



THE NEWSLETTER GUY®

## WHAT YOU'RE MARKETING IS YOU

> *From front page*

was setting me up for business failure?

January turned harsh in a hurry. On successive days that first week in 1992, I lost two of my three biggest customers. The recession hit California hard, and for the first time in my business career, I felt fear. Would I survive, or would I have to get a real job?

The facts seem to be that 90% of businesses fail in the first five years. I wonder what percentage of that statistic includes those who simply give up, who just throw up their hands and say, "This

isn't worth it."

And so, I learned my first valuable business lesson the hard way — no matter how successful you are, you always have to market yourself. Constantly. Consistently. Continuously. You must be unrelenting in reminding potential customers that you exist.

I've tried a little bit of everything, looking for the right marketing mix for my business. Some strategies worked, some didn't. I tried the Yellow Pages, advertised in business journals and joined networking groups.

I wrote articles, sent

press releases and dabbled in direct mail. What worked the best was a combination of being slightly different in my marketing approach than my competition, and doing the little things that few people do.

For example, I return all my phone calls promptly. I send people handwritten notes when they do nice things for me, and gifts when those nice things turn into business.

But the best marketing move I made was getting involved in my first networking group, in December 1992. Now I embrace networking and do

everything I can to support the people in my network. I make sure they know I have a stake in the success of their business.

This commitment has been returned many times over. It illustrates the most profound lesson I learned about marketing — who you are means more than what you're selling.

It's still true — I am celebrating my 25th anniversary in 2006!

**Inside  
Ten guaranteed-  
to-work  
business growth  
strategies**

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# The Write Stuff

from



THE NEWSLETTER GUY®

## WHAT YOU'RE MARKETING IS YOU

By **Jeff Rubin**  
The Newsletter Guy®

*Author's Note: I first published this article in 2001, when I celebrated my 20th year in business. Now I'm at 25 years and have changed my business name to The Newsletter Guy®. I thought the article was worth repeating.*

**T**he first week of 1992 was a gentle one in the San Francisco Bay Area, unlike the torment of the year before. That

January, a cold wave (well, at least for Northern Californians!) swept through the area, destroying plants, increasing sales for Eddie Bauer and L.L. Bean, and bringing snow (gasp!) to downtown San Francisco for about a minute and 30 seconds.

While the radio bemoaned bumper-to-bumper traffic on



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clogged freeways, I took my daily 40-foot commute to my home office, complete with a computer, radio, TV, coffee warmer and a dog at my feet. Business boomed and I was comfortable, tucked away in my second-floor sanctuary.

***"Be careful  
about reading  
health books.  
You may die  
of a misprint."  
— Mark Twain —***

I belonged to no networking groups, chambers of commerce or other business organizations. I did little or no marketing of any kind — why bother when business was steady?

How could I know that my idyllic, isolated working world

> *To back page*

A QUARTERLY COMPENDIUM OF WRITING TIPS AND OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

SPRING 2006



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## WRITE WELL TO SELL! — PROSPECTS AND CUSTOMERS LEERY OF LOOSE LANGUAGE

By Craig Harrison and Jeff Rubin

**D**espite their attention to dazzling four-color brochures, letter-perfect newsletters and exquisitely designed, double-sided business cards, business people constantly undermine their opportunities for new customers through sloppy language skills and inappropriate word choices in their communications.

### STOP BEING SLOPPY . . . PRECISION IS PREFERRED

Professionalism counts in the business world. Using language properly shows

good taste, good schooling and an understanding of professional protocols.

#### • **Affect vs. effect:**

*Affect* is a verb meaning *to change or influence*: "Good writing skills can affect your ability to get new business."

*Effect* is a noun meaning *a result or outcome*: "Your language skills can produce the desired effect."

*Effect* is also a verb meaning *to bring about*: "You can effect a positive outcome by demonstrating good language skills."

• **Unique:** Sadly, very unique isn't. *Unique* means *one of a kind, unparalleled, without peer*. Adding "very" in front of unique is as meaningless as doing something 110%.

• **Figuratively vs. literally:** When you say you could eat a horse, you are speaking



CRAIG HARRISON (L) AND JEFF RUBIN SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT GOOD LANGUAGE SKILLS WHEREVER THEY TRAVEL. IN THIS CASE, IT'S AT WRIGLEY FIELD IN CHICAGO.

*figuratively*. Only the Donner party meant it literally. One consultant told his client he literally killed to get a past

job. Really? Who wants to hire a murderer?

• **Degrees** are important. So is understanding the

degree to which you are in favor or opposed to something. When you tell people you are 360° opposed to something, they won't hire you since you obviously failed geometry. 180° denotes complete opposition. Once you've come 360° you've come full circle and are back where you started — without passing Go!

#### • **More than vs. over:**

*Over* is a preposition and generally refers to spatial relationships: "The plane flew over San Francisco." Use *more than*: "Silicon Valley has more than 10,000 programming jobs."

#### • **Myriad vs. a myriad**

**of:** *Myriad* means *many*: "He has a myriad of problems" is incorrect. That's saying, "He has a many of problems." Instead, say, "He has myriad problems, not the least of which is a lack of command of the English language."

#### • **Money is important:**

Don't ask about *renumeration* if you want to be paid. There's no such word. The correct word is *remunerate*, which means *to give someone money or to be paid*, which you will be when you use it.

• **Irregardless** is not a word. Regardless of what you've heard, the correct word is *regardless*.

#### • **Interred vs. interned:**

*Interned* refers to serving time behind bars, as in a jail or prison. As bad as that is, being *interred* is worse, because that means you were buried. You'll never get

ahead if you're already six feet under!

#### • **Presidents and Olympians**

are forever. When you speak of a United States president such as Bill Clinton, George Herbert Walker Bush or Jimmy Carter, they're still President Clinton, Bush or Carter.

When you refer to Olympians Mary Lou Retton, Billy Mills or Peggy Fleming, they're still Olympians (not past or former Olympians). Even Olympic competitors who don't win a medal are Olympians because they were on the Olympic team.

#### ON PRONUNCIATION . . .

These days alternate pronunciations are plentiful: *harassment* (accent on the first syllable, which is correct, or the second syllable, which is not), *nuclear* (nuclear is acceptable until 2008), and *database* (pronounced DAH-ta-base or DAY-ta-base).

By the way, the singular of *data* is *datum*, the plural of *stadium* is *stadia* and *media*

is plural for *medium*.

TV is a *medium*. Radio, too. Print (newspapers) is another. TV, radio and newspapers together are forms of *media*.

Customers do business with those they know, like and trust. Speaking and writing well builds trust with customers. It's a sign of your professionalism, suggesting you will adhere to other standards of good business: honesty, fairness and service.

When you speak and write well the world respects you and wants to do business with you.

*Professional speaker Craig Harrison founded Expressions of Excellence!™ to help people at all levels express their excellence as leaders, communicators and professionals. He may be reached at www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com, e-mailed at excellence@craigspeaks.com or called at 510/547-0664.*

*Reach Jeff Rubin, The Newsletter Guy®, at 510/724-9507, 877/588-1212 or jeff@thenewletterguy.com. There's lots of free information on newsletter writing and design at www.thenewletterguy.com.*

*Jeff is also the founder of National Punctuation Day, which is celebrated September 24. Check out incorrectly punctuated photos at www.nationalpunctuationday.com.*

## I'D APPRECIATE A REFERRAL

I'm trying to build my business and I need your help.

Will you refer me to a company that needs help with its existing newsletter, or a business, association or non-profit you've worked with that has talked about doing a newsletter but hasn't done one?

I'm looking for companies, associations and non-profits that are seeking more effective ways to communicate with their employees, customers, members and donors.

I would not only appreciate your referral, but I will reward you handsomely if it turns into my customer. Thanks for your help.

— Jeff Rubin

## TEN GUARANTEED-TO-WORK BUSINESS GROWTH STRATEGIES

- 1 Don't be cheap. Present a polished image.
- 2 Get in front of your customers at least six times a year.
- 3 Return calls promptly.
- 4 Identify and sell your value.
- 5 Be a problem solver.
- 6 Set fair rates that attract the clients you want. This way you won't have to charge for every breath you take.
- 7 Be reliable.
- 8 Maintain high standards of integrity, ethics and quality.
- 9 Say thank you.
- 10 Be patient. It takes time to grow, so take a long term view of your business.

**Spend less time chasing money and more time building relationships. Successful businesses depend on relationships, and relationships take time.**