

FILE>MAKE A COPY

From:

W-A-Y West of Jewfish Creek

Dear Friend & Subscriber,

Have you ever wondered how I decide what to write about in this newsletter every month?

One man suggested I write a year or two's worth in advance and then go on vacation. But I don't like that idea. To me, it seems like cheating. I feel obligated to try to make each issue both timeless and timely. I don't always succeed but I sure try. In any case, most often, I don't decide what I'm going to write about until just before I sit down to do it.

It keeps me on edge. It keeps me fresh.

In truth, I've taken a leaf from my favorite entertainer, Jimmy Buffet. He's the singer/songwriter of "Margaritaville," "A Pirate Looks At 40" and many other musical classics that are dear to my heart. Anyway, somewhere in the middle of each of his concerts, he asks all the other musicians to leave the stage and he ends up there all alone with nothing but his guitar and his talent. He does this, he says, because it keeps him sharp and in touch with his audience.

It's a good idea. And, in my own way, I do the same thing. How I do it is by traveling all over the U.S. visiting with my clients and also giving talks before various marketing organizations. Recently, I've spoken to direct marketing groups in Seattle, Washington, Portland, Oregon, Redondo Beach, California, Cherry Hill, New Jersey, Chicago, Illinois and Spokane, Washington.

Usually, my talks are not what people expect. You see, I strive to teach people what they really need to know as opposed to what they think they need to know. Most often, marketing groups expect me to speak on how to write direct mail copy. But usually, even though they don't know it, most people in marketing simply aren't ready for a discussion on how to write copy. You see, it doesn't really matter much about the quality of your direct mail copy if you haven't yet learned how to get your mail delivered, opened and read. To me, this point is so important, so vital important, that, at the risk of being redundant, I'm going to spend a few moments discussing it here once again.

I make no excuses for this. Nothing is truly redundant if your audience hasn't yet completely got the message.

So, to begin with, here is the typical sequence of events that go into the making of a direct mail promotion. First, the camera ready copy is delivered to a printer who prints the letters, the envelopes and everything else that makes up the package. Then, all this is delivered to a lettershop that folds and stuffs everything into the carrier envelopes, seals the envelopes and arranges

them in zip sequence, ties them in bundles and trundles them off to the loading dock of the nearest post office.

What happens at the loading dock of the P.O. is that the letters are weighed to determine how many there are and how much postage is due. Then, the lettershop pays the postage, gets a receipt and gives that receipt to the mailer.

What happens next is the post office routes this already sorted mail to wherever it's supposed to go and sends it on its way. When your mail arrives in the city to which it is addressed, it is sorted into carrier route sequence and then given to the local carriers who deliver it to your prospects.

Ho-hum. Yawn. This is pretty boring stuff, isn't it?

Except for one thing. You see, quite often, this is not what happens to your mail. Try the following more realistic scenario and see if it doesn't wake you up a bit.

First, let's say you've contracted for 100,000 pieces of mail to be printed, addressed, folded, stuffed, sealed and delivered to the post office. O.K. What really is likely to happen is, first, perhaps only 90,000 of your letters actually will get delivered to the loading dock of the P.O. Why? The answer is simple. You see, it is much more profitable for a lettershop to produce only 90% of your mail and then charge you for producing 100% of it. But wait! What about that receipt? How in the world do you get a postal employee to sign a receipt saying you deposited 100,000 pieces of mail when you only deposited 90,000?

I'll leave that one up to you.

So anyway, what really happens next is, a portion of your mail is thrown away right there at the loading dock.

And, moving right along, what happens to the rest of your mail that actually makes it to your city of destination is that more of it gets thrown away by the various mail carriers who just don't want to deal with it.

And, of course, since you're mailing bulk rate, none of your letters get forwarded to those people who have moved -- even though they did leave a forwarding address.

What does all this mean? Let's do some arithmetic and see if we can't get a clearer picture of what's happening here. Take a gander at these numbers:

10%
17%
<u>7%</u>
Total 34%

Here's what the numbers mean: The 10% represents my guess as to how much of the mail you paid for is not delivered to the post office by your lettershop. NOTE: Do not forget, however, that there are many totally honest lettershop owners who never cheat at all! What I'm saying here is that 10% is my "guesstimate" as to how much lettershops on the average do not produce.

Now, let's go on to the 17% figure. What that represents is how much of your PROPERLY ADDRESSED bulk rate mail does not get delivered. I got this number from reading articles in various marketing publications who were reporting on studies done on this subject.

And lastly, the 7% figure represents the average percentage of bad names that are on almost any list that cannot be reached by any class of mail.

Hmn? What we've got here is a situation whereby...

**Only 66% Of The
Mail You Paid For
Got Delivered To
Your Prospect's Mailbox!**

Cheer up, it gets worse. Recently, the Wall Street Journal reported on a study that proved that Americans throw away 57% of all advertising mail (bulk rate) without even opening the envelope. But that's the good news. That study was done a few years ago. The most recent study shows that now...

**75% Of All Advertising
Mailed Is Discarded
Unopened!**

Uh, let's see now. If only 66% of your mail gets delivered and 75% of that 66% gets tossed, that means only 16.5% of all that mail you spent big bucks on ever gets delivered and opened.

Do you see why I often am reluctant to teach people how to write better copy before they understand the above? I mean really, what's the use? What does it matter how brilliant your words are if 83.5% of them are trashed before your letter is ever looked at?

So, once again - mail 1st Class. Make it personal. And make it look personal!

And now, back to the question I posed at the beginning of this letter on how I decide what to write about each month. What I try to do, by keeping "in touch" through all my speaking engagements and in-person client work, is not so much to find out what people expect to hear from me but rather to learn what they really...

Need To Hear!

And what is it my sensitive, ever-questing antennae tell me my readers need to be advised of? What is it at this precise point in time that I believe you, as a reader of this newsletter and a marketing person needs most to consider?

You're not gonna like this. At least, many of you are not. Because, what I'm going to suggest is going to make many of you uncomfortable. You're going to fight me on this. You're going to say that, in your case, I'm off base. Nevertheless, I'm still going to suggest you consider this radical action and here it is...

I Suggest You Commit "Image Suicide!"

Please allow me to explain this concept and I think you'll then understand why it's such an important idea. Question: What group of professionals have the highest rate of suicide (real suicide) in the U.S.? Answer: Psychiatrists.

Why? Well, first off, most psychiatrists are nutso anyway but that's not the entire story -- You see, shrinks are supposed to have all the answers. Therefore, if a psychiatrist breaks down sobbing and confesses he can't control his life, that action will be devastating to his image as a great, all-knowing father figure to whom you can trust your deepest and darkest thoughts and feelings.

And so, rather than destroy his image, he literally destroys himself!

Really. Literally. For real.

Now, let's talk about how this relates to marketing. One of the groups I addressed most recently is PIMA which stands for Professional Insurance Mass Marketers Association. There are many good people in that organization. But boy, are they ever being shortchanged by the people who do their creative work. In fact, of all the groups I've addressed over the last 15 years, I believe their direct mail may be the very worst I've ever seen. What's particularly awful, is they are selling a rather sophisticated financial product, yet their mail looks like it was put together by a carnival barker.

Conversely, many members of PIMA are difficult to enlighten because so many of them are so "frozen" in their thinking and overly concerned about their "image." Truly, this particular group is nothing if not conservative. Conservative, traditional, hidebound and emotionally frozen.

And when it comes to their direct mail, you can be 100% sure all of it is "conventional."

Conventional Junk Mail!

Now, please don't get me wrong. I don't mean to demean this fine group of people. No. What I'd really like to do for them is bring them out of the dark ages as far as their marketing is concerned. But it's tough. Especially so, because "image suicide" is never easy and this is especially true for people caught in the "previous investment trap" of being steeped in conventional wisdom. However, if you've got the guts to give it a try...

The Payoff Can Be Enormous!

An example. Years ago when I was still a partner in Halbert's Inc., the coat-of-arms company, I was known far and wide as the "boy wonder" of direct mail. Everybody back then thought my innate creativity (?) was the key to my success but really, there was a far more important factor. Namely...

**I Was Always
Willing To Learn!**

From anyone. Friend, foe, moron, genius...ANYONE! You see, I believe a truly wise man can even learn something from a moron but a person locked into his "expert image" can't learn anything from anyone.

Anyway, back in those days there was a brilliant man named Ed Mayer who taught classes all around the country on the subject of direct mail. Ed was known (deservedly) as the "Dean of Direct Mail." In any case, one of his courses was on basic direct mail and the other was on advanced direct mail. Well, it came to pass that I decided to attend Ed's "Basic Direct Mail Institute" at the Forty Acres Club in Austin, Texas (a great town) and, while there, people expressed amazement at my presence.

"But you're the best," they'd say. "What in the world are you doing here at a direct mail course for beginners?"

To me, it was simple. I went to the basic course to make sure there was nothing I had forgotten or had overlooked or simply never known. I went there because I've learned I can learn a lot from the fresh, uncluttered minds of beginners. I went there because...

**I Wasn't Nearly As
Concerned About My
"Image" As I Was
About My Results!**

But what if my "image" as the all-knowing direct mail expert would have stopped me from going? What would have happened then? It's no big mystery. What would've happened then is I simply wouldn't have learned all that neat stuff I'm still using today.

So, the first benefit of "image suicide" is that...

**It Gives You The
Psychological Freedom
To Learn!**

Here's another thing. In my opinion, the profession of advertising has more incompetence per capita than any other American profession except psychiatry. In fact, most ad agencies don't even know what good advertising is. They don't even know what they are trying to do! Hear this. Good advertising is simply...

Salesmanship Multiplied!

Howsoever, you can't multiply zeros! Therefore, if you don't have any salesmanship ability in the first place, how in the world are you going to

multiply it? You're not. You're going to end up creating stupid, expensive campaigns that feature dancing raisins and cute little jingles.

Or, if you end up working for people who belong to PIMA, you'll create direct mail that totally ignores the vitally important fact that...

**The People Of America
Sort Through Their Mail
While Standing Over
A Wastebasket!**

I guess I caused quite a stir with my talk. Those people had a jillion questions for me. And later, at a cocktail party, some people were going around saying, "Did you hear that arrogant SOB? Who does he think he is anyway, going around saying our direct mail is the worst he's ever seen?"

Ah, but there were others. The truly smart ones who were willing to learn, who said, "Yeah, but did you hear what he was saying? How much sense it makes? Let's try it."

And those people called me and subscribed to this letter and opened up a new avenue of communication and those people, I bet, will soon have more business from PIMA than all the rest of those "frozen" marketing experts (I call them "shallow breathers") who are so protective of their precious "image" that they can't be open-minded enough to really learn anything about anything.

Think I'm wrong? Well, you just keep your eye on Jackalyn Stouffer, Catherine L. Cox, Mike Garee and Susan Raef.

Now, let's go on to a discussion about how "image suicide" can immediately help your bottomline profits. Another of the groups I spoke with recently is a group of coin dealers who were charged \$5,000 apiece to attend a 3-day seminar where I was (as the guest of Jay Abraham) the featured speaker. Let me ask you something: What would you say to a group of hard-nosed, capitalistic coin dealers who paid \$5,000 to hear YOUR pearls of wisdom? Here was my question:

**"Is There Some Law That Says
That In Order To Be A Coin
Dealer You Have To Have A
'Charisma Bypass'?"**

The reason I asked that question is because so many coin dealers seem to me to take their business so seriously that they are so stiff they almost squeak when they walk. They give their companies names like FIRST AMALGAMATED INTERNATIONAL FIDUCIARY BULLION AND COIN DEPOT OF NEW ENGLAND and so forth.

Kinda puts you off, doesn't it?

A far better name would be John Smith Coin Company. You know, people respond to people. Warm people. Consider this: Many utterly beautiful women spend many lonely nights all by themselves. Why? Simply because, when an eligible, young man sees one of those frozen-faced beauties in a nightclub or a restaurant, he

is often too intimidated to make an approach. Is that what you want? To have your would-be customers come to your cold, forbidding place of business, enter your marble lobby, gaze wonderingly at the 747 jet-type console manned by your haughty, aloof, Nordic receptionist and then felt a little ashamed because all he wanted was to buy an Indian Head penny or a few silver dollars?

What's that? You say you don't have a big, imposing building with a ice-cold receptionist? You say you do most of your business through ads or direct mail? Not to worry. You can still practice intimidation with the format of your mail or the "look" of your ads. Just print your letterhead so it looks like it would be used by a big New York law firm. Use sentences like this:

"Please be advised that we have been informed of your possible need for a comprehensive insurance vehicle encompassing all aspects of your fiduciary liability."

Yuk! And while I'm at it, you want to know the silliest question I hear over and over whenever I lecture? It goes something like this:

"Yes, Gary. What you are saying is fine for most products and services but our customers are different. They are more sophisticated. You can't talk down to them."

Whoa! I don't talk down to anyone. Except, of course, true idiots like most attorneys and all psychiatrists. You know, I am probably responsible for more successful direct response advertising than almost anyone you'll ever meet. My clients are often huge, multi-national, multi-million dollar corporations that sell incredibly sophisticated products and services. Yet, no matter how large the company or how complex the product, I always slave to bring the sales message down to a human level. And, one of the ways to do that is to "break the image" that is normally used in their sales literature. You see, another big advantage of "image suicide" is...

**You Make Yourself
More Accessible To
Your Customers!**

Lighten up. Let your hair down a little. Let people see a few of your warts. Come down off that lofty perch. Stop trying to impress and start trying to "humanize" your selling efforts. Hey. Most of us are not curing cancer or splitting the atom. The fate of the western world truly does not hinge on the success of our efforts.

But don't get me wrong. I'm not saying you shouldn't take yourself seriously. Or that you should act like a clown. Or that you have to be as crude and rude and ridiculous as me. I'm also not saying what you are doing is not important. What I am saying is that the girls who get the most dates (and the

ads that make the most sales) are those that appear warm, non-threatening and assessable.

And human.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Halbert
Flawed Human

P.S. I feel funny about this issue of my letter. It scares me a little. It's not what my readers are used to. Reading it over I realize that this issue is really a lecture. As you know, most of my issues are jam packed with immediately practical "how to" info that is extremely specific.

Well, fear not. Next month I'm reverting to style and I'm going to reveal a little something I've been saving that just might double your income. It's a little-known "remote control" mass marketing technique I bet you've never heard of.

So there. But please, in the meantime, give some thought to what I've written here.

It's important.

P.P.S By the way, if you'd like to order a video of Sir Gary "in concert," open the sealed envelope. Otherwise, there's no need since all it contains is a crass commercial message.