the opportunity today.

When you examine the most successful examples of salesmanship-in-print, you'll almost always find these three reasons-why in full force, which is why they are so profitable.

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



P.S. If you know any copywriters or marketers who would enjoy this *Bullet*, just send them an email with this link: <http://bencivengabullets.com/bullets.asp?id=9>

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## **BULLET #10**

### **The Secret "Trigger Word" That Makes More of Your Prospects Say Yes Than Any Other Word in the English Language**

Dear Marketing Top Gun,

This *Bullet* is the companion of *Bullet #9*, which described the awesome persuasive power of giving compelling "reasons why" in your direct marketing copy.

As you recall (or *should* recall if you're paying close attention to these valuable *Bullets!*), one of the most reliable ways you'll ever find to boost your response by 50%-100% or more is to fill your direct marketing copy with potent "reasons why" in each of three key areas:

1. Compelling reason(s) why your product is superior to other alternatives your prospects might choose, including doing nothing.

2. Compelling reason(s) to believe that what you say is true.
3. Compelling reason(s) to seize the opportunity immediately.

### **The Trigger Word That Secretly Persuades People**

Okay, today I'm going to share what I'm convinced is the single most powerful trigger word that makes your "reasons why" hit home with much greater persuasive force. It is the overlooked word that causes more prospects to say "yes" than any other word in the English language.

Why is it so powerful?

. . .Because it triggers an automatic and favorable response in the overwhelming majority of your best prospects—94 percent and 93 percent in two typical scientific experiments I'll cite in a moment.

. . .Because it secretly "anesthetizes" the skeptical part of your prospects' brains, seducing them into deciding *emotionally*, often with little or no critical thinking. This results in much higher levels of response and sales.

. . .Because you can use this magic word *any* time you want to persuade almost anyone to do almost anything, whether in your advertising, presentations, relationships with your customers, employees, management, board members, spouse, children, lover, a jury—*anyone* you wish to persuade in the fastest, most reliable manner.

. . .Because people *love* to be persuaded this way, as you'll see.

Interested? If so, you are already coming under the spell of this magic word in this message because I always use it throughout my copy. (In fact, I just used it in this paragraph and you probably didn't even notice. That's how it works— invisibly.)

First, let me give you the scientific proof on why it works, and then I'll reveal the word that is likely already building curiosity and desire in you.

### **Two Fascinating Experiments Every Marketer Should Memorize**

In the animal kingdom, as well as in humans, sometimes a single sound can trigger automatic behavior. For example, when a mother turkey hears a certain chirp from her chicks, she becomes a very conscientious mother turkey. But if she doesn't hear exactly that chirping sound, she will ignore or even kill her young.

But here's where it gets interesting, especially for anyone who wants to evoke automatic and favorable responses in *humans*. Listen to these two amazing experiments, described in the wonderful book, *The Psychology of Influence*, by Dr. Robert B. Cialdini. The first involved mother turkeys, the second, humans. Let's look at the first . . . .

"For a mother turkey, a polecat is a natural enemy whose approach is to be greeted with squawking, pecking, clawing rage. Indeed, the experimenters found that even a stuffed model of a polecat, when drawn by a string toward a mother turkey, received an immediate and furious attack.

"When, however, the same stuffed replica carried inside it a small recorder that played the 'cheep-cheep' sound of baby turkeys, the mother not only accepted the oncoming polecat, but gathered it underneath her. When the machine was turned off, the polecat model again drew a vicious attack."

In other words, the "cheep cheep" sound of a baby turkey was the only key factor that mattered in evoking an automatic and favorable response in our mother turkey.

And if you think this happens only to our bird-brained feathered friends, listen to this second experiment involving humans, reported by Dr. Cialdini:

"A well-known principle of human behavior says that when we ask someone to do us a favor we will be more successful if we provide a reason.

"Harvard social psychologist Ellen Langer demonstrated this unsurprising fact by asking a small favor of people waiting in line to use a library copying machine. *'Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine because I'm in a rush?'*

"The effectiveness of this request-plus-reason was nearly total: 94 percent of those asked let her skip ahead of them in line. Compare this success rate to the results when she made the request only (without giving a 'reason why'): *'Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine?'*

"Under those circumstances, only 60 percent of those asked complied. At first glance, it appears that the crucial difference between the two requests was the additional information provided by the words, *'because I'm in a rush.'*

"But a third type of request tried by Langer showed that this was not the case. It seems that it was not the whole series of words, but the first one, *'because,'* that made the difference. Instead of including a real reason for compliance, Langer's third type of request used the word 'because' and then, adding nothing new, merely restated the obvious: *'Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine because I have to make some copies?'*

"The result was that once again nearly all—93 percent—agreed, even though no real reason, no new information, was added to justify their compliance. Just as the 'cheep-cheep' sound of turkey chicks triggered an

automatic mothering response from maternal turkeys—even when it emanated from a stuffed polecat—so, too, did the word '*because*' trigger an automatic compliance response from Langer's subjects, even when they were given no subsequent reason to comply."

### **How to Use This to Leverage Your Response**

Top Gun, if you want to boost your results by very significant numbers—virtually automatically!—start filling your copy with more "becausees."

Why? Because it works!

And, for best results, always follow your "becausees" with compelling reasons.

Remember, in Dr. Cialdini's example, where someone asked to jump to the front of the line, people were persuaded solely by the word "because," even when the "reason" that followed wasn't particularly rational or logical.

But with written words, I believe the bar is raised a little higher because people are more deliberative when they read.

So, when using the written word, you'll enjoy maximum results when you use lots of "becausees," followed by compelling reasons.

For example, I could encourage you to read these *Bullets* regularly by saying, "Read the *Bullets*—you'll be glad you did!" But you'll probably feel a stronger pull of persuasion if I urge you to read these *Bullets*:

...Because they are based not on opinions but on solid research of the most effective ways to influence others, as well as literally thousands of scientific split-run tests I have conducted for my clients.

...Because they will help you become a master of persuasion in any medium.

...Because they are the best gems of persuasion and direct response wisdom I have gleaned from almost 40 years of hard work, passionate dedication and relentless searching for the best ways to make others respond favorably ... and because you can profit from all this free.

...Because they are shortcuts to whatever you want in life—money, fame, status and the freedom of financial independence, all of which can be yours once you know how to persuade others to do what you ask.

These excellent reasons, framed by "because," are infinitely stronger than a lame claim like, "you'll be glad you did." See the difference?

Fill your copy with potent "reasons why," peppered with lots of "becausees," and I guarantee you'll find it so much easier to persuade people. You'll also find that people love to be persuaded this way. Here's why ....

### **It's Not Only the Most Effective, but also Most Ethical Method of Persuasion**

In the end, there is no great mystery, nor any unethical manipulation involved in the use of the word "*because*." In fact, it's the most honest, straightforward, aboveboard and ethical type of persuasion you can use.

Why?

Because (there it is again) people act in their own self-interest. That's a given. And when you give people rational, logical and honest-to-goodness reasons to act in their own self interest—*voilà*—they do!

You win, they win, and as long as your reasons are accurate, you accomplish

your goal without trickery or deceit.

What's more, it's the best kind of sale you can make, because it's a sale built on mutual benefit, trust and the truth, all of which will endow you with future sales from that same customer.

So persuading a customer in this straightforward, "reason-why" way creates not just one sale, but a repeating "annuity" for you, a future stream of revenue that keeps making you wealthier repeatedly, not just once. It is therefore the most leveraged way to build both your sales and your wealth, all from a single magic word—*because*, the great, secret "hinge of persuasion" that lets you open almost any heart, mind or door and grow richer in the process.

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



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## **BULLET #11**

### **The Secret of Happiness (A Holiday Message)**

Dear Marketing Top Gun,

Today, in honor of this season of giving and joy, I have a special gift for you. It comes not in a golden box with a fancy red ribbon, but in the unadorned text of the message you're about to read.

It reveals one of the great secrets of marketing, of life, of how to connect with people, and, most of all, how to experience unsurpassed joy any time you wish.

If you read every word that follows, don't be surprised if a tear wells up in your eye. This is my holiday gift to you, a true story that will touch your heart.

As I mentioned in an earlier message, I am the father of a developmentally disabled child, our daughter Laura, the light of our lives.

But this story is about another father of a disabled child, in his case, a son named Shaya.

This story was originally reported in the New York newspapers. It was so touching, it spread like wildfire across the internet, and many began to question, *"Did this really happen, or is it just another urban legend?"*

### **Yes, This Story Really Is True**

Well, that's the amazing part of this story. It is true. In fact, because of all the buzz, a web site called "TruthOrFiction.com" investigated and has reported that, yes, the story is indeed true. It has also been confirmed by no less an authority than the highly respected Rabbi and author, Paysach Krohn of Brooklyn, who says that he personally knows the participants and that every word of the story is true as originally reported.

As I said, the story is about Shaya, a learning disabled boy in Brooklyn.

On weekends, Shaya and his dad like to go for walks. As they do, they like to stop and watch the neighborhood boys play baseball.

On this one Sunday afternoon, as they approached the ball field, Shaya looked up at his father and asked, "Dad, do you think they would let me play?"

Now, this gave Dad a dilemma. He knows his son is learning disabled, very uncoordinated, and has never played baseball before.

But Dad also knows that the neighborhood boys have always treated Shaya with kindness. And he feels that if he, his father, doesn't speak up for Shaya, who will?

So he walked over to one of the boys and asked, "What do you think about letting Shaya in the game?"

The boy didn't know what to say, and looked around to his teammates for

guidance. Not getting any, he took matters into his own hands. He said, "Well, we're about to start the eighth inning, and we're losing by six runs. I don't think we're going to win this game, so what's the difference? Get him a glove and he can play behind second base, in short center field," which Shaya did with a big smile on his face.

In the bottom of the eighth inning, Shaya's team rallied and scored three runs. But they were still losing by three.

In the bottom of the ninth, they rallied again. They had three runners on base, two out, and it was Shaya's turn to bat.

Dad wondered, will they even let him bat? But without hesitation, one of the boys shouted, "Shaya, you're up!," and he was handed a bat.

But as he stood at home plate, it was obvious to all that Shaya didn't even know how to hold the bat, let alone hit with it.

So the pitcher moved in a couple of feet and lobbed the ball very softly so Shaya could at least make contact.

Shaya swung and missed by a wide margin. Before the second pitch, one of Shaya's teammates called out, "Hold on, let me help him. Let me show him how to bat."

This boy came and stood behind Shaya, and put his arms around him so the two boys were now holding the bat together.

The pitcher moved in a couple more feet and again lobbed the ball as softly as he could.

The two boys swung the bat together and managed to tap a soft grounder right back toward the pitcher. Shaya's teammates yelled, "Run, Shaya! Run to

first!" And he took off for first.

But the pitcher pounced on the ball in an instant and could easily have thrown Shaya out at first, ending the game.

Instead, the pitcher took the ball and, with obvious intention, threw it on a high arc way over the first baseman's head, all the way into the outfield.

Shaya was safe at first. The first baseman turned him toward second and said, "Run, Shaya, run to second!"

But by then, the right fielder had chased down the ball and he, too, could have easily thrown Shaya out, at second.

But he understood what the pitcher had done.

So he threw the ball not just over second base, but way over the third baseman's head, so far that nobody was going to retrieve that ball.

As Shaya chugged into second base, the opposing shortstop ran towards him, turned him towards third base and shouted, "Run, Shaya, run to third!"

Of course, by now the three runners who had been on base had scored. The game was tied, Shaya represented the winning run, and his teammates were screaming with excitement.

As Shaya rounded third base, every boy from his team and several from the team on the field were all running behind him, cheering him home.

And as he put his foot on home plate, both teams gathered around him, lifted him on their shoulders and cheered him as the hero of the game. He had just hit a home run and won the game.

These boys gave Shaya the thrill of his life. Of course, they gave him something even more precious—their acceptance.

### **The Secret of Happiness**

Obviously, these boys had either been taught, or perhaps had discovered on their own, the greatest secret of human happiness.

And that is . . . .

We experience our moments of purest joy at precisely those moments when we are causing it in others.

It is a truism of life—whatever we give out comes back to us, multiplied. Which brings me back to the beginning of this message . . . .

In the hurly burly of the holiday crush, if you want to experience some genuine joy, all you need do is take a few moments to spread some around.

So maybe it's time to call an old friend who needs calling, to forgive what needs forgiving, to let a family member hear some healing words, to write that note that needs writing, to smile an accepting smile at the next disabled person you encounter, or perhaps to just relax in the moment with someone older who'd love your undivided attention for a few minutes, as all living things thrive on attention.

Of course, you may ask, what does all this have to do with effective marketing, the usual subject of these *Bullets*?

Nothing, really.

And everything.

As Malcolm Forbes was fond of saying, "In all thy getting, get understanding."

It's vital for all of us to understand that our prospects and customers are people, too . . . and people like to connect with others who are unafraid of showing a little humanity, of taking some time now and then to share a laugh, feel some warmth, express some sympathy, do a favor, help a charity, be a friend.

Whatever your product, however impressive your expertise, people will never care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Every now and then, toss a few pebbles of caring into your pond of contacts. Those ripples of friendship will spread and unfailingly return to you in waves of appreciation and loyalty.

Especially at this time of year, we all need to rediscover, like Scrooge in "A Christmas Carol," the sheer, giddy delight of perpetrating on unsuspecting humanity an occasional act of random, senseless joy.

\* \* \*

If you would like to share Shaya's story of joy with anyone you know, you certainly have my permission to share this message with as many people as you wish, to spread a little cheer yourself and honor the spirit of the season.

In closing, at this time of year, I normally wish my clients and friends "happy holidays and a prosperous New Year."

Well, you already have my message for a happy holiday. In the next issue, *Bullet #12*, I will share one of the greatest secrets I have ever learned for achieving prosperity. It's entitled, "*How to Get Anything You Want in Life.*"

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



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## BULLET #12

### How to Get Anything You Want in Life

Dear Marketing Top Gun,

The great motivational speaker, Zig Ziglar, has said, *"You can get anything you want in life if you help enough other people get what they want."*

Dale Carnegie, author of *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, put the same thought this way, "The only way to influence someone is to find out what they want, and show them how to get it."

Notice that both these masters of influence say that success lies in what others want.

Ignoring this simple insight is the most common cause of marketing failure. Over and over, I've seen otherwise sharp marketers launch a product because *they want to sell it*, not because anyone wants to buy it.

Top Gun, remember this always—you will easily avoid embarrassing failures

and discover great riches only when you look at markets through the other end of the telescope—not the lens of what you want to sell, but the lens of what people want to buy.

This is why marketing decisions based on demographics, psychographics, "relationship marketing" and other hifalutin phrases can be a huge trap.

Let me tell you something—I've never bought an aspirin because I'm a member of a demographic group or because I want a relationship with my druggist. *I buy aspirin because I have a headache!*

Headaches, problems, desires—human wants—these are your markets!

Identify these wants, these "hungry crowds" as my friend Gary Halbert puts it, and you can make more money than is likely good for you. Help enough people get what they want, and you can get virtually anything you want.

### **How Can You Identify Wants?**

I have many suggestions, but I promised to keep these *Bullets* short, so let me name three of my favorites for now:

1. **Keep your eye on best-seller lists.** These are straws in the wind of what the public wants. *Example:* go to Amazon.com and look up the 25 best-selling books in your market. They will instantly give you lots of ideas on what people in your market are looking for. Similar titles could make red hot informational premiums to add to your own offer.
2. **Watch more movies** because movies are the playgrounds of human emotion. As a marketer, you want to be an expert in human emotions. As you watch, try to identify every emotion the actors are playing, and let yourself feel it intensely. It's fun and instructive.

You'll also open up your emotional channels as never before. This will help you immensely in writing more emotionally powerful copy because you will feel what you are writing about.

Remember that in direct response, for clarity and for maximum believability, we must express our thoughts in logical sequence, in rational sentences, offering lots of proof and "reasons why" along the way. These are rational elements that make up the bones, the skeleton of your presentation. They are critically important.

But emotions are the flesh and blood of your copy. They are the life juices, the beating heart of your ad. The vast majority of products are sold because of the need for love, the fear of shame, the pride of achievement, the drive for recognition, the yearning to feel important, the urge to look attractive, the lust for power, the longing for romance, the need to feel secure, the terror of facing the unknown, the lifelong hunger for self-esteem and so on. Emotions are the fire of human motivation, the combustible force that secretly drives most decisions to buy. When your marketing harnesses these forces correctly, you will generate explosive increases in response.

3. **Follow Your Heart.** Your brain is the smartest organ in your body, but your heart is the wisest. In any activity, whether in marketing or in life, listen to your heart.

If your heart is saying one thing, but your brain (or the "expert" running the meeting) is forcing the issue in another direction, take a step back and listen to that voice from your heart. Don't be afraid of that inner voice. It is not just your best friend. It is *you*.

You will live a much happier life, be much more influential and become a much better marketer because other people's hearts vibrate to the same string. The more you listen to your own heart, the more you will hear—and influence—the hearts of others.

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



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## BULLET #13

### How to Be Lucky

Dear Marketing Top Gun,

There are some secrets so important, I call them *Silver Bullets*, because they greatly enhance your success in all areas of life, including marketing. Such is *Bullet #13*.

Many people associate the number 13 with luck, which is why I saved this message for now.

Personally, I don't believe that numbers, in and of themselves, influence your luck.

What will? I believe three factors are paramount.

But first, please understand that I'm not talking here about winning-the-lottery luck. The odds of such occurrences are so remote, they're not worth investing much of your time or money.

You'll be far more successful—and a lot luckier in life—if you seek good fortune in areas much *more likely to pay off*, such as seizing opportunities, having an edge in your business dealings, and developing a reputation as someone whose campaigns are consistently successful—often record-breakers.

What are the factors that make such good luck strike repeatedly in your life?

### **Three Factors That Make You Luckier**

1. ***Build up your "risk muscle."*** In most people, the fear of loss is a much stronger motivator than the desire for gain. Knowing this can be quite useful in boosting your advertising response, as it can be very persuasive to spell out what your prospects will lose by not taking action.

For example, Alan Rosenspan reports that in one study, people who were interested in saving home energy costs were asked one of two questions:

"Did you know you can save an extra 75 cents a day by implementing our recommendations?"

Or....

"Did you know it costs you an extra 75 cents a day if you don't implement these recommendations?"

Question #2 won by a wide margin because it more directly tapped into our universal fear of loss.

Of course, this fear, unfortunately, stunts our good luck if we live by it too rigidly. Most of the time we tiptoe through life too timidly. Like small children, we cling to the pole of our carousel pony tightly with both hands, afraid we may fall off if we stretch for the brass ring. Is it any wonder we keep going in boring circles, without a big dream to energize our souls

each morning?

Those who work with the elderly report that at the end of life, the most common regret is not over what we did, but what we failed to do: the chance not taken, the business not started, the invention not patented, the dream not followed, the talent not nourished, the novel not written, the product not tested, the trip not taken, the apology not offered—*so much music that died, bottled up inside us, because we were too timid to let it out*. Don't let this happen to you!

Jim Rohn has said, "*If you don't push timidity into a corner, it will push you into a corner.*"

The remedy: build your risk muscle, like any other, by using it more often, even in small things. A little more risk adds spice and adventure to life, and can greatly increase your good luck. *Fortune favors the bold*. A perfect example in marketing: make an offer to your prospects so outrageously generous, only a fool would refuse it. In one daring stroke, you can have a blast, electrify your marketing team, outflank your competitors, seize momentum, wow your prospects, trigger fantastic word-of-mouth, spark some media buzz, and uncork a geyser of new business.

I wish I had learned many years ago this sensible rule from psychologist Dr. Joyce Brothers, for whom I once test-marketed a newsletter on successful living: "*If you can take the worst, take the risk.*"

2. **Make "persistence" your job description.** President Calvin Coolidge once said, "Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not. Nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not. Unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not. The world is full of educated derelicts. *Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.*"

One of my most successful clients, a top producer for Merrill Lynch, kept this sign over his desk: *"The harder I work, the luckier I get."*

Other brokers would marvel at how "lucky" he was, because he so often "bagged the elephant" (signed up a super-wealthy client). The secret of his luck? He was more persistent than anyone else. He told me that most brokers give up on a prospect after calling two, three or, at most, four times and getting the brush off. He developed what he called his *"rule of nine."* He would call on affluent prospects at least nine times.

Why nine? On average, it would take him nine calls to strike gold—yet most other brokers threw in the towel after just three or four! When telemarketing fell out of favor, he switched to personalized direct mail (which is how he came to retain me), and found that his persistence paid off even better in direct mail.

Want to *bag more elephants* in your business? Apply your own rule of nine contacts—through an e-zine to your industry, a free online e-course to your best prospects, a personal direct mail campaign, free offline newsletter, simple follow-up calls, *anything* proven to work in your industry and that offers something of value repeatedly to your best prospects. Nine hooks dangling in the water—or 25—will catch more fish than one.

### **The Single Most Important Factor In Boosting Your Good Luck**

3. ***To reach a destination, you must first have one.*** In my experience, the most important ingredient in filling your life with good luck is clarity—*clarity about what you want.*

Put simply, when you are clear about what you want, you are much more likely to get it.

As the Zen master said to his archery student, "If you aspire to hit a target, you must first see it." Before you can arrive at a destination, you must first have one.

This is so obvious, it seems almost simple-minded. Yet how often do we rush into activities, relationships, and projects—sometimes wasting months if not years—without first investing just sixty seconds to ask ourselves, *"Why am I doing this? What is my goal here? What outcome do I hope to experience?"*

You'll be so much luckier in life—and in marketing—if you define and then picture your successful outcome before plunging in.

For example, before you invest days or weeks writing your next ad, take just sixty seconds to picture it being a smashing success and how good that makes you feel. Then review your clear image of success before every new work session, to keep yourself heading straight for the target you've now envisioned.

Likewise, before you hurry into your next three-hour marketing meeting, picture clearly what you want to see as the successful outcome of this meeting. Your clear vision beforehand will keep bringing the meeting back into sharp focus when people wander, and you'll accomplish a lot more.

And before you give anyone on your marketing team an assignment—whether to find a new list universe or develop a breakthrough new product—clearly define for them your vision of a successful outcome, so it can guide them at every step.

As the military genius Sun Tzu said, "The battle is won before it is engaged." The architect sees her majestic skyscraper long before the first shovel breaks earth.

In every major activity, first devote a few moments to clarify and clearly picture your objective. *When you are crystal clear about what you want, and then envision success vividly and repeatedly, all the universe conspires to help you.*

This is because your mind is like a powerful radio transmitter, and when you mentally broadcast with clarity, regularity and vivid mental imagery exactly what you want to experience, the whole universe is listening. Forces seen and unseen respond to your call. Allies assemble. Assistance arrives, opportunities materialize, often from the most unexpected sources. Sure it's good luck, but good luck that you've attracted to yourself by broadcasting a clear message of your desired outcome.

Psychologists say the reverse is also true. When you broadcast worry and fear, or images of hate, hostility and anger, you will attract these to yourself as well.

The key is to realize that you have been given by your divine creator the free will to broadcast whatever signals you wish and, in so doing, attract into your life exactly what you broadcast.

Every day, before each major activity you undertake, remember to imagine with clarity exactly what you'd like to experience, and you will be astonished at how lucky you become.

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



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## **BULLET #14**

### **6 Little Words That Boost Your Sales**

*Because They Make Your Advertising  
More Interesting and Believable*

Dear Marketing Top Gun,

"You can't save souls in an empty church," said David Ogilvy. "And you can't bore people into buying your product."

That's why Ogilvy sought to hire copywriters "with richly-furnished minds."

How can you have a richly-furnished mind and write copy so interesting that, in the words of legendary Copy Chief, Vic Schwab, it's "easier to read than to skip"?

You can start with this advice to young writers, from poet Ezra Pound:

**"Curiosity. Advice to the young. Curiosity."**

Substitute "*copywriters*" for "the young," and you're seeing the light.

And how can you easily become more curious and thus more interesting? I commend these words from Nobel prize-winning poet, Rudyard Kipling:

"I keep six faithful serving men  
Who teach me well and true  
Their names are What and Where and When  
And How and Why and Who.

Journalists call this the "5W1H" formula for investigating any subject. It's quite useful in marketing. For example:

Who are you advertising to?

What does your product do for them?

Why is it superior to alternative products?

How can you prove your case?

Where should you advertise to reach prime prospects?

When is the best time to reach them?

Each of these five "W's" and one "H" will lead you to a dozen more, after your first pull at the ball of string.

The team captain of your six faithful serving men is Mr. Why. If you aspire to write compelling copy or be a marketer with a Midas touch, ask at least one good "why?" every day and, like a dog with a bone, gnaw on it until you're satisfied.

Why is this product such a red-hot seller?

Why did this headline outpull the control by 60%?

Why is our renewal rate falling?

Why are our sales much higher in California?

Why do women comprise 80% of my practice?

Why do I want to take on this project?

**There Are No Boring Subjects,  
Only Boring Writers**

When you research a product, send your six faithful serving men into the field to inspect everything—look under every rock, poke into every closet, roam and rummage through back offices, interview the product's creators, best salespeople, enthusiastic customers and anyone else standing around.

Appoint Mr. Why as your lead detective. Instruct him to come back with at least seven times more information than you can use, and he will dump on your desk a gold miner's sack of fascinating factual nuggets, each of which will outweigh 100 airy adjectives.

Chisel away the encrusted dirt from your golden nuggets, refine them into gleaming insights, hammer them into logical sequence, fasten them to reader benefits, then polish and polish until your fingers ache, and you may create a glittering necklace of persuasion that seduces the eye, charms the imagination, and dazzles the reader with so much human interest that it is indeed easier to read than skip.

Like gold in many forms, your copy will not only attract attention, but

simultaneously trigger a lust for possession.

***"Curiosity. Advice to copywriters. Curiosity."***

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



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## BULLET #15

### The Secret of the Monkey's Fist

*Perhaps the most effective  
selling strategy ever discovered*

Dear Marketing Top Gun:

When I was a young, inept copywriter, I felt acutely ashamed of my lack of skill. I craved respect in my craft yet reeked of mediocrity. I was determined to better myself by learning from the best.

That's easier to do in New York City than just about anywhere else on earth because so many outstanding people in every field work in New York.

Reaching beyond my grasp, I applied for a job with the legendary copywriter and direct marketing agency boss Tom Collins. My interview with the great man took place in his office, after hours.

I can still see him now, so friendly and courteous to a copy cub so beneath

his level. Leafing through my portfolio, he politely searched for something encouraging to say about my mundane samples. Finding nothing to compliment in my headlines, he plowed into body copy.

As he read, I glanced around his office and stared out his window, feeling that my future as a copywriter loomed as dark as the New York night. I had been rejected for other jobs with other masters, and the pattern was about to repeat.

Sure enough, he told me in a very considerate way that I wasn't ready to make it in his agency. "Maybe sometime in the future," he said, as he closed my portfolio and handed it back.

However, the experience did prove to be a turning point in my career. That's because, during the interview, as I looked around his office, I noticed a little sign on his desk, carved in wood. It said, "*Advertising Is Hard.*"

"You're not kidding," I thought.

For several years, I had found copywriting exasperatingly difficult. Nobody seemed able to teach me a simple, logical way to produce outstanding copy consistently. It was all so subjective. I never knew where to begin an assignment. I had nary a clue about how to develop an ad into a powerhouse of persuasion. So of course I harbored no dreams of shattering response records. My lowly standard was, "If I can get this past the copy chief, I'll feel so relieved." But even that often proved to be an exercise in frustration.

There were few good books on the subject. One I remember was the Vic Schwab classic, *How to Write a Good Advertisement*, which I bought in a bookstore on my lunch hour when I was feeling particularly desperate for guidance. An excellent book, it extolled a list of "100 good headlines," but, as I would learn, most of them, even back then, had already become tired old formulas that no longer worked in the real world. (After extensive testing, I wouldn't dream of using 90 of those 100 headlines today. They would bomb.)

I could find no easy, repeatable path to success. Even worse, here I was, sitting in the office of a legendary copywriter, someone I fervently hoped could make my career easier, but whose blunt motto turned out to be "*Advertising Is Hard.*"

"This man is a legend," I thought. "If it's hard for him, it's hopeless for me."

I have always enjoyed walking. After this failed interview, I said to myself, "Maybe I should get a job as a mailman. I could walk my route each day, stay physically fit, deliver mail and derive fulfillment in life purely from my family and spare-time activities."

### **Don't Laugh, But...**

...I actually went so far as picking up an employment application at the post office, only to be told that: (1) they were not hiring, and (2) if they ever did start hiring again, thousands of names were ahead of me on the waiting list.

This was an unhappy time for me. But when life knocks you down, you face a decision: either *give up* or *get up*, dust yourself off and try again.

In my case I had no choice. I had a young family, a medically involved daughter, and we needed an income and health insurance.

Then, not long after my interview flop with Tom Collins and reading his little sign, something in me snapped, a second wind filled my sails and, since the post office wouldn't have me, I vowed, "*I am going to make copywriting easier if it's the last thing I do.*"

And that's what I did. Ever since that night almost 40 years ago, I have devoted myself to uncovering easier ways to trigger outstanding results in advertising. I thank my lucky stars that nobody fired me until I got the hang of

it. It did take me several more years of trial and error, of scientifically tracking the results of hundreds and then thousands of campaigns, of studying under various masters and great copy chiefs, learning their tips and tricks. In time my snowball-size skill started a slow roll downhill, eventually picked up speed and turned into something considerable.

The most important lesson I learned along the way was that almost anything in life can be greatly improved with time and persistence. Almost always, there's no reason to remain hopeless.

Eventually I succeeded in finding so many ways to trigger outstanding results in advertising that, ever since those early days, I have almost never failed to deliver outside results for my clients, offering them not one but a variety of ways to beat their control packages and ads, usually by wide margins of 25 to 100 percent or more and sometimes, when their ads were weak, by several hundred percent.

Among the most powerful master strategies I ever learned is the one I will share today, *The Secret of the Monkey's Fist*.

In every sale, either in person or in an advertisement, there are at least two sales that have to be made, not just one. This is true of anything you sell, and the sooner you realize this, the sooner you can become a master at selling anything, in person or in print.

The main sale, of course, is the product or service you ultimately want to sell. But before you can even get a chance to sell your main product, you must first *sell your prospect on giving you an audience*.

That is known as the sale before the sale. In short, you must sell the chance to sell. This will become clear in a moment.

I learned this secret from one of the greatest salespeople who ever lived, the

legendary life insurance salesman Frank Bettger (rhymes with "catcher").

Bettger was such a crummy salesman that he came close to quitting before he stumbled upon one of the most powerful strategies for selling anything. He later revealed it in one of the all-time best-selling classics of salesmanship, *How I Raised Myself from Failure to Success in Selling*. (I love that title. It's exactly the same "oaf to success" road I had walked.)

Bettger discovered this strategy on his vacation, while standing on the deck of a ship about to dock in Miami. Bettger noticed that the ropes needed to moor a great ship to the dock are tremendous. They are very long and as thick as a man's thigh. He wondered how any seaman, no matter how strong, could ever lift such a thick rope, let alone hurl it so that it would reach the pier.

### **So He Decided to Watch How It's Done...**

He discovered that the crew doesn't even try to throw the heavy rope, known as a "hawser." Instead, he saw a solitary crewman hurl a little iron ball, called a "monkey's fist," which was attached to a thin rope about the size of a clothes line.

He tossed this monkey's fist to a longshoreman standing on the pier, waiting to receive it.

When the longshoreman caught the little iron ball, he started to haul in the thin rope attached to it. This thin rope, in turn, was attached to the huge hawser, which Bettger then saw moving through the water as the fellow on the dock hauled it in. And that's how the big, unwieldy hawser gets tied to the moorings on the pier.

Throwing the hawser was too big a first step for any sailor, just as it's too big a first step for any marketer to approach ice-cold prospects and instantly persuade them to buy.

So this is the little-known but amazingly reliable formula for opening—and then closing—many, many more sales, in person or in direct response advertising. *Make the first step for your prospect irresistibly easy to take.*

This means that whether you're selling in the mail, on the Net or in space, you shouldn't start off trying to sell your product. Break it into smaller steps. As a first step, offer something that makes it easy, irresistibly easy, for your prospect to say yes.

### **An Example from the Great Claude Hopkins**

Claude Hopkins, the Aristotle of advertising, described how in the early days of the twentieth century, door-to-door salesmen would go through a neighborhood, knocking on doors, to sell coffee.

Sounds like a tough way to make a living, doesn't it? Imagine how many doors would be slammed in your face by the end of the day?

After experimenting with many different presentations, the coffee marketers found an incredibly easy and effective way to sell. They "threw the monkey's fist"—made the first step in the sales process irresistibly easy. It was so simple...

The salesman would knock on the door. When it was opened, usually by the woman of the house, the salesman (almost all salespeople were men in those days) would NOT launch into a sales pitch about coffee.

Instead, he would say, "Good afternoon, madam. Today I bring you a special gift, a free half-pound of our finest coffee. Please accept it with my compliments. In about a week, I'll return to see what you think about it. Fair enough?"

How could she refuse?

Next week, he'd return and, instead of asking for an order, would surprise her with another gift, which could be hers free if she placed her first order.

Making the sale in this way was so easy, because the salesman made the first step easy. He completely bypassed the automatic rejection he would surely get if he tried to strong-arm prospects with a hyped-up sales pitch. As Hopkins put it, "Any apparent effort to sell creates corresponding resistance." Therefore, do NOT approach your prospects, either in person or in print, with an obvious effort to sell.

There are countless ways you can achieve this gentle, seductive first step in your marketing. The free sample of the actual product is one way. A magalog or direct mail letter that reveals interesting, valuable information right in the copy is another. A free checkup, audit, analysis, first lesson, consultation, etc., are yet more. So is an enclosed quiz or treasure hunt or free informational guide on a topic of high interest to your prospects. The Gary Halbert, dollar-bill- stuck-to-the-top-of-the-letter is still another. The variations are endless.

### **The Best Way to Do This, Most of the Time**

I have found that offering valuable, free information that targets your prime prospects is the most versatile, economical and usually most effective execution of this strategy. It works so well because it not only makes it much easier to *open* the sale with your best prospects, but also sets you up perfectly to *close* it.

For example, if you sell a carpet-cleaning or housekeeping service, you can offer your prospects a free booklet entitled, "*How to Keep Your House Free of Health-Destroying Dust Mites.*"

If you sell a course on Internet marketing, you can offer a free e-book such as, "*The 100 Most Successful E-mail Advertisements Ever Written.*"

If you manage a real estate office in, say, Marietta, you can offer a free *"Trend Report—Sale Prices of Marietta Homes, Condos and Co-Ops over the Last Six Months."*

If you're a chiropractor, you can advertise a free guide, *"My Seven Best Secrets for Having a Pain-Free Back in Just Six Weeks."*

If you're a headhunter, you can offer a free report, *"How to Launch Your Career on the Fast Track—By Getting Today's Best Employers to Call You."*

If you sell a course on public speaking, you can offer a free cassette, *"Secrets of Getting a Standing Ovation Almost Every Time You Speak."*

If you sell a magazine on parenting, you might offer a premium, *"How to Raise a Happier, More Confident Child—Startling New Research from Harvard Psychologists."*

All these examples "throw the monkey's fist"—they make it much easier for your prospects to lower their guard, give you their time and allow you into their busy lives. This is how you make the sale before the sale.

It's the same as courtship. You would never dream of walking up to a total stranger and asking him or her to marry you. The first step might just be a flirtatious conversation, which leads to a date, which leads to more dates, which lead to an engagement, which leads to a marriage proposal, which leads to a lifelong relationship. Trying to race to the ultimate destination from an ice-cold start just won't work.

Romance your prospects in the same way. Make the first step easy, nonthreatening, enjoyable, *irresistible!* Then make the next small step the same way, and keep going until you're both in love.

Perhaps this bit of doggerel will help you remember the principle...

*Whether you'd like to dock a ship,  
Sell a product or be kissed,  
Just follow this little tip—  
First throw the monkey's fist!*

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



P.S. If you know any copywriters or marketers who would enjoy this *Bullet*, just send them an email with this link: <http://bencivengabullets.com/bullets.asp?id=15>

P.P.S. Your e-mail address will never be shared. And if you ever wish to unsubscribe, just let me know and I will vanish from your life like a shadow in the night.

To Visit Gary's Arsenal (*Bullets Archive*), [click here](#).

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## BULLET #16

### The “Fuzzy Dice” Secret For Exploding Your Sales

*How to Find “Hot Pockets” of Customers  
Eagerly Looking for What You Sell*

Dear Marketing Top Gun:

A master salesman, one of the most successful in America, once told me that selling is simple, unless you make it complicated. He then taught me his greatest secrets for keeping it simple.

I found that his secrets worked like a charm in advertising as well, because advertising is nothing more than *multiplied salesmanship*—one good salesperson working his or her magic with thousands, even millions, at once. In fact, it's this mighty multiplication factor that empowers advertising to rapidly enrich Top Guns who know how to use the simple secrets shared in these *Bullets*.

So let's take a look at one of the greatest secrets this wise old salesman taught

me. Just as I did, you'll find it's one of the easiest things you can do to increase your response. It seems so obvious, you may well think that you're doing it already. But let me assure you of two things...

First, 98% of all marketers, even savvy ones who think they may know this, can do a *much* better job of applying it (most have barely scratched the surface). Second, once you do apply this in your market, you'll be able to attract customers the way a large magnet draws metal filings. Or, merrily mixing my metaphors (I love doing that), you'll be tossing your hook right in front of a ravenously hungry school of fish.

So what's the big secret?

Well, the wise old salesman told me *you'll corral lots more customers by intercepting them wherever they are looking for someone like you.*

Sounds simple, and it is, but we often complicate it to the point where we're not doing this at all. Let me illustrate with an example I came upon recently, which I've dubbed...

### **The Fuzzy Dice Secret**

My best "aha!" moment last year hit me when I learned the smartest way to sell just about anything online.

I learned it from Andy Jenkins, a supersuccessful internet entrepreneur who's created a sprawling online empire of more than 80 sites that sell everything from information to specialized electronics to medieval suits of armor at \$7,000 a pop.

For months, I had been trying to figure out for a business partner the best way to sell products online. Where to begin? What marketing strategy would work best? Should we create one big website selling all our products—in effect,

an online catalog?

Or would separate websites for each main product be better? And how should we drive traffic—with ezines, Google ads, search optimization, banner ads, blogs, podcasts, a little of everything, or what?

The marketing questions seemed endless, and the answers elusive...until Andy clarified everything by sharing what I have come to call "The Fuzzy Dice Secret."

Andy explained his approach in an interview conducted by internet guru and my friend, Ken McCarthy, whose System Club features excellent interviews with successful internet marketers. Andy explained that all his years of testing have taught him the smartest way to sell anything online. And that is, to apply the same secret of the wise old salesman—intercept your customers precisely where they are looking for someone like you.

Applied to the internet, this means *matching your selling process to the way people search online.*

Let's say, for example, that you sell car accessories. Now, you could create a website, and a series of Google and banner ads, trumpeting your product line, "Car Accessories."

Logical enough, right? It's what most companies do. Trouble is, people don't go online searching for "a product line." Almost nobody searches for "Car Accessories." That's way too broad. When I typed those words into my search bar, I got more than 49 *million* results! If I were a thorough shopper and wanted to check out each of these vendors for just 20 seconds apiece, I'd have to sit at my computer 24/7 for the next 31 years (without a single bathroom break)!

More than 49,000,000 advertisers are offering their wares under "car accessories," yet almost nobody searches for "car accessories."

But people do go online searching for a *single product*.

For example, they go online searching for "Fuzzy Dice" (you know, those tacky, spongy dice that dangle gaudily from the rearview mirror).

Or they'll search specifically for "Leather Steering Wheel Covers." Or "Car Stereo Subwoofers." Or "Mercedes Replacement Hood Ornaments," etc.

Since that's how people search, that's how you should sell—with a mini website devoted exclusively to Fuzzy Dice. Or another devoted to Leather Steering Wheel Covers. Or another offering Car Stereo Subwoofers, or Replacement Hood Ornaments, etc.

Sell the way your prospects buy—with a rifle shot like "Fuzzy Dice," not a shotgun like "Car Accessories." Like the wise old salesman said, *intercept your hot prospects where they are looking for someone like you!*

There are some exceptions, of course. If you've got megabucks, you could try to become the next "horizontal" one-stop superstore, ala Amazon, Staples, or Wal-Mart. But at this stage of the internet's development, you'd probably go broke trying to muscle your way into dominance of any broad categories, even the medium-sized ones.

And, sure, it's usually desirable to have a "hub" or what I call a "kitchen sink" website, where you summarize everything your company is about, as well as all your offshoots and products, for those who happen to stumble onto your site and want an overview.

But if you really want to hear your cash register endlessly murmur its happiest mantra (*ca-ching!*), you must develop for each star product its own separate mini site, supported by equally vertical, dedicated, and specific Google ads and ezine marketing campaigns that drive traffic directly to that site, where

prospects are then greeted with an in-depth sales presentation focused exclusively on that single product, fully explaining its compelling raison d'être.

This is exactly what my client and I wound up doing, and the program of narrow, "rifle-shot" campaigns we've developed is working beautifully.

Please listen to the wise old salesman...

Don't sell a "stock market newsletter." Sell a special report on "Three oil service stocks that may soar in the next 12 months because of the worsening worldwide oil squeeze," and give me all the reasons to buy into that story.

Don't sell "retirement planning." That phrase brings up more than 41 million results! Create a website offering a video on "How to Retire to Mexico and Live Like Royalty on \$500 a Month or Less." Run a Google ad with the same headline, and everyone searching for "retirement in Mexico" can easily find you and respond.

Don't sell "gourmet foods." Sell, "Imported Smoked Scottish Salmon," and give me the full sales pitch on why it's the best I can buy.

Don't sell a report on "Hospital Trends." Sell a report on "How the New HIPAA Regs Will Change Your Hospital Emergency Room Procedures in the Next Six Months and What You Must Do Now to Reduce Your Potential Liability."

Don't sell "insurance." I'll find you faster and buy from you a lot more quickly if you run a Google ad that leads me to a website offering "Flood Insurance for Homes in the Hamptons" (where I live). Why? Because that's what I was just searching for online recently, not "insurance"!

That's it, the secret of how to sell anything online. Go vertical and go deep. Use highly specialized mini sites dedicated to a single star product, and deliver

an in-depth, fully developed sales presentation to capture your prospects and convert them into customers. Once they are customers, you can then branch out, offering related follow-up sales pitches, via specialized ezines, which lead them to other highly targeted mini sites. And just keep repeating the process for every major product or service you want to sell.

Highly specialized, single-product, vertical mini sites automatically optimize your position in searches. They also make more people click on your links because, unlike most others in your market, you'll seem to specialize in exactly what that searcher came online to find. For the same reason, your highly specific Google headlines will trigger higher ad placement and higher click-through rates.

The internet is the ultimate vertical selling machine, a niche marketer's dream, but only if you use it right. The general rule: *The sharper your focus, the better your results.*

Don't sell horizontally, sell vertically. Don't sell "Car Accessories." Sell "Fuzzy Dice." That's how you'll intercept the "hot pockets" of customers eagerly searching for someone just like you.

### **Here's Another Example...**

...from another master marketer, Jeff Paul, whose Tape of the Month Program also interviews star marketers. I remember that Jeff once interviewed John K. Harris, chairman and CEO of JK Harris & Co., which helps taxpayers resolve problems with the IRS.

Earlier in his career, John was an ambitious car salesman who knew how to apply the wise old salesman's secret of *intercepting your prospects where they are looking for you.*

At one point, he was hired to help turn around a failing Lincoln Mercury

dealer whose sales were 48th out of 52 dealers in Florida.

By the end of the first year, he moved that dealer from 48th to 9th. Within 18 months, he brought the dealership from a \$250,000 loss to a \$1.8 million profit.

How on earth did he do that in such a competitive "commodity" type of business as selling cars?

He did many things right, but probably the most important was *intercepting his potential prospects precisely where they look for a new car.*

When he first arrived at the dealership, he saw that it was spending a lot of money on TV advertising every month. *But people don't shop for cars on TV*, and John knew it. From his experience as a car salesman, he knew that people sometimes take a long time to decide whether or not to buy a new car. But once they reach a firm decision, they move fast and almost always buy within the next 10 days. And once that 10-day "buying clock" starts to tick, the first place they look for a car is *not* on TV, but in their local newspaper. That's where prospects know they will find the biggest selection of car ads.

So John axed the dealership's TV budget and boosted its *newspaper* ad budget from \$5,000 to \$25,000 a month.

With that master stroke, as well as teaching his salespeople how to close the flood of new prospects that started pouring in the door, he turned that dealership around from a \$250,000 loss to a \$1.8 million profit in just 18 months.

Like a shrewd general who knows exactly where to deploy his greatest troop strength to turn the tide of battle, John redirected—and significantly increased—his ad budget to *intercept his prospects precisely where they were looking for someone like him.*

Advertising is simple, unless you make it complicated. First find out exactly

how, where, and when your hottest prospects go about shopping for your type of product or service. Then simply go there and intercept them just when their wallets are out and they're ready to buy.

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



P.S. If you know any copywriters or marketers who would enjoy this *Bullet*, just send them an email with this link: <http://bencivengabullets.com/bullets.asp?id=16>

P.P.S. Your e-mail address will never be shared. And if you ever wish to unsubscribe, just let me know and I will vanish from your life like a shadow in the night.

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## BULLET #17

### How to Name Your Product

*...including 21 examples of great names*

Dear Marketing Top Gun,

The best product names have a *benefit built right into them*.

For example, *Kleenex* embodies the benefit of clean.

So does *Mr. Clean*.

I love the name *Swiffer*, the dust picker-upper that swiftly glides over your floors and under your coffee table to snare the dust bunnies.

*Health & Healing*, the newsletter from Healthy Directions, is a great one.

For an oven cleaner—*Easy Off*.

For a car window shade—*Way Cool*.

For weather stripping that blocks winter drafts under your front door—*Draft Dodgers*.

*Fat Blaster, Wonder Bread, Mr. Peanut, Arrid Anti-Perspirant, Vein Away Cream*—great names.

I like my own company's name—*Accountable Advertising, Inc.*

A new product I recently came across is named *Bites*. These are bite-sized oatmeal and jam treats from Quaker Oats. A splendid little name, *Bites*. Quaker Oats is already selling 5 million *Bites* a day.

I love the name *Blue Blockers*, Joe Sugarman's famous sunglasses that shield your eyes from harmful blue rays.

If you're well-known in your field, consider naming your product after yourself, as did Ransom Eli Olds with his *Oldsmobile* and also his company, *Reo Motors*, named from his initials. The benefit here is that your market respects you and knows that if you've put your name on a product, you're proud of it.

Louis Rukeyser could not have chosen a better name for his newsletter than *Louis Rukeyser's Wall Street*. It quickly became the most successful launch in the history of investment advisory publishing.

If you're in a service business, it can likewise pay to name your company after yourself, as clients like dealing with the person whose name is on the front door.

Whenever you come up with a good name, be sure to do a name search, so you don't step on anyone's toes, triggering angry cease-and-desist letters or a costly lawsuit. If your search reveals that your name is unique, lock it up

quickly. Have your attorney apply for a trademark.

Always keep your eyes peeled for good names and jot them down.

While driving recently, Pauline and I spotted a paint store with a name we liked—*The Fresh Coat Paint Store*. It immediately planted the idea of how nice a room or house looks with a fresh coat of paint.

Just as we do, make it a game, a hobby, to collect great product names. Your list can goad you to greatness when you need inspiration.

Another time while driving, we passed a dentist's office in the Hamptons, where we live. His sign: *Gentle Dental*.

### **The True Story of "Painless Parker"**

Speaking of dentists, have you ever heard of "Painless Parker"?

You'll enjoy this.

Back in the early 1900s, there lived a famous dentist and flamboyant pitchman named Edgar R. "Painless" Parker. He looked like Colonel Sanders and behaved like P. T. Barnum.

He wore a top hat and a necklace made of teeth he had pulled from his patients' heads. To attract new business, if you can imagine this, he crisscrossed the countryside with a combination circus-and-dental-clinic.

He would roll into town, with his circus-and-dental-clinic in tow, proclaiming "*Painless Dentistry!*"

He'd set up his dentist's chair on the bed of a horse-drawn wagon parked in the center of town, and hired a brass band to play as he pulled teeth. The twofold

purpose of the brass band was to attract a crowd and drown out the moans of patients, who had been plied with whisky and other pain-reducing concoctions.

For his outrageous antics, he incited the holy wrath of his fellow dentists. The American Dental Association denounced him as "a menace to the dignity of the profession" and vowed to put an end to his shameless promotions, which made headlines and attracted scores of patients wherever he went.

The dental establishment hatched a strategy. They accused him of false advertising since he claimed that his dentistry was *painless*, and no dentistry could truly be called "painless." If they could legally deny him the right to promote "painless" dentistry, they'd severely undercut demand for his services. *At last, the deacons of dentistry had their rogue treed and surrounded!*

But the wily pitchman outfoxed his tormentors again. Parker legally changed his first name to "Painless," and they couldn't do a thing except gnash their teeth. Emboldened, "Painless Parker" opened a chain of some 30 West Coast dental offices, all featuring his ingenious name which proved so appealing, he employed 70 dentists and grossed \$3 million per year, quite a fortune in his day.

*Never underestimate the power of a good name—one with a built-in benefit!*

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



P.S. If you know any copywriters or marketers who would enjoy this *Bullet*, just send them an email with this link: <http://bencivengabullets.com/bullets.asp?id=17>

P.P.S. If you come across any great product names, I'd love to hear about them.

In a future issue, I'll publish the best, to help you build your own list. Be sure to include your full name so I can give you credit.

P.P.P.S. Your e-mail address will never be shared. And if you ever wish to unsubscribe, just let me know and I will vanish from your life like a shadow in the night.

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## BULLET #18

### A Simple 7-Step Formula for Succeeding Online

Dear Marketing Top Gun,

If you want the easiest, surest and most rewarding way I've found to succeed online, here is the simple 7-step formula:

***Carve out a niche.*** Be known for something specific. Use the rifle, not the shotgun. When in doubt, go *narrower* than others in your field. For specific examples, see *Bullet #16*, "The Fuzzy Dice Secret for Exploding Your Sales." You can find it in the *Bullet Archive* (link below).

***Give something valuable away free.*** Within your narrow specialty, create an ezine (or course, collection of tips, series of mistakes to avoid, seasonal recipes, any regular communication) that demonstrates your expertise and is so helpful, interesting and informative, your prospects will *want* to keep getting it regularly.

***Promote your free ezine every way you can***—in Google ads, articles you write

for the media, speeches before trade groups, press releases, radio interviews, communications with your customers, take-ones at related retail outlets, space ads, newspaper classifieds, direct mail, co-ops and swaps with others in your industry, etc. Explore any and all avenues.

***Capture email addresses.*** Never give away your valuable free tips on your website! *Share them only in exchange for an email address when someone signs up for your ezine.* Consider offering one of your best free tips in the form of a free report to induce people to sign up. This automatically gives you permission—and the means—to stay in touch with your market, building your most valuable direct marketing asset, your list.

***Pile on the value.*** Work hard to make your free ezine so valuable and interesting, your prospects eagerly open it. As in romance, woo your new prospects with your bouquets of insight and pearls of wisdom. Don't be shy about opening up and getting personal. Become a friend. Resist the urge to keep lunging at them with sales lust. Your goal: get your prospects into the habit of *welcoming* your emails like love letters because they are so valuable, useful and interesting...not in the habit of *deleting* them on sight because they are self-serving sales pitches. *The rule:* establish trust before you sell with lust.

***Never sell hard in your ezine or free course. Instead, dance the two-step.*** The biggest mistake even savvy marketers make in their ezines is *selling too much, too soon, too hard, and too often.* Let your ezine be an oasis of value in a desert of hype. Always, and especially in your first several communications, let the value of your free information far outweigh your sales copy.

Eventually, after you've proved your value to readers and it's time to sell something, dance the two-step...

**First**, mention that you have a great product that enhances the valuable, free tip you've just shared in your ezine. To learn more, "click here."

**Second**, when readers click on the link, they land on a dedicated page elsewhere, where you can sell your product or service as hard as you want.

In other words, never sell too hard, too often or too early *in your ezine!* Doing so makes your reader perceive it as a vehicle of hype, not a trusted vehicle of value.

Once your prospects categorize your ezine as sales hype, you will lose them by the score. Game over! Their door will shut as closed as a coffin, as tight as a tomb. Your emails will bounce off their mailboxes like corks off granite. In your eagerness to sell, you will have trained your best prospects to shun you. You will have taught the legions of people who were ready to trust you, who had hoped you were different, to conclude that you're just like all the rest—just another "me-first" marketer pushing too hard to sell, not serve.

Once you've painted yourself into this portrait, your identity remains fixed. Every time your prospects see your name on an email, they'll automatically think "sales pitch" and most will delete you on sight. You will have committed list suicide. Don't make this fatal mistake!

Remember—use your ezine to deliver pure, rare, refreshing, beautiful *value*—interesting, useful tips that your market is yearning for and delighted to receive. Introduce sales messages only occasionally, briefly, lightly, as I've described above, using the soft two-step—tying a brief mention of your product into the valuable tip you've just shared, then using a link to a hard-selling page that resides elsewhere.

### **A Little Secret for Boosting Your Sales Up to 400%**

***For even better results, capture their physical addresses.*** Once your prospects have a relationship with your ezine, offer them another free gift. It must not only be valuable, but *something you have to send to their home*, such as a

report, CD, DVD, paperback book, newsletter, cool poster, free sample, gift certificate, etc.

Why something physical? Because this gives you the right to ask for—and get—their physical address. And why is *that* so important? Two reasons...

First, a physical gift normally has higher perceived value than, say, an ebook. But far more important, getting a physical address enables you to send a compelling direct mail promotion with your gift, and to follow up later with additional direct mail.

And why is *that* important? Let me relay the experience of my friend Gary Halbert, from whom I originally heard this idea.

Gary reports that sending your direct mail promotion to the physical addresses of prospects who originally signed up online usually pulls up to 400% higher sales than the same copy delivered on the web only.

\* \* \*

And that's all there is to it. Repeat these 7 simple steps for every major product or service you want to sell.

Are there other roads to Rome? Of course! But for me and others I respect in direct response, this has been our express lane.

This simple, 7-step plan is a good illustration of what these *Bullets* are—highly concentrated packets of knowledge...small, fast and powerful, like *Bullets*.

So saddle up, marketing gunslinger, and ride out to claim your stake of the wild web frontier. Yes, the hills are full of renegades, bandits, and wolves. But you will prevail. *You, Top Gun, are packin' better ammo!*

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



P.S. If you know any copywriters or marketers who would enjoy this *Bullet*, just send them an email with this link: <http://bencivengabullets.com/bullets.asp?id=18>

P.P.S. Your e-mail address will never be shared. And if you ever wish to unsubscribe, just let me know and I will vanish from your life like a shadow in the night.

To Visit Gary's Arsenal (*Bullets* Archive), [click here](#).

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## **BULLET #19**

### **The Most Important 9-Word Sentence in Marketing History**

Dear Marketing Top Gun,

If I were on my deathbed about to wheeze my last breath, and you asked me to sum up in a single sentence the most important marketing secret I could bequeath to you before I kick the bucket (or bedpan), here is what I would whisper in your ear, hopefully without giving you anything contagious.

It's a 9-word sentence I first read in the book *Reality in Advertising* by copywriting genius Rosser Reeves. He said that he had learned it from a legendary copywriter whom he didn't name. This one sentence made fortunes for Reeves' clients, as well as my own, and for scores of other marketers wise enough to apply it rigorously, as I hope you will.

Ready?

Bend close now as I whisper. Oops, let me raise myself up a bit first. OK, here goes...

***A gifted product is mightier than a gifted pen.***

That's it—the 9-word secret so powerful that it has built more fortunes than any other principle in marketing.

To explain its profound insight, let me quote advertising luminary Bill Bernbach, creative director of Doyle Dane Bernbach, the renowned ad agency responsible for the brilliant and enormously successful Volkswagen Beetle ads of the 1960s, voted the all-time greatest general advertising campaign in history.

Bernbach was also named No. 1 on *Advertising Age's* 20th century honor roll of advertising's most influential people.

Said Bernbach, "The magic is in the product," not in the copywriter's pen. Or as he put it another way, "Advertising doesn't create a product advantage. It can only convey it...No matter how skillful you are, you can't invent a product advantage that doesn't exist."

If you're involved in marketing in any way, this 9-word sentence may well give you an "Aha!" moment, because it instantly clarifies the roles of everyone involved.

### **The Surest Road to Riches for Marketers**

For example...

***If you are the client (the advertiser)***, it means that it's *your* job, not your copywriter's or ad agency's, to come up with a brilliant product, one with a clearcut, built-in, immediately understandable, unique, and highly desirable advantage.

It means that if your "research and development department" responsible for coming up with such blockbuster product advantages resides only in your copywriter's keyboard, you're already in big trouble.

It means that if you're settling for a "me-too" product and hoping that a gifted copywriter will carry you on his or her back to the winner's circle, you're kidding yourself. *Your product is the horse; your copywriter is only the jockey.* Yes, good jockeys are worth their weight in gold. But champion race horses are worth much more. It's your job to breed champion race horses.

Remember that most businesses make real money only on *repeat sales*. While a good copywriter can make a prospect *hopeful* enough to try a product, he or she can't make that customer *delighted* enough to buy it again. Only you and your product can do that.

Our 9-word rule means it's your mission to come up with a product so inherently superior that, as soon as it's effectively explained, demonstrated, or sampled, your prospects have no conclusion to draw except "*I want it!*"

Create "*Wow!*" products like this, add in great customer service, and something magical happens. Your customers become your auxiliary sales force—a large, unpaid, ever-growing army of raving fans who extol your product to others, causing your market and profits to grow far more effectively than any copywriter can.

This is where real marketing magic is born—*in the product itself*.

### **What If You're a Copywriter?**

*If you are the copywriter*, our 9-word rule means that the star of your ad should always be your product and how it uniquely benefits your prospects.

It means that *your* job is to research the product thoroughly to uncover its unique advantages. Research—deep research—is the launch pad of copywriting breakthroughs.

It means that you should never even *think* about writing a word of copy until you've done your homework and become an expert in the product and its market.

It means that you should begin every assignment like an investigative reporter, asking your client and his or her best salespeople a torrent of questions, starting with these 10...

1. Why is this product made the way it is?
2. What consumer problems, desires, and needs is it designed for?
3. What's special about it—why does it fulfill a consumer's needs better than the competition?
4. Who says so besides you?
5. What are your strongest proof elements to make your case believable?
6. What are all the product's best features and how does each translate into a consumer benefit?
7. If you had unlimited funds, how would you improve this product?
8. Who are its heavy users—the 20 percent who generate 80 percent of sales?
9. What irresistible offers might trigger an explosion in sales?
10. What premiums can be tossed into the mix to press your prospects' hot buttons?

Likewise, since the product itself is the star of your ad, you should fiercely resist all temptation to be clever, cute, or entertaining, all of which only call attention to *your* creativity and away from the star. Puns in headlines are advertising malpractice. As David Ogilvy warned—"If you spend your advertising budget entertaining the consumer, you're a bloody fool. Homemakers don't buy a new detergent because the manufacturer told a joke on television last night. They buy the new detergent because it promises a benefit."

## **The Secret of Getting Rich and Famous as a Copywriter**

If you're a direct response copywriter who seeks fortune and fame, knowing this 9-word truth will reward you immensely. Here's why...

Your career success is tied directly to the performance of the ads you write. Write for great products that drive consumers wild with desire, and their success will make you seem like a genius. Write for weak ones and, even when you do a respectable job, the smell of the product's failure will rub off on you.

Think of it this way. You are a jockey. If you want to win more races, by all means hone your craft. But even more important, learn how to spot and get yourself assigned to *faster horses*. That's a big part of building your reputation and career success.

You want your name associated with winners, not losers! Cultivating a jockey's eye for winners and then campaigning to ride them is one of the most rewarding skills you can develop.

As a jockey, you can't do the horse's job. You can't carry your horse across the finish line. The best you can do is guide your pony to win, using every trick of your craft. Even if you're a great jockey, if you're too often teamed with milkwagon nags, you'll be labeled a loser.

While you can't carry a flawed product—or a slow horse—on your back to glory, great products, like champion race horses, will put you in the winner's circle consistently.

And that will work wonders for your career. When you win, the entire industry notices. Even if your horse is a Secretariat, *you* will be credited as the brilliant jockey who rode him home to victory. You'll get a rep as a winner, a

hot hand—a Top Gun! If you work in an ad agency or in-house copy department, you will earn more generous raises, faster promotions, high praise at meetings—all the things that make work fun. If you are a freelancer, the demand for your services will rise exponentially, and you can start to command some of the highest fees and royalties in the profession.

All from hitching your fortunes to this potent 9-word insight—*a gifted product is mightier than a gifted pen.*

### **There Are Three Additional Benefits As Well...**

Learning to spot great products also forces you to see the world through the eyes of your prospects, which is the single most valuable trait you can cultivate as a marketer or copywriter.

In addition, knowing what great products look like and asking, "How can *this one* be better?" will inspire you to help your clients create much stronger products, making your counsel exceptional, perhaps even indispensable.

Moreover, as a copywriter, your life will be mercifully easier when you work with great and worthy products. When a product has a clear-cut, built-in, unique superiority, your ad often writes itself. As Bill Bernbach said, all you have to do is *convey* the advantage, not *create* it out of thin air.

Having to invent a non-existent product advantage puts a tremendous strain on you *because that's not your job!* You should not have to carry your horse!

Your job is to get the best possible ride out of your horse. If it's a milk-wagon nag, you're won't win any races...or the fortune and fame that follow.

Take my advice. Develop an eye for great products, those with a clear-cut, built-in, unique superiority supported by powerful proof elements. Then all you

have to do is focus your headline and body copy dramatically on that inherent superiority and the proof behind it and in no time, you'll find yourself atop a winner, galloping like the wind around the far turn and heading for home ahead of the pack, with the crowd going wild. Your biggest strategic question—what should I write about?—is already answered for you *by the product's unique advantage*. That unique advantage will, by itself, speed you to the winner's circle much of the time, which is where a Top Gun like you belongs.

To sum up, if you want to become a successful copywriter, hook up with brilliant products, focus your headlines and copy on their unique advantages, and let them carry you to glory.

And if you aspire to be a copywriting legend, learn to spot winners *and* become a master of your craft. In all of marketing, there is no combination more powerful than *a gifted product and a gifted pen!*

### **Here's a Little Rhyme to Help You Remember**

To be a master marketer, remind yourself again—  
*A gifted product is mightier than a gifted pen.*

\* \* \*

Well, after talking this through with you, I feel much better now. So what am I doing lying here in bed, whispering in your ear? The sun is shining...life is so beautiful...and time's a-wastin'! There are ambitious jockeys to coach...fast horses to cheer...thrilling races to catch...and big money to win. Hand me my socks and shoes, Top Gun, and *let's go!*

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



P.S. If you know any copywriters or marketers who would enjoy this *Bullet*, just send them an email with this link: <http://bencivengabullets.com/bullets.asp?id=19>

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## BULLET #20

### Controversy! Gunfire Erupts Over "9 Most Important Words in Marketing History"

Dear Marketing Top Gun,

My last *Bullet* revealed what I firmly believe is the most important sentence in marketing history.

That nine-word sentence is...

***A gifted product is mightier than a gifted pen.***

As I explained, this principle has built more fortunes than any other marketing insight and is the surest road to riches in business.

Why?

Because, as the great Bill Bernbach said, "The magic is in the product," not in the copywriter's pen. "Advertising doesn't create a product advantage. It can only convey it...No matter how skillful you are, you can't invent a product advantage that doesn't exist."

The better your product, the more persuasive your ad can be, and the bigger your marketing success. Clever copywriting technique is no substitute for a brilliant product. Consumers are too smart.

But soon after I fired off this *Bullet*, I heard sniper fire...and suddenly bullets were zinging around me! Pow! *There went my flowerpot!* Smash! *There went my lamp!* I had to duck for cover under my desk!

To some readers, especially a few copywriters, my *Bullet* had not only missed its target, but had gravely wounded a sacred cow. The part of my message that these readers took exception to was this advice to copywriters...

"Our 9-word rule means that the star of your ad should always be your product and how it uniquely benefits your prospects. It means that your job is to research the product thoroughly to uncover its unique advantages. Research—deep research—is the launchpad of copywriting breakthroughs."

The friendly fire triggered by this statement could be summed up this way...

Gary, you say that the *product* should be the star of the ad? No way! The *prospect* should always be the star of the ad! Making your product the centerpiece can be deadly dull, especially if you leave out the *prospect* and his or her wants!

**Top Guns, Hold Your Fire!!!**

Let me come out from under my desk (it's uncomfortable down here), and

you'll see we're still on the same side. No need for an armed insurrection!

The question of whether the *product* or the *prospect* should be the centerpiece of the ad is a needless choice and a common misunderstanding of what was preached by Rosser Reeves, the copywriting genius who created the *Unique Selling Proposition*, or "USP" strategy. The "USP" is probably the most successful and reliable mass marketing strategy ever created, and it's based squarely upon the nine-word sentence, ***A gifted product is mightier than a gifted pen.***

It teaches that, just as in a military campaign, when you create an advertising campaign, you must think about two separate issues—your strategy and your tactics.

By strategy, I mean the main message to be communicated—*the unique benefit, or combination of benefits, you want to emphasize, regardless of the execution.*

By tactics, I mean the ad's execution, or the way you want to present your message.

First you figure out your strategy (your message), and then you figure out your tactics (your execution). Approach your assignments this way, and you'll see that this makes copywriting a whole lot easier, and a lot more successful.

Sound tactics—putting the consumer front and center in the picture—are always necessary to win any advertising battle, and this includes all the proven techniques for capturing your prospect's attention, getting him or her interested, building desire, proving your case, making an irresistible offer, closing the sale, etc. And, sure, in all such instances—*on the level of execution*—the prospect should be front and center every step of the way: his or her problems, wants, desires, needs, objections, concerns, questions, etc.

But what Reeves teaches us is that you first need a strategy—a unique and powerful message—to win the war. *Always, always, always* decide on your ad's strategy first—***what message do you want to convey*** as you put the prospect in the picture? What unique benefit(s) can this product accomplish in your prospect's life?

Or to say it another way, putting the prospect front and center means answering his most obvious question as he encounters your ad: *how will this benefit me in a superior way compared with every other product making pitches for my business?*

If you have a gifted product—one that fills the consumer's wants better than other options—the answer will be much more persuasive than if you have only a gifted pen pouring out puffery about the prospect and his wants.

### **A Classic Example**

While working in Europe during the 1930s, it occurred to candy maker Forrest Mars to give chocolate a protective candy coating to stop it from melting. The idea became M&Ms candies. Because they didn't melt, they were adopted as a staple ration for U.S. forces during World War II.

After the war, Mars wanted to sell his candies via TV, the hottest new mass-marketing medium ever to come along. He hired Rosser Reeves.

If Reeves had been just a journeyman copywriter, he might well have taken the tired, traditional approach of selling M&Ms based on their wonderful chocolate taste. After all, that's what prospects want in chocolate, isn't it? And if you think of only your prospect, that's what you're going to focus on by default—the obvious wants that every other product talks about, and which the consumer has heard countless times and just screens out. This is why a message that focuses only on what the prospect wants almost never seems fresh, new, interesting, or compelling. The cruel fate of such ads is death by boredom,

because their message is all too familiar and not unique.

But Reeves knew better. He understood that before you write a word about your prospect's wants, you should research your *product's unique strengths...* and see if these unique benefits can be the foundation of a unique selling message. Your research might discover that your product satisfies a *different* prospect desire than you might have guessed at first, and this could give you a fresh, much more compelling message to feature in your advertising, one that makes you stand out from all the clutter *and* creates desire to buy the product.

So instead of writing puffery about rich chocolate taste, Reeves did his homework and discovered what's unique about M&Ms—thanks to their thin candy shell, they melt in your mouth, not in your hand.

Reeves' digging had uncovered a rich gold strike! It meant that millions of chocolate lovers could now buy a delicious treat and not worry that it would melt in inconvenient places. M&Ms wouldn't melt on store shelves (important in an era when many stores lacked air conditioning). Neither would they melt in your car's glove compartment, your kitchen cabinet, or your child's lunch box. They wouldn't make your fingers messy and stain your clothes. You could enjoy chocolate anywhere, anytime, without needing a napkin to wipe your fingers.

Aha! He had his core message—"M&M chocolate candies melt in your mouth, not in your hand!"

*Then and only then* did he start writing his executions—magnificent, utterly compelling TV ads demonstrating this core strategic message. These ads were so powerful that to this day, 50 years later, I can vividly remember one commercial in which the announcer showed two closed fists on the TV screen and asked, "Which hand holds the M&Ms?" Then he'd open one fist showing a melted mess of chocolate. He'd say, "Can't be this hand! Must be this one!"...and then he opened his other hand, showing prim little unmelted M&Ms. He'd end with a tagline, and I'm doing this from memory but believe it's accurate, "M&Ms are

the only chocolate candies that melt in your mouth, not in your hand."

Reeves delivered his unique message in ads that certainly put the consumer front and center in his executions. Compared to traditional candy advertising, the difference was that his ads were based on a superior strategy, one that *dramatized the uniqueness of the product* and the unique benefit it made possible for consumers. Based on that unique advantage, dramatized to the hilt from the prospect's point of view, tens of millions of moms started buying M&Ms to put into baby boomers' lunch boxes so they wouldn't mess up their clothes at school.

*It's the most reliable copywriting formula ever discovered:* A brilliant strategy (a message based on a product's unique benefits) + a compelling execution (an ad that shows how this unique benefit improves the prospect's life) = blockbuster success.

*Result:* the Mars candy company *minted* money!

Indeed, when Forrest Mars died in 1999, he was a multibillionaire, one of the richest men in the world. As of this writing, Mars remains a privately owned company and is one of the world's largest family-owned firms, grossing some \$18 billion a year in 65 countries. Several of Mr. Mars' descendants are *each* listed among the world's wealthiest individuals.

If you're a copywriter, imagine the opportunity, the vast wealth, that would have been lost if Reeves had thought only about putting the prospect in the picture—and didn't look first at what's uniquely strong about the product.

If you're an entrepreneur, imagine the opportunity, the vast wealth, that would have been lost if Mars had aspired only to create another me-too chocolate candy with no clear-cut, built-in, immediately understandable, unique, and highly desirable advantage.

But because both were smart and dreamed big, they teamed up to create the most powerful combination in all of marketing—a *gifted product* and a *gifted pen!*

**"What you say is more important  
than how you say it." —David Ogilvy**

In the end, *A gifted product is mightier than a gifted pen* means that a superior message is even more important than the way it is delivered, as most good copywriters can be counted on to do a halfway decent job of putting the prospect in the picture. But if their ads aren't based on a powerful strategic difference that a gifted product makes possible, prospects are smart enough to see the message for what it is—a weak, me-too product presented skillfully. *Result: no sale.*

It's why David Ogilvy counseled forcefully and repeatedly, "*What* you say in your advertising is more important than *how* you say it!"

Top Gun, I hope this clears the smoke. Holster your weapon, go back to your keyboard, and start figuring out what unique benefits your product offers. Then and only then commence your execution (and not of *me*, please!).

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



P.S. If you know any copywriters or marketers who would enjoy this *Bullet*, just send them an email with this link: <http://bencivengabullets.com/bullets.asp?id=20>

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## **BULLET #21**

### **Which Offer Pulled Best?**

*Plus, a checklist of proven offer ideas to boost your response*

Dear Marketing Top Gun:

Which of these three offers pulled best? Please note that all are identical but expressed differently...

- 1) 50% Off!
- 2) Half Price!
- 3) Buy One, Get One Free!

In my experience—as well as that of others who've tested this—#3 invariably wins. It's called the "*bogo*" offer—short for *buy one, get one free*.

Bob Stone, in his classic book *Successful Direct Marketing Methods*, reports that offer #3, the bogo, outpulled the other two by 40 percent.

## Do You Bogo?

The bogo works like magic in boosting response in virtually all markets where it's appropriate to give a discount. I say "appropriate" because if you're a neurosurgeon, running a "*buy one, get one free*" sale on brain operations would scare away more patients than you'd attract.

But for just about everyone else, it's exceptionally responsive. The classic way to bogo is to give away the exact same product for a purchase.

Or you can get creative...

When I was a copy chief, we had a client who sold gold and silver bullion, both of which were red-hot investments at the time. One of my star copywriters, Peter Betuel, came up with this great offer: "**Free ounce of silver for every ounce of gold you buy!**" Then as now, silver cost a tiny fraction of gold (about 1/60th), so this was easy for our client to do. But what a compelling offer it makes!

## Do You Gogo?

Another strong offer, especially around the holidays, is the bogo's first cousin, the *gogo*—short for "*give one, get one free*."

Example: Not long ago I wrote a renewal letter for a newsletter in which I'm a partner. To all our subscribers, we romanced what an ideal holiday gift the newsletter makes for family, friends, and business associates. The killer offer: "For every one-year subscription that you give to someone else, we'll extend your own subscription by a year." *Give one, get one free. Give two, get two free, etc.*

It worked like a dream. One man gave away 62 subscriptions, earning so

many one-year extensions, he'll have to leave them in his will.

### **Checklist of Proven Offer Ideas to Boost Your Response**

1. **The offer is the second-most-important component** in any direct marketing effort. The first is your list; the third is your copy. It follows that you should spend at least as much time tinkering with your offer as with your headline. Here are some ideas to spur your thinking...
2. **"Make your offer so great that only a lunatic would refuse to buy"**  
—Claude Hopkins.
3. **A believable reason for a special offer boosts response.** Was there a fire at your warehouse and you must liquidate everything? Is the manufacturer running a one-time-only promotion? Is your company's founder retiring and giving his best customers an unprecedented deal as a fond farewell? Are you celebrating a special anniversary or event, introducing a new service, or clearing out overstocked inventory? Are you tying your offer to a major news event or seasonal holiday on everyone's mind? Will you give a portion of your profits to a charity or to help victims of a recent disaster? Are you offering your product at cost for a limited time to win new customers? Whatever the reason, merchandise it to the hilt and your response will rise. If you don't have a reason to run a special offer, come up with one. A believable reason gives your offer *traction*.
4. **Never sell more than one thing at a time**, unless you have a catalog or a group of closely related items (for example, mystery books in a book club offer). In more than 40 years of copywriting, the most effective strategy I've ever found for advertising profitably is to sell one thing per ad and sell it *thoroughly*.
5. **However, always try to come up with a deluxe version of your basic**

**offer.** A percentage of your prospects will always opt for your highest-priced offer. Offering a deluxe option also subtly switches the decision your prospects face from a "yes-or-no" choice to an "A-or-B" choice, often resulting in a higher response and almost always a higher average sale.

Carrying this one step further, it often pays to make a *good, better, best* offer, such as the Franklin Mint has done with bronze, silver, or gold versions of its collectible coins and ingots. Magazines and newsletters do the same with one-year, two-year, and three-year options, featuring progressively generous discounts or additional premiums.

6. **Always test the same type of offer being repeated by your competitors.** Unless they're dummies (always possible), they're repeating it because it works. But also try something dramatically different along the lines of #2 above—so outrageously risk-free and irresistible, only a fool would refuse.
7. **Make your guarantee as strong as you can.** For example, I've found that longer-term guarantees *reduce* refunds! In other words, a one-year, full money-back guarantee not only gives your prospect more confidence when considering an order, triggering higher response, but also results in fewer refunds than a one-, three-, or six-month guarantee. A five-year guarantee works better still. These longer terms allow a disappointed customer to feel that he has plenty of time to get around to returning the item. Most of the time, he never does.
8. **Test a price ending in 7.** My friend, the legendary marketer and copywriter Ted Nicholas, has tested pricing extensively. He reports that prices ending in the number 7 work better than any other number. (Pricing is its own major subject, and there are so many pointers I'd like to share, I'll cover them in a separate *Bullet*. But I couldn't resist sharing this gem from Ted.)
9. **"Till forbid" is where the largest treasure is buried!** In any business,

repeat business is where the real money lies. That's why it's usually much smarter to sell an *ongoing product or service* than a one-shot. Whatever your business, try to figure out how you can market it as a club, a membership, a newsletter, a periodic maintenance service, or some other continuity relationship.

Better still, have your new customers pay by credit card and give you their permission to bang it every month, quarter, or other regular interval. You'll never find an easier way to make money than when your customer is on an automatic repurchase plan. It puts *you* in control of initiating the next regular purchase, instead of relying on your customer to remember. In this way you convert onetime sales into continuously flowing *rivers of revenue*.

10. **A "takeaway" offer can be extremely effective in boosting response.**

People never want something so much as when it might be snatched away and thereafter forbidden. If you have a hard deadline after which no orders will be accepted or a limit you can place on the number of orders you'll fulfill, by all means mention it. It will significantly boost your response.

And whatever limit you set, either in time or the number of allowable orders, *mean it!* Don't fudge or give in to greed and accept orders beyond the limit. If you do, your customers will eventually discover that your deadlines and limits mean nothing, and you will have killed this golden goose.

Louis Rukeyser once sought my counsel on how to increase subscribers to his investment newsletter. He already had amassed about 500,000 subs, which made his publication the world's largest "guru" letter. But he wanted more.

I told him that the easiest way—in fact, the *only* way—I could see him attracting a million subscribers would be, ironically, to strictly *limit*

subscriptions to one million. Having such a cutoff would drive subscribers through the door in droves. I said, "Lou, I'd be happy to write a direct mail package for you that strictly limits your readership exclusively to one million investors. We can romance it this way: '**Just one million subscribers—a tiny fraction of one percent of the world's investors—will be exclusively entitled to receive my specific buy/sell recommendations.**'"

He rejected my idea because he didn't want to limit the growth of his newsletter in any way or to any size, even a million. But true to my forecast, he never reached anywhere near the million mark.

11. **If prices are going up, say so!** Another form of the "takeaway," this beat-the-coming-price-increase offer works like gangbusters with your existing customer list.
12. **Always offer a unique and alluring premium** or set of premiums. Usually premiums related to your product work best, especially for informational products. But not always, so test.

In his book, *Secrets of Successful Direct Mail*, mail order wizard Dick Benson says, "Desirability is the key element of a premium. The relationship of the premium to the product isn't important." As an example, Dick describes tests he conducted to induce drivers to apply for the Shell gasoline credit card. To everyone's surprise (including mine, as I was one of the copywriters working on the Shell account at the time), the strongest premium had nothing to do with cars or driving. It wasn't car coffee mugs, sunglasses, or even free gasoline. The winner was a free set of steak knives.

13. **Offer an extra bonus for prompt response.** This is sometimes called an "early-bird bonus," or a "fast 50" gift, as in "*Free Gift for the First 50 Who Reply.*" Unless you're online, don't lock yourself into a fixed date, such as,

"Free if you reply by January 31." An unexpected delay at the hands of the post office or printer can massacre your response, as prospects are already too late as soon as they see your ad.

Instead, say "Free if you reply in 7 days." Test different periods, such as 10, 15, or even 30 days, to find what works best for you.

14. **Sometimes a "mystery" early-bird bonus, described with tantalizing copy, can pull even better than a specific description.** Example: For a weight-loss space ad I wrote for Richard Simmons, our strongest early-bird premium proved to be a mystery gift. Here's how I described it, next to the coupon, using Richard's own voice, of course...

### **"A Surprise Gift from Me to You...with Love"**

"Everyone loves a surprise gift, especially *me!* And I've got one for you that's extra special if you respond to my invitation within the next 10 days. It's something you absolutely must have before you can seriously consider losing weight and keeping it off. *And it's very, very personal.*

"I'll bet you want to know what it is...*Sorry!* I can't tell you—that would ruin the surprise! But I *can* tell you what it's *not*:

"It's not a magic potion or a low-calorie pizza...It's not a zipper for your mouth or a padlock for your refrigerator ...And it's definitely not another fat-gram counter!

"It IS, quite simply, to be an indispensable item

that will help you get and stay motivated. You'll slim down. You'll become fit and healthy. It will help you see yourself perhaps as you've never seen yourself before, and it will continue to inspire you for years to come.

"Oh! I just can't contain myself any longer! The suspense is killing me. The surprise is...*Oops! I almost said it!*

"Sending you this wonderful gift with my love and affection will give me such pleasure. Join my exclusive *Never Give Up Weight Loss Club* right now and this gift will be yours to keep, along with everything else I name in the coupon at right. (*Pssst...don't tell anyone else what your gift is when you get it. You don't want to ruin their surprise, do you?*)

Love,  
Richard!"

\* \* \*

This mystery gift offer worked like a charm. I described it this way because the gift was a small book of testimonials from Club members who mentioned some of their favorite weight-loss tips and why the Club meant so much to them. To describe it as such seemed a little flat, and try as I might, I couldn't come up with anything scintillating. So I turned to the "mystery gift" strategy. It helped make Richard's audience not only want this gift, but even more passionately want to join a club where they could experience an ongoing relationship with Richard, who seemed to care so much about them and their weight problems. They wanted to feel his warmth, understanding, encouragement, and acceptance much more than

they craved another set of diet tips.

And that is probably the greatest secret of all—with each of your offers, let your genuine love, empathy, and affection for your customers shine through. They will feel it and respond in kind.

15. **Other enticing offers you can try, depending on your business:** free shipping, free sample, free trial, free information, free estimate, free consultation, or even free "money"—such as a coupon, discount certificate, or facsimile currency or check that's valid toward a purchase. Notice the common element in all these proven offers: the word *free*, which reduces your customer's risk and makes it more enticing to say yes.

And let's not forget the venerable free talent test. For many years, the Art Instruction Institute ran ads on matchbook covers, featuring a sketch of a pirate along with this challenge...



### **Are You an Artist? Draw the Pirate**

This matchbook ad promised that if you take this simple aptitude test (tracing the pirate not permitted), the Institute's instructors would review it and let you know if you have the talent to be an artist. I understand that Peanuts creator Charles Schulz was accepted and later graduated from this program with honors.

To my dismay, I could *not* draw the pirate.

Would you like a good laugh right now? Check out this underground film short (just seven minutes) that anyone in direct marketing should find hilarious. It spoofs the famous matchbook ad, "*Draw the Pirate.*" Go to this link now and you'll be LOL, I promise...

[www.undergroundfilm.org/films/viewer.tcl?  
oftype=lar&reso=2&wid=1028027](http://www.undergroundfilm.org/films/viewer.tcl?oftype=lar&reso=2&wid=1028027)

Sincere wishes for a good life  
and (always!) higher response,



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## BULLET #22

### 16 Rules for Success

Dear Marketing Top Gun,

I'm a sucker for any article promising "rules for success."

You too?

If you're like me, deep down you suspect that you already know whatever the rules are going to be. But you harbor a glimmer of hope that maybe, just maybe, you'll uncover a gem, an "obvious" secret that has somehow eluded you all these years and will now lift your performance to a new level.

Even if not, such lists can be quite valuable because, as one of my mentors used to say about the rules for writing good copy, *"We need not so much to be taught as reminded."*

When I came across the following list, I was pleasantly surprised. Yes, the list expresses mostly insights I "knew" in some form or other, but have sometimes forgotten, for which I've always paid a price. (Rule #10 is my

favorite in that department! I also like #1, #3, #6, and #16 a lot.) I'll bet that you, too, will find yourself nodding in heartfelt agreement with these rules, as they resonate with your own hard-won life experiences.

The list was posted online recently by Bob Parsons, a high achiever who started with little in life and has founded several wildly successful companies, including GoDaddy, the Internet domain registrar and hosting company. His 16 rules sum up the lessons he's learned along the way.

No, I'm not an affiliate for Bob, GoDaddy, or anyone else. I don't even know Bob personally. But I really enjoyed his 16 rules. Reviewing them is a great way to start any new year...or any new day.

So here, with his permission and in his own words, are...

### **Bob Parsons' 16 Rules to Live By**

1. ***Get and stay out of your comfort zone.*** I believe that not much happens of any significance when we're in our comfort zone. I hear people say, "But I'm concerned about security." My response to that is simple: "Security is for cadavers."
2. ***Never give up.*** Almost nothing works the first time it's attempted. Just because what you're doing does not seem to be working doesn't mean it won't work. It just means that it might not work the way you're doing it. If it was easy, everyone would be doing it, and you wouldn't have an opportunity.
3. ***When you're ready to quit, you're closer than you think.*** There's an old Chinese saying that I just love, and I believe it is so true. It goes like this: "*The temptation to quit will be greatest just before you are about to succeed.*"

4. ***With regard to whatever worries you, not only accept the worst thing that could happen, but make it a point to quantify what the worst thing could be.*** Very seldom will the worst consequence be anywhere near as bad as a cloud of "undefined consequences." My father would tell me early on, when I was struggling and losing my shirt trying to get Parsons Technology going, "Well, Robert, if it doesn't work, they can't eat you."
5. ***Focus on what you want to have happen.*** Remember that old saying, "As you think, so shall you be."
6. ***Take things a day at a time.*** No matter how difficult your situation is, you can get through it if you don't look too far into the future and focus on the present moment. You can get through anything one day at a time.
7. ***Always be moving forward.*** Never stop investing. Never stop improving. Never stop doing something new. The moment you stop improving your organization, it starts to die. Make it your goal to be better each and every day, in some small way. Remember the Japanese concept of Kaizen. Small daily improvements eventually result in huge advantages.
8. ***Be quick to decide.*** Remember what General George S. Patton said: "A good plan violently executed today is far and away better than a perfect plan tomorrow."
9. ***Measure everything of significance.*** I swear this is true. Anything that is measured and watched improves.
10. ***Anything that is not managed will deteriorate.*** If you want to uncover problems you don't know about, take a few moments and look closely at the areas you haven't examined for a while. I guarantee you problems will be there.
11. ***Pay attention to your competitors, but pay more attention to what you're***

*doing.* When you look at your competitors, remember that everything looks perfect at a distance. Even the planet Earth, if you get far enough into space, looks like a peaceful place.

12. ***Never let anybody push you around.*** In our society, with our laws and even playing field, you have just as much right to what you're doing as anyone else, provided that what you're doing is legal.
13. ***Never expect life to be fair.*** Life isn't fair. You make your own breaks. You'll be doing good if the only meaning fair has to you is something that you pay when you get on a bus (i.e., fare).
14. ***Solve your own problems.*** You'll find that by coming up with your own solutions, you'll develop a competitive edge. Masura Ibuka, the cofounder of Sony, said it best: "You never succeed in technology, business, or anything by following the others." There's also an old Asian saying that I remind myself of frequently. It goes like this: "*A wise man keeps his own counsel.*"
15. ***Don't take yourself too seriously.*** Lighten up. Often, at least half of what we accomplish is due to luck. None of us are in control as much as we like to think we are.
16. ***There's always a reason to smile. Find it.*** After all, you're really lucky just to be alive. Life is short. More and more, I agree with my little brother. He always reminds me: "We're not here for a long time; we're here for a good time."

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