



# The Grizzled Pro Report

52 Public Rants, Reality Checks and Marketing Notes from the Most Ripped-Off Copywriter on the Planet.

John Carlton

To my Pop (biggest influence in my life) who first dealt with snow while digging a foxhole in Belgium during the last Nazi push in WWII.

Did his duty, came back as promised to his family in warm SoCal climes shaken but not daunted, and is still loving life at 93.

Here's to ya, Pop, and the other vets who served with you.

Thanks for everything, and I'm glad I finally got to hear those stories...

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For my twenty-something friends who are kicking ass and making the world theirs right now.

I always feel connected to you because I WAS one of you when I was your age. Unstoppable.

Now, at 43 we're markedly different - I've had my teeth kicked in a few times... I'm a little bit more crusty and cynical, less easily impressed, but still excited by it all. If I'm completely honest - I'm often a little jealous of your freedoms. It's good to be you.

Fast forward (or rewind) one more generation and we have the crystal clear insight of a John Carlton who reminds us all in one simple report why it's so important to heed the words of those who have truly been through it all - the righteous victories, the crushing failures, and come out the other side with insight and wisdom that only time and survival can provide.

Anyway, take a second and soak up this Grizzled Pro advice from John Carlton.

- Brian McLeod

# I. Get Clued-In

## Post #1 - Advice from a Grizzled Pro.



There's a difference between wisdom, raw brain wattage, and savvy.

Most of the high-IQ folks I know have made hash of their lives. (Not all, but most.)

The younger hot-shots brimming with hipness and earned confidence (how I define "savvy") tend to be reckless, not yet freed from that sense of invulnerability humans enjoy before reality cold-cocks you a few times.

Throughout my career, I've craved real wisdom, and the wizened dudes and dudettes were the ones who possessed it.

Takes a bit of effort to separate pure wisdom from the ravages of age (resentment, regrets, irrelevant nostalgia), but really the best insight to living well and successfully comes via time-tested geezers.

Have you ever wanted to hang out with a grizzled, respected pro... maybe share a beer over some hair-raising stories of marketing horror

and delight (from a guy who was there)... while also learning the insider stuff about becoming ridiculously successful they can't teach you in school?

You ever had a hankering to do something like that?

Well, except for the beer, this is where some of those stories can be found.

# Post #2 - Your brain will rebel, relentlessly.

Veteran marketers and copywriters who get stuff done know, by heart, the old Zen maxim that there is no "trying" in reality.

You're either eating a sandwich, or not eating it.

To even think you're "trying" to eat it is absurd to anyone who understands how things get done.

**The common delusions** that hold back civilians (non-entrepreneurs) include phrases like "I can't do that" (translation: I WON'T do that) and "I don't have time for that" (translation: I won't MAKE time for that)... all of which absolve the speaker of responsibility for action, as if some third party were interfering with their lives.

You crave success; you gotta get over your bad self...

... and take on the writing and management of your life's script.

Think of it as a movie -- you may not have total control over everything, but you have a lot MORE control than you naturally believe you have.

**Write your script the way you want**, and then go for it.

*Accept reality, but never accept your own lame excuses for not making things happen with as much input from you as you could muster...*

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... and regard failure as just another step toward ultimately succeeding, not the final act.

Your brain will rebel, relentlessly. It prefers that you slack off for the rest of your days. Which is fine, if that's what you want.

When slacking off isn't good enough anymore, and you're ready to control your destiny a bit, then get busy figuring out what you need to fix or change... and then DO it.

Don't "try". Just do.

Okay, carry on...

# Post #3 – The necessity of despair.

Here's something you seldom realize until after you've actually gone through the gauntlet of achievement:

Often, despair is one of the critical steps to go through before attaining real success.

Seems counter-intuitive, but it's what happens.

The pro's know to work through ALL obstacles... including massive depression, feelings of giving up, and that sense that all is lost and your supply of Mojo has evaporated.

# Post #4 – Hero-level strength.

Perk of being on the "inside" is seeing how alpha dog, confident, aggressively-successful types act behind the curtain.

Sometimes, they just wanna go back to bed and hide under the covers -- I've seen this with several of the most famous/powerful dudes I've hung out with.

**The takeaway:** Hero-level strength is often just a veneer over fundamental vulnerability.

The ones who succeed just figure out how to deal with their weaknesses better than most.

# Post #5 - As an Entrepreneur... you MUST get results.

Regular civilians can get through life with all sorts of goofy notions about how things get done in the business world.

However, entrepreneurs have no such luxury.



**For example:** Nearly every biz transaction is an inherently hostile situation. Behind the smiles and back-slapping and promises of "working for the common good" between, say, a freelancer and a client...

... the writer actually wants to do as little work as possible for the maximum possible money, while the client wants to bleed every ounce of productivity from the writer for the least outlay of cash.

I've had clients who became close personal friends. Still, when it came time to set deadlines and write checks, we had completely opposite agendas, and never pretended otherwise.

It's the same throughout life.

Sometimes it's subtle, sometimes it blooms into full-on fisticuffs (or divorce, strategic bankruptcy, strikes, war, lawsuits, name-calling, etc).

**You can't ignore it, if you want to succeed as an entrepreneur.**

There's no reason to be afraid of it, either -- I've even had fun with it during negotiations with clients, exposing our veiled teeth-baring for what it was: A couple of wannabe alpha's pissing on our established territory, jostling for position.

At the highest levels, this "primal snarling dance" only works when deadlines are put in place and it's crystal clear what is promised versus what is expected.

I wanted my client's hand to shake while writing out the check to me... but I also knew the rest of my month was now locked up, as I went into full creative mode.

When the check cleared the bank, and I delivered the best work I could muster... while the market responded with jaw-dropping results... all was well.

But there are never any guarantees. When you start playing in the upper atmosphere of the biz world, everything gets hairier -- the money, the risks, the game-playing, the stakes, all of it.

*But it's still just a gathering of shaved apes,  
with one foot still in the jungle, angling for  
dominance.*

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Learn how to happily navigate the inherently hostile parts of doing biz, without taking it personally or botching it up with dumb-ass notions of playing "nice" or expecting your good deeds to magically bring rewards...

... and flavor it all with a professional's attitude of doing your part to the best of your ability every time (while negotiating deals that allow for the other guy to screw up without taking you down with him)...

... and you're on your way to bigger and better deals.

**And enjoy the ride.** That's the real secret to a good life.

The machinations of the biz world only seem complex and mysterious until you've bloodied your nose a few times learning the rules.

You've poked your head around the corner of life, to peek at the entrepreneurial world hidden from most folks. It's different from regular life. But you'll figure it out, as long as you're willing to take a few bruises along the way.

Just my two cents.

Now go tear your niche a new asshole...

## Post #6 Good salesmen lead better lives.

I have many friends who consider me one of their closest pals... who do not get along with other friends who also consider me close pal. This is because my world view has never penalized anyone for being odd, or a different age, or of a different political/religious/ethnic belief system.

I like character, intelligence (not IQ, but raw savvy) and a strong sense of humor and yearning for adventure -- everything else is irrelevant.

So when I started studying salesmanship, I realized I was already steeped and self-trained in one of the more critical parts -- the deep empathy that comes from walking a mile in the other guy's shoes, and the refusal to allow ideology to trump common bonds.

This is pretty rare, folks. I mastered this by accident... because as a totally introverted, color-blind, working-class kid who felt isolated from the bulk of society, I experienced a bond with other outsiders. Those of you who paid attention in high school should know, by now, that the kids who became successful adults almost never were popular or comfortable in their teens.

My first advice to entrepreneurs is often to "Get out of Dodge" -- go for a trip away from your Comfort Zone, where you're constantly challenged on your beliefs, and your conceits of being competent (or, worse, "brilliant").

Another country is good.

*But also simply leaving your Echo Chambers of political/financial/social thought patterns can do the trick.*

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Listen to, rather than talk over, someone with ideas or attitudes different than yours.

Actually entertain the thought you might be wrong, and your doofus pal might be right.

Good salesman lead better lives, because they see the world as it is, rather than how they wish it was (or think it "ought" to be).

Reality fixes a lot of cognitive dissonance in your head -- admit when you're defending a position simply out of ego-need or stubborn refusal to be wrong, and stop judging folks on superficial rating charts. That is SO high school.

My life has forever been richer and more fun because of this tolerance for foible, idiocy, delusion and different world views.

Even better, it was always relatively easy for me to fathom even starkly new market audiences, no matter how initially foreign their status appears.

There are many ways to lead a full, productive and honorable life -- anyone who tells you different would make a shitty marketer.

## Post #7 - Always hated Sundays.

School tomorrow, later it was go back to work tomorrow.

Now, after 30 years of being my own boss, and being able to take Monday off whenever, I'm finally ready to give Sunday another chance.

Still don't fully trust it, though. Had a dream about that test tomorrow I forgot to study for, again...

# Post #8 - Delight your Inner Kid.



Gary Halbert with his coral-pink "Keys Cruiser" Rolls Royce

Are you rewarding yourself for jobs well done?

I'm guessing no -- most folks ignore this simple productivity trick. But it works.

Gary Halbert used to buy himself watches, or cameras, or even boats (preferably used wooden craft requiring thousands in maintenance, but that's another story) whenever he finished a big gig.

I'd always rewarded myself with free time (as intaking the phone off the hook for the weekend, or splitting to hang with friends).

It doesn't matter what, precisely, the reward is (as long as it's meaningful to you)... but the ACT of rewarding yourself fires up the motivation part of your unconscious brain.

The Puritan Azzhole that still rules most American's brains thinks that work should be its own reward. Screw that. When you move into the upper levels of biz (where the risks are greater and the moolah more lavish), you need every trick in the book to stay in top form.

Fastest path to burnout is to finish a grueling gig, clear the desk, and then start the next grueling gig. What the hell are you thinking, you're Superman?

Decompress, go shop for a goodie, teach your brain to associate end-of-job with fun rewards.

**Main key:** The reward cannot be something you'd buy or do anyway. It has to be pure excessive nonsense (like Halbert's 14th watch or 3rd boat) that delights your Inner Kid. Just sayin', that's how the Big Boys do it...

# Post #9 - Coexistence advice:

Current culture coddles cynics and rudeness. Yet simple courtesy is how groups keep from killing each other in crowded, frustrating situations.

It's astonishing how far "please" and "thanks" will get you.

Add awareness of your surroundings, so you're not causing human pile ups on the sidewalk, and you're an appreciated fellow traveler.

I mean, sociopaths are the most polite guys around, cuz they know it melts resistance. But you're too cool for social niceties?

Eliminate 90% of the friction in life by just being a mensch, and leave being a dick to lesser mortals.

And yes, I've been navigating airports again. When did Americans get so rude? Did I miss a memo?

## Post #10 - Perfect storms

Multiple unrelated events or situations colliding together at the worst time possible for you happen more often when you start planning out your life and pursuing goals.

It's like people who don't juggle never drop a ball, but ambitious jugglers who push the envelope are guaranteed to drop a bunch.

Just something to keep in mind if you decide to finally get your ass in gear and act on your dreams...

## Post #11 - I used to be so superstitious...

... that the standard ones (like black cats, ladders, Fri 13th) weren't nasty enough, so I invented my own. It was all about feeling powerless in a seemingly cruelly-random universe.

One day, I said screw it, and violated all my "rules", just to see what might happen.

Nothing happened, is what happened.

The irrational wetware in our brains is constantly sending you goofy, useless info. Learn to ignore it. And go engage with the universe knowing it's still cruel, but not because you didn't obey some dumb superstition..



Bond Halbert, moi, Jay Abraham and Kevin Halbert on break at a Mastermind meeting.

## Post #12 - Friday Reality Check

I spent last week in San Francisco, helping my mastermind peeps solve problems and get on the profit fast track... and then hung out with colleagues and old pals at the big damn Traffic & Conversion event nearby.

Lots of biz got done, projects were finalized, income boosted, networks expanded.

But you know what made me happiest?

Just being around friends -- often talking about everything BUT biz. It's important to know how you (not anyone else) measure your own "success" in life... and money will often not play a huge roll once you've found a groove.

I know many cash-heavy folks who are essentially friendless... and many just-makin'-it folks awash in love and adventures, who are clear on what matters (for them). You will make decisions today that affect your bottom line. You will also make decisions today that affect your relationships.

It's good to reflect on this, relentlessly, because it will never be easy to balance the two... but it will always be imperative that you do so.



## Post #13 - Just Sayin' Department.

Life is precious, giddy, terrifying and unknowable, all at once.

I am overwhelmed with thanks for the ticket I've been given, every damned day I'm above ground, despite the mix of horror and fun showering down on us in unpredictable deluges.

Think I'll take the pooch swimming in the Ditch this afternoon.

For her, it's the most awesome thing to do in the history of dogdom, and it reaffirms for me the worthiness of existence...

# Post #14 - Question of the day.

*Why are you STILL dicking around avoiding doing that really important thing you know you gotta do?*

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If you've logged more time avoiding it, than it would have taken to actually DO it, then you've just fallen down the Rabbit Hole of Procrastination.

Nasty place down there. Yuck.

Do the damn thing, and it's all instantly a distant memory...

# Post #15 - Alone, entrepreneurs are vulnerable to idiotic decisions.

Together, you may still go with the idiocy, but at least you'll go into it knowing all the alternative data and opinion and advice...

Humans like to believe we're able to conquer worlds and markets all on our lonesome, like Hollywood insists.

However, I know of ZERO top marketers (and I know a ton) who operate alone. They seek out, and USE, the advice and brainstorming of colleagues whenever possible. Their decisions (especially the really important ones) are laced with facts, intuition, gut feelings, facts, input from peers, facts and more facts.

Not "common wisdom" derived from the cultural wasteland out there.

As a marketer, you need to immerse your bad self into the culture, and understand what your prospects know and -- very critical -- THINK they know. And what they suspect they don't know, or feel paranoid about not knowing.

That means you've got to go deep, all the time, and have resources you trust to bounce incoming data and ideas off of.



Masterminds have always been my #1 tool for this.

I'm in multiple free ones, have paid for membership in others...

... and host my own very elite mastermind four times a year.

If you think you'd enjoy being locked in a room with me and a small group of focused entrepreneurs just like you, then [go here to see how you might join](#).

# II. Write Killer Copy

## Post #16 - Marketers must face reality.

Civilians have the luxury of adopting any whacky worldview they like, but marketers must face reality.

Your human prospects have one foot still in the jungle (or, rather, the ancient part of our brain is still there).

We're talking dark needs, reptilian instincts, and basic greed/fear responses that lie just under the thin veneer of the neo-cortex modern slab.

This is not a cynical nor a negative view, it's just fundamental Step 1 knowledge for anyone needing to understand how to communicate at the levels required to influence, persuade and perform complex capitalistic functions.

In other words, to exchange moolah for goods.

## Post #17 - To jack up your sales-mojo,

don't look "at" the problem as a writer, but rather lookout from "inside" the problem, as a prospect.

That means going deeper than the cliches, way deeper than rookies or clueless marketers go. The motivation I'm talking about is primal, further down the Maslow scale than vague "desire".

You want to make that ad the most amazing thing that happens to him today, & to do that you need to dive into the trauma he's feeling. He wants/needs/requires something he doesn't yet have -- if it's a hamburger cuz he's jonesing for munchies, that's a low level of trauma (unless he's starving)... but he's still motivated at an animal level first (and a gourmet level later).

If it's health-related, there's more intellectual wrestling going on in his head, but he's still mostly concerned with lessening the level of trauma in his system.

Financial problems bring on emotional, physical and existential angst.

Self-esteem issues are not funny to the dude suffering from it. The hungers, lonely nights, confused journeys, disappointments and nightmares of our fellow humans all come down to the primal discomfort of a raw Id lusting and fearing the outside world, all at the same time.

To a writer with the skills to persuade, this kind of insight obliterates the masks and defenses your prospect is hiding behind.

Figure out what level of discomfort you're dealing with, and show (with deft compassion & legit answers) how you can help him deal with it. Lessen the pain, soothe the yips, restore dignity, pump up health, whatever.

Consider the times you were in some level of loss/pain/need, and were swayed by an ad. What tripped the "get out your wallet" circuit?

All the credentializing, all the bullets, all the hooks are about getting you up ON the fence, so you'll consider the offer.

*The pro's knock you OFF the fence, and kick your wallet open.*

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A great ad is like being lost and turning a corner to see friends and a ride home safe. It's like a near-drowning man hoisted aboard. It's like finally seeing the 7-letter word in your scrambled rack in Scrabble. A moment prior, trauma and chaos.

A moment after enlightenment, a sense of beng saved. I've never found a better way to describe it than some level of trauma, absolved with your promise of a new day, a second chance, an answer at last.

Make sense?



A gathering of Grizzled Pros – From Left – Joe Polish, Gary Halbert, Gary Bencivenga and myself.

## Post #18 - The 4 fundamental interlocking (and often warring) human parts.

The intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual "Big 4" sections of our being.

Most marketers understand two, maybe three of 'em, but seldom put all 4 to work in campaigns.

The spiritual one really eludes folks. It's not religion, but rather that murky meta-physical side just beyond the emotions... the empty area behind the smug civilized masks where inchoate fear lurks (along with that "what's it all mean" funk that can jack refunds).

This isn't trickery. It's simply pointing out that marketers who strive for a more total awareness and consciousness can more effectively bond with prospects.

The obvious "wrong way" example is the ad writer with zero personal experience of his prospect's problems (which can lead to being humorous about loss or heartache, a spectacular bad move when you're trying to sell).

The "right way" adjusts by connecting elsewhere (like emotionally, if no physical experience is available).

We connect on multiple levels, most of them unconscious.

We are complex creatures, but the fundamental psychology behind our behavior can be targeted and explained.

The top writers know why people buy. On a very deep level.

## Post #19 - Get in touch with your market.

Briefly, long ago, I wrote ads for the dental market, & went to a dentist convention.

Expected boring, witnessed Sodom/Gomorrah 2.0.

Out of the lab coat, in Vegas, the docs went totally Animal House.

**Lesson:** Almost EVERYTHING you THINK you know about people is wrong, most of the time.

If you crave success, you can't operate on assumptions or untested beliefs.

Get off your butt, get physically in touch with your target market...

## Post #20 - 'Nother Halbert Story:

Even back in the late 80s, Gary was a dinosaur when it came to customer lists.

Instead of putting everything into a database, he insisted on having every name hand-written on a card first, and filed in a small box.

Sure, there was a computerized database, too (for the lettershop), but those cards were sacred to him.

He wrote notes (in ink, no erasing) on each card, lined-through old numbers and addresses, & had "salesman's notes" scribbled everywhere.

Need more space? Staple a new card on. I was already doing the same thing with my Rolodex, very old school.

*Why? Because viscerally handling those cards made each customer "real".*

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You saw their history, how their situation had changed over time, what they'd bought, what interactions you'd had.

Yes, it was inefficient.

But if you grok how (for example) solid relationships with 300 clients can beat a 300,000-name list of prospects for real income in an entrepreneurial biz, then the tactic becomes essential.



Me speaking at one of the first marketing seminars ever, circa 1989. It was a 15K event that included presentations by Michael Gerber, Jay Abraham and Joe Sugarman.

# Post #21 - You're not your prospect.

Never forget that the vast majority of folks out there are "low information" consumers, meaning: They're not so hot on researching things, or going deep on subjects.

However, they think they're savvy consumers, cuz they like to shop.

Most entrepreneurs and ad-writers are high-info, and launch research obsessions easily.

So you're not your prospect.

You're the go-between guy translating the wonderfulness of your product to nice people who essentially need to be bludgeoned with the obvious.

# Post #22 - Pro Writing Tip #127:

I read lots of newspapers and magazines (online), but I spend half the time reading the comments. (In the old days, I devoured Letters To The Editor.) The articles are fine, but they're penned by one person (or, at most, a writer/editor team).

To get the full flavor, you gotta see what Joe Blow's got to say, too. This is often a huge wake-up call for marketers -- you only read the elite output (well written, edited, fact-checked, etc), you think the world's a sensible, orderly place.

You dip into the comments, you realize it's more like a soccer riot out there.

Your prospects aren't elite at anything, but by God they've got opinions and belief systems and notions on how the world should be... and you better get hip (w/o judgement) on what that mess in their brains is.

# Post #23 - Everyone has dreams of glory growing up.

The vast majority quash them early, and maintain a steady diet of intellectual white noise to cover the faint screams of frustration from their locked-away desires.

A small percentage sort-of pursue their dreams but never, ever allow the curtain to come up on their show. They plan, they flirt with starting something, then retreat at the first sign of resistance from the universe.

The tiny slice of entrepreneurs who actually get moving have levels, too -- from skittish, low-info shallow pond treaders (who prolly got into biz accidentally), through the struggling folks bulging in the middle of the curve, to the few who force success to happen by never admitting defeat.

Your lists are rife with all of these categories.

Most profit will come from a minority. Understand?

# Post #24 - We are creatures of denial & masks.

The one consistently shocking piece of advice I give rookie freelancers is... if a prospective client says "money is no problem", then you can be sure it very much IS a problem.

Deconstructing "who" a man is reveals what he fears and desires most.

Heavy, but essential to great salesmanship.



# Post #25 - Empathy is NOT standard equipment.

**Advanced Copy Tip** That Most Pro's Won't Share With You (cuz they're selfish bastards):

Here's a critical little lesson I just posted in the Marketing Rebel Insider's Club members-only site, responding to a question about using empathy in copy:

"I am not being mean when I say this: You write with empathy after you learn to LIVE with empathy in your life."

Here's a nice homework assignment: Pick 3 people you don't like. They can be family, in your social circle, or even someone famous or infamous.

Now, walk a mile in their shoes. Get into their head, their life, their outlook, their opinions. Own it. Put your own biases aside, completely.

This is a tactic I learned from doing debates in college -- my prof purposely assigned me to argue positions she KNEW were opposite to how I actually felt or thought.

This forced me to put aside my own feelings -- cuz I wanted to win the debate more than I wanted to hold onto my own biases -- and essentially "try out" a completely different John.

A John who had the opinions, outlook and determinations of someone I would normally not like, and might even despise.

Great writers are able to "box up" everything in their head. Their own feelings, beliefs, opinions, all of it -- box it up, put it aside, and open a different box up and OWN that new set of feelings.

I have written for markets where I had ZERO personal experience... and yet, whenever I met one of the new customers, they were POSITIVE I felt exactly like they did, and shared their passion for the product.

That's what you aim for. Start practicing now.

Empathy is NOT standard equipment in humans.

**Quick marketing tip:** whenever you're pissed off or upset, critical think your emotional state. In many markets, your prospect is in a similar level of distress.

Catalog your own mindset, and access it when you communicate w/ your audience.

It's all about empathy, folks

# Post #26 - The classic "love/hate" relationship thing...

... (which everyone indulges in at one time or another) is a great glimpse of how our brain likes to screw with reality.

Your greedy lizard brain desires without compromise, your neo-cortex realizes you can't take possession, so the conflict boils and never resolves.

It can be over things, people, ideas, anything and everything.

But here's why it's a tool in a good salesman's bag: Both the "love it" part and the "hate it" part are highly-charged emotional states... and just a hair-trigger response away from flipping.

Some of the best customers you'll ever have will start out hating on you. Some of the worst nightmares you'll go through will come from people who feel their undying loyalty was mistreated.

It doesn't actually matter which state you begin with -- what's important is that you understand you're dealing with an emotionally volatile situation.

It's a foot in the door, to anyone with good persuasion skills. If you've ever witnessed someone going from rage to tears to acceptance in the space of a few breaths, you've seen the human brain in action.

***Key point: Emotions are irrational states seeking an acceptable resolution... which may be refused if presented in the wrong way.***

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This is what makes dealing with humans so frustrating at times.

A skilled salesman is totally at-home in the emotional realm, not bothered by irrational behavior, and focused on results (even if those results defy objective definitions of "resolution").

Just sayin': When you get into the Big Human Sandbox that is civilization, the "elephant in the room" is the emotionally-charged dominance of invisible brain activity influencing decisions.

# Post #27 - Jar a prospect out of his comfort zone.

Most folks stumble through life believing they've got reality nailed, and as adults have largely stopped questioning stuff.

This is an advantage to a marketer who knows how to jar a prospect out of his comfort zone (of zombie-like snoozing) with a hook that gooses accepted wisdom or "common sense".

The trick is not to just blindly startle anyone, cuz that just starts an argument.

No -- you gotta finesse the hook to get a "Wait, can that possibly be true?" response.

# Post #28 - Calling someone "stubborn" is like saying the sky is blue

-- ALL humans are stubborn. It doesn't vanish after the terrible 2's, or teen rebellion.

It may get over-ruled, occasionally, thru "socialization", but it's always there, lurking.

People will be stubborn even when it hurts them, when they know they're wrong, when they know they'll regret it later.

Doesn't matter. Knowing this perverse tendency is a must for all marketers... the best of whom know how to use sneaky child psych tricks to persuade and influence.

# Post #29 - Talk it out.

The hot trend in online marketing is VSLs (video sales letters)... which simply moves great copy from written form to spoken form. A lot of marketers get confused over this, but it's not at all new in advertising.

When I started my career, I specialized in direct mail and print ads in newspapers and magazines. However, when infomercials arrived (because cable needed to fill those wee hours of the night with something), I easily slipped into writing copy for them. Same when I wrote the occasional radio ad.

It was easy, because all the copy I wrote was simply conversation.

The governing rule is "Write like you talk" (and yes, that's grammatically incorrect... just like nearly everyone is grammatically incorrect when they're blabbing away at each other)... "if you could edit how you speak." Very important, that last part -- the magic of great copy is in the editing. I tend to stutter a bit when my brain's moving faster than my mouth, and I often talk my way down a blind alley with no exit.

However, when I'm writing, I can simply go back and edit out that blind alley tangent... and fluff up a few of the verbs here and there, and spend time honing the message into something vicious and awesome that sounds like a playwright sculpted it.

Your copy should be the same whether it's being read or listened to by your prospect. The vehicle for delivering that copy can be ink, audio, video, or mind-melding... doesn't matter.

When I first met Gary Halbert, he shared one of his secrets for writing killer ads -- he'd go down to his favorite watering hole near the Santa Monica pier and read his copy to the patrons. If they said they "liked it" (or didn't like it), he knew he had a loser.

The only acceptable response was "Hey, where I can get me one of those things you're talking about?"

But the key was that he READ the ad aloud. He didn't give them manuscripts to read.

*The best test of whether your copy is "final" or still an early draft is to read it out loud.*

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Even to yourself. If you stumble over the phrasing, or lose your breath mid-sentence (cuz it's too long), or get twisted up in the syntax... then you've still got work to do.

My pal Jimmy Curley is using ad copy I wrote 20 years ago for direct mail as straight-to-video VSLs now online for his biz. The only thing he has to edit out are references to mailing or phone

calls in the close. These VSLs work like crazy, just as they did a generation ago as plain old printed ads (before the Web even existed as a viable vehicle for marketing).

Just sayin'.

Good copy is simply communication, and the best way to communicate with your fellow shaved apes is to talk good.

## Post #30 - Getting it down.

One of the truly excellent side effects of keeping a journal (a real daily examination of your life and career, not a whiny diary) is that you are actually measuring things in your life -- you can look back a week to see how anxious you were over a gig, say, and then compare your anxieties with how everything turned out... and this gives you a way to gauge (and control) your own physical/emotional/intellectual reactions to the roller coaster rides of the entrepreneur world.

You also get a front-row view of your life as it's rolling out... and this is a great opportunity to express constant gratitude for the people helping you out... the way the universe seems to be sneaking opportunities onto your lap... and all the adventures that are happening to you now that you've upped the ante in life by becoming an entrepreneur.

*Entrepreneurs run a little hotter than other folks -- we have to know more, master more intangible skills, tolerate levels of risk that would send average folks into a fetal position...*

---

... and time can speed up a bit when you're in the middle of a campaign or launch.

You're on a different clock than the rest of the world.

So, no matter how crummy your day was, or how disappointed you've been in the way some things have played out...

... get a handle on what you're thankful for, every morning, as a little ritual to begin your day.

I've gone so far as to thank my computer, my coffee maker, my phone and my chair -- it's kinda Zen, but the stuff that helps you do what you do are big parts of the ensemble of living and non-living entities supporting you.

Thanking the good people around you is a no-brainer. It makes sense (and can crush a bad attitude or a destructive ego-driven revenge cycle quickly).

But also be aware of the non-breathing stuff in your life -- it may not be sentient, but it's working hard to keep you productive. Spock and Doc and Scotty regarded the Enterprise as a living being, requiring all the subtle love and good vibes the crew did in order to run properly.

Yes, it's laughable to expect most folks to understand why you've named your iMac and address it in conversation at times...

... but to aware dudes and dudettes who appreciate the inorganic "team" they've assembled, it all makes sense.

## Post #31 - Psych Insight #523:

The reason this psych insight crap is so often confusing (or causes hurt feelings, or misunderstandings) is that (as much as shrinks wanna call it a "science") it's still your brain trying to understand your brain.

So there's academic psych (all data & tortured monkeys), & street psych (what cops, salesmen & comics know).

Both are flawed, but still awesome tools for a better life, & better biz.

This is why I'm breaking it down for ya..

## Post #32 – Stop it.

Just stop being silly for a few minutes, and go get some grizzled pro insight on how to write killer copy with the Simple Writing System already.

Jeez Louise, it's like trying to herd cats with you guys.

If your lifestyle depends on making sales (or just understanding why your fellow humans do the bizarre shit they do), then this is PURE GOLD. It is, unquestionably, the most complete (and truly easy to learn) copywriting program out there.

Literally everything you'll ever need can now be written at a professional level, by you or anyone you assign to the gig, with high-end persuasive salesmanship sizzling in every piece.

This will transform your biz results. And your life.

To check out this amazing program (in a very no-pressure, no risk way), and see what other entrepreneurs have to say about it, go here now:

[Check out the Simple Writing System now.](#)

And yes, it could vanish from the market again at any time... so don't dawdle.

# III. Get Shit Done

## Post #33 - From the minds of Babes

A friend's daughter, all of 7 yrs old, likes to earn money and donate it to worthy causes.

That alone is awesome, but here's how she does it:

Lemonade stand in summer, hot chocolate in winter... all free.

Just a nice tip jar on the table and a look that would melt ice.

**And she rakes it in.**

If that isn't a solid marketing lesson for us morons in the adult biz world, I don't know what is.

The entire history of biz savvy is contained in that little girl's seemingly simple plan...

## Post #34 - Business before pleasure.

One of the small advantages I had when I started my career as a freelance copywriter was having my then-soon-to-to-be-ex-girlfriend throw a lamp at me as I ducked out the door for the last time.

She was mad that I was devoting so much time to the gig, and I realized I needed to fly solo for a while if I was gonna successfully navigate the rocky early-career months.

Now, I've helped many a married-with-kids rookie get their mojo going in this same career -- there's no requirement to live like a monk (and I didn't, either).



But any sweetie who wants to come along needs to be VERY clear on the time/energy/focus commitment that IS required.

A rookie has an enormous amount of reading, video-watching and audio-listening to do for many months (I took a year to feel I'd "arrived", but I had zero help and was inventing the entire process as I went)...

... and if you're also juggling a "real" job, there just ain't gonna be much time for lovey-dovey and relationship nurturing.

It's not a permanent status, though... and any couple that has gone through military deployment, for example, will understand that during crunch time, you just gotta buck up.

### **Becoming an entrepreneur requires an entirely different mindset than "normal" living .**

-- and you need to understand this as you commit to deadlines (which you can NEVER miss) while your family/significant-other/new-squeeze needs to have the self-confidence and respect for your career that gives you room to move through the early months. Cuz you're gonna be frustrated, you're gonna fuck up, you're gonna be obsessed to distraction with problems, and you're gonna be used and abused by clients.

After a period of self-hazing and chaos, if you're doing it right, you'll get the hang of the gig, and your productivity will zoom while time-commitments drop... and you can start planning deadlines and time-boxing projects so you again have plenty of time to get busy with your sweetie(s).

Just sayin' -- this isn't a normal kind of job. Your entire brain chemistry is going to transform and your lifestyle will be obliterated (so you can rebuild it how you choose).

My first breakthrough was making "business before pleasure" my mantra (which completely harshed my former partying/slacker habits).

I've counseled many writers through the burn-out and destroyed relationships that occur from miscommunication, selfishness and narrow-minded/short-sighted thinking (which is rampant in our culture, btw).

Fore-warned is fore-armed.

For someone with entrepreneur's blood in their veins and a writer's soul, there isn't a better gig in the universe. But you seldom travel solo.

With the right partners, it's a dream ride. With the wrong ones, it's like hacking through jungle with a butter knife.

**Be sensible.** Communicate. Prepare yourself and everyone around you, and enjoy the pleasant exhaustion of moving into the world of success and goal-attainment



Me and long time friend and business partner, Stan Dahl, goofing off on Australia's beautiful coastline.

## Post #35 - Productivity tip for lazy asses.

Back when I worked with Gary Halbert, we perfected the art of screwing off.

All deadlines were padded with lots of "down time" to just drive around shucking & jiving, sleeping late, and never, ever needing to pull a panicked overnighter writing copy.

Observers were scornful, pissed off that we seemed to be enjoying ourselves so much while we were supposed to be fulfilling our clients' needs.

**The secret:** Coming up with brilliant hooks, headlines, and pitches requires keen thinking and a freshly stimulated brain. And time.

We may have looked like we were goofing off, but we were actually cooking ideas in the back of our skulls the entire time.

In other words: It ain't goofing off when you end up with ads that work.

It's just part of a process most folks will never understand.

# Post #36 - Einstein's Theory of Relativity, Explained:

Back when I worked for The Man, I might enjoy an evening's social engagement into the wee hours, drift off for a bit, bolt wide awake at the first shudder of the alarm, and coffee-up, eat, shower, dress and be on the highway into work inside of 15 minutes.

Just had the routine down.

Now, after working for myself for 30 years (I'm a horrible boss, btw, but don't tell me I said that)... I get my 8 hrs of shuteye, stare at my iPhone when the alarm cranks as if I've never seen it before, crawl out of bed after 5 snooze-hits, coffee-up, eat, etc... and after a couple of hours, I'm still not near-ready to leave the house. Let alone qualified to drive a car.

It's all relative, is what I'm sayin'. Same routine, minus the efficiency borne of rush-hour windows, vicious VPs tapping their watch, and the social pressure of an office resentful of your tardiness. And yet... I get massively MORE quality work done now than I ever did in a blurry 8-hour shift at Grind, Inc.

However, I've long ago given up trying to explain this to folks. Less time, more productivity, while looking lazy and hauling in the moolah.

Hard to get your mind around it, until you learn the ropes as an entrepreneur.

Okay, fine... so it ain't Einstein. It's still all relative... and once you CAN get your head around being your own boss, you will happily kick your own butt to get stuff done (once you eventually drag yourself to your desk), and do it with more love, precision and focus than you ever believed possible.

# Post # 37 - Stay calm. Deep breath.

Clear your mind of mosquito-like thoughts, allow your system to hum on low power, just let it go.

Good stretch, lie down and dream of chasing squirrels. That's how the dog does it, anyway...

# Post #38 - I love this quote by Oscar Wilde:

*“Some people know the price of everything and the value of nothing.”*

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It applies to other things, too... like knowledge.

In life, love and biz, you'll encounter folks who are well-read, clever and quick with opinions... yet lack the most essential ingredient for good advice:

Experience. They're bursting with common sense that ain't, specific plans untested in the real world, and theories free of the bothersome complexities of how things actually work.

Some of the most blunder-prone marketers I've known had library shelves sagging with books and courses (and ticket stubs from seminars up the yin-yang). The missing ingredient was an inability to "grok" anything -- to understand how the lessons applied to their own behavior as they went after goals.

They're like doughy, bloated couch-potatoes who watch every exercise show on the tube -- they "know" what to do, but never DO it... and thus, are no help whatsoever for anyone actually hitting the gym to workout.

# Post #39 - You don't HAVE to be a sociopath to succeed,

but it's tougher to win when you're concerned with fairness and doing the right thing (or, worse, not really positive you want what you're after) while swimming in a pool seething with Machiavellian sharks unburdened by the Golden Rule (treat others as you would have them treat you).

So you work harder to stay reality-based (as opposed to starry-eyed dream-based) and learn the rules of the game... including how others will cheat. And keep your inherent sweetness and humanity intact while winning despite your disadvantage.

**There's nothing magical about setting goals.**

It simply forces your mind to focus on specific outcomes. When you add experience, tempered with an attitude of "learn from your humiliating blunders and do better next time", you move forward quickly.

But the main question will always be: "How bad do you want it?" Bad enough to go mano-a-mano with evil bastards who learned early how to game the system, who really, really, really want to eat your lunch, and who take delight in tossing you aside?

Rookie goal-setters often don't really know what they want.

So their first efforts include a lot of stuff they later discover they didn't really want. That's normal. When you pare down your goals to what really matters to you, THEN you're ready to prep for the front lines. If this process takes you years, so what?

*It's a good way to live -- and opposite the standard choices of just slacking off until someone else picks a direction for you.*

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The first step in never being a slave to someone else's goals is to have your own.

Just sayin'...

## Post #40 - Operation MoneySuck.

Sometimes, you face such a daunting To Do List that it's hard to know where to start.

Operation MoneySuck dictates two decisions:

First, because there will be "urgent" fire drills every single day of your working life, you must learn to distinguish between "we're all gonna die!" actual emergencies (which are rare) and situations that simply demand your attention soon (but will sit for another hour or so).

Then, choose any item from your list that will directly result in income (not pats on the back), set your timer for one hour, and work on that.

No phone calls that can wait (and almost all can), no email checking.

Lock the door, sit down and give it your all for one hour.

That hour will be one of your most productive and valuable all week long...

## Post #41 - Monday Morning Quarterback Advice:

If you're prone to second-guessing yourself when plans go awry, then work on your prognostication skills.

Put yourself in a physical/mental mind-frame of 5 minutes after you've made the decision you're pondering. It's not that hard to do.

Now, how do you feel after deciding yes? After deciding no?

When you can taste confidence AFTER making a decision, you're more likely to be on the right track.

## Post #42 - Never eat like a dog...

... (as scavengers, they gulp first, digest later)... but do learn to MOVE like one when you wake up.

Watch a terrier stretch and yawn first (yoga: Downward Dog), giving every muscle a brief workout including the jaw.

They may go back to napping, but they are wide awake when they rise. Sleepy state is totally different than awake state.

Humans tend to be sloppy about the difference... and the body (and brain) suffers...

# Post #43 - The big "ceiling" that rookie entrepreneurs often hit...

... (Which can stop a career cold) is all about taking responsibility. Most of the truly prosperous & happy biz owners I know quickly admit when they're wrong, and spend time and capital (if necessary) to clean up their mess and make things right.

The flakey folks blame others, lie to cover their tracks, make vast promises with no intention of fulfilling on any of it... and use words like so much fairy dust to obscure their selfishness, while relying on kneejerk responses ("I never lie. Nev-er. What part of that don't you understand?") and victim blaming with lots of drama to change the subject.

So, first step of getting on the right track to success: Stop deflecting blame.

Take ownership of consequences to your actions.

Just accept responsibility when you've fucked up, and take steps to do better next time.

You are not "branded" by losing an argument, or screwing up a project, or committing social errors... unless you refuse to accept responsibility.

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Take the high road, and you can move to the next stage freely and without baggage, even if you've screwed up royally. Americans, particularly, are quick to judge and shame... but also equally quick to forgive and welcome you back into the tribe.

All entrepreneurs botch things, more in the early stages, but even the grizzled veterans are sowing chaos around them at times.

The key is to know how to keep moving, proactively. This is where the old phrase "it's better to act and ask forgiveness, than to ask permission first" comes from... especially when you're trying out stuff that challenges the status quo around you.

In life, as in politics, it's never the crime, it's the cover up.

Stop deflecting blame when it's all on you, stop lying to avoid consequences, and become that trusted, honest dude people want to work with.

## Post #44 - Your apology isn't to make the other person feel better.

It's about your own internal movement toward self-knowledge and positive growth, in spite of our natural tendencies to rather die than admit a mistake.

Emotional stubbornness will nail you to a psychic hot spot that can define (and ruin) your life.

Examine your behavior, change when necessary, clean up your messes, and yes, it's a bonus if you make someone feel better, too.

## Post #45 - Sure Sign I'm Thinking Too Hard About It:

So I'm listening to Joan Jett's "I Love Rock n Roll" in the car, and realize the line "put another dime in the jukebox" really dates it. Then, I'm thinking "Whoa, the guy she's singing about would be around fifty now... wonder if he even survived the 80s".

Then I recall how young/stupid/dangerous I was back then, and suddenly I realize it's a green light and people are honking at me.

Does this mean I can't listen to oldies anymore while driving?



# Post #46 - Humans are lovable, but crazy.

Know that, diving into any biz venture, and you'll be way better off...

You've probably heard that most ad copy strives to be understood at a 5th grade reading level (same as most newspapers). But do you know WHY?

It's not because your audience only comprehends the language that a typical 5th grader uses.

The actual vocabulary of many people in your market is much, much more limited than that. (And the words "fuck" and "dude" provide nearly all of the hard work in any communication they have to get through, anyway.)

Also, an large number have a much richer vocabulary.

No. The reason you write your copy "simple" is because of the LOGICAL PATH you must take your reader through to get from "here's what I've got for you" all the way to "here's how to buy it now." It's got to be so easy to "get" that a kid (or an adult with a kid's comprehension level) can grasp it quickly.

There is a CONCEPT behind the language of your ad -- a storyline that may be rather complex overall, but which you've simplified through storytelling and imagery. The actual "thing" being bought may involve rocket science, but the buyer flips because of something basic like primate-level greed.

And no matter how much you work on your concept (which includes your USP, your "elevator chat", and your hook)...

... it will never be simple enough for everyone to grasp.

One of the more frustrating things you will ever encounter as a marketer... is meeting folks with vast "raw" intelligence (high IQ, academic success, lots of random knowledge)...

... who are, in the real terms of trying to live well, dumb as bricks.

I just got my first "One Star" review on my book on Amazon.

That doesn't bug me much -- I'm never been everybody's cup o' tea, and my stuff just naturally offends a huge slice of the public.

Screw 'em, is my motto. I'm here to help real entrepreneurs.

But there's a larger lesson in this new review -- the woman rejects my entire book (and all the lessons in it) because she believes I misused a word in a sentence.

This is fascinating, as a case study in how a not-insignificant part of ALL markets will regard your efforts to reach them. She's wrong about the misused word, first off. It's grammatically acceptable, according to Merriam-Webster.

But more to the point... it's a word that is used in speech patterns all over the world. And an early lesson that any good copywriter must master is that you do NOT write to please English teachers... rather, you write to please the inner "ear" of your reader.

You write like you talk.

Your ad copy is a conversation you're having with your prospect. (This is more pronounced in Video Sales Letters, because the narrator is actually talking over the video.)

This bad review suggests my book (and me, by inference) is "not for copywriters"... based on a wrong perception of a single word, under the very wrong notion that grammar or word-choice in an ad shouldn't follow the often-grammatically-wrong speech patterns of the markets we're after.

I don't wanna get too deep into this. But this woman spent precious time crafting her argument, posting her review, and is trying to influence others from a perch she believes is "right", compared to my "wrongness".

Uh, okay. Nothing to be done about bad reviews -- when you stick your head above the trenches in biz, you're gonna take on pot-shots.

It's part of the gig. No biggie.

But the larger lesson is important:

*Part of any market you go after will be populated with nut-balls, trolls with grudges, and idiots intent on sharing their idiocy with others.*

### Follow the Crime Blotter

Another habit I picked up from Gary Halbert.

Sometimes, you just gotta **get a reality check on the humans sharing space with you on the planet...** even though they seem to exist in a different dimension altogether...



Don't allow them to sour you on the market.

They may engage you (and I've been interrupted during seminars by these whacko's, who desperately want to sow chaos in everyone's lives, so they don't feel so isolated in their whackdom), they may buy and then dominate your staff's time with complaints and refund requests, and they may spread bad PR about you with the energy of a personal vendetta.

You WILL encounter these types in biz. It cannot be avoided.

A huge part of the human population we share the world (and all the markets) with are "unclear on the concept"... and intent on proving their flawed thinking is actually the right way to go.

And to hell with reality and pesky facts.

Shine it on.

Spend as little time as possible dealing with the chaos these people sow, and do NOT allow them to rob your actual customers or good prospects of your best energies and efforts.

Just continue to keep it simple.

And never be surprised when your 5th-grade copy completely befuddles a brainiac out there, who then makes it their mission to set you straight.

## Post #47 - News got you down?

Sales tanking, creditors swarming, angst bubbling up in your gut?

Write yourself a letter, outlining all your troubles & all your immediate plans.

Be specific, just get it all out of your head (where it's causing trouble) & onto the written page (where you know it can found, so you can forget about it).

Hide it for 24 hrs. Let your unconscious work on solutions. It works.

# Post #48 - There's real honesty in letting your disappointment show,

but not acting out too much about it.

Basically, communicate your displeasure so it's received, and then deal with your feelings yourself.

However, as soon as the situation changes ("Oh, we ARE going for a walk after all? Great!"), drop the mope and allow good replacement feelings to wash over you completely.

Essentially, clear your brain's emotional browser of all history.

This is living in the moment -- something that stoic, deep-in-denial, passive-aggressive non-communicative humans can adopt to instantly alter the theme of our lives.

# Post #49 - Seriously... what's your ego done for you lately?

Except get you in trouble, and make people mad at you.

We all have a small town's worth of urges, voices, and beliefs roiling inside our heads... and most of them are going in different directions.

The goal of living a "centered" life means knowing yourself, and ALL of your competing behavior/thinking quirks.

And your ego is not "you" -- it's a malformed, usually immature pouting brat, and your happiness with life will soar once you learn to control it.

Just sayin'...

# Post #50 - Operative question for a troubled world:

"What are you gonna do about it?"

Today, you will face snark, cynicism, mockery, disbelief, hostility and a sociopathic disregard for everything you consider valuable in life.

Heck, you may even deserve it.

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune are never-ending.

Still, the question stands: "What are you gonna do about it?"

How you respond, as a habit, will determine the arc of your life from here forward.

# Post #51 - The only way I've been able to figure myself out...

... has been to chart the path I took to get to this point.

I got a lot of hard miles on me, and I have a nice knack for always choosing the most difficult way to do anything.

I can testify that, if things seem tuff right now for you, don't despair.

All things pass and become memory eventually -- you either learn your lesson, or you go through the test again until you do.

The key, for me, has been to laugh heartily at myself, not take defeat personally, and never quit adjusting to reality.

Nobody lives a perfect life.

*Chew up scenery when you can, recharge when you're spent, and put a lid on all drama-queen behavior.*

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Life is a complex ongoing adventure in different worlds of emotion, sensation, thinking and meta-physical properties... and you're in charge of writing much of the script.

Not all of it, but enough to matter.

## Post #52 – Still jonesing for more...

... then check out my first course for marketers - it's a transformational thrill-ride you that you can devour in a weekend...

...yet, it will completely arm you with the simple-yet-brutally-effective advertising chops required to slaughter your competition and dominate your niche as quickly as possible.

It's called "Kick-Ass Copywriting Secrets of a Marketing Rebel" ... and you cannot even imagine yet how much advanced business know-how and specific selling tactics this easy-to-absorb course short-cuts for you.

This is what to do next, and how to do it for maximum results... from creating your first product, to finding and persuading your first mob of deliriously-happy customers, to quickly establishing yourself as the most dangerously-good competitor in your niche.

So zip over to [Kick-Ass Copywriting Secrets](#) and grab your copy today.

Your satisfaction is, of course, guaranteed. You don't risk anything by seeing what's up.

This is, after all, the same course that sits on so many successful entrepreneurs' desks, dog-eared and well-used as the main resource guide for creating ads and fortifying marketing channels.