



Put it in Writing will help you get your newsletter done on time, every time. We offer crisp writing, eye-catching design and punctual delivery.

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Jeff Rubin

I'D APPRECIATE A REFERRAL

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

Do you know of a company that could use my assistance with their existing newsletter, or a business or association 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

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The Write Stuff

A quarterly compendium of writing tips and other useful information

SURVIVING A HOME REMODEL



JEFF RUBIN

Did you know that 18% of couples who remodel their homes end up in divorce court?

I didn't either, but as my wife and I embarked on an extensive home remodeling project late last year, friends eagerly imparted the grim statistics.

Well, our project, which included two bathrooms and the kitchen, is done. We started in November 2003, and finished in April 2004. We're still married.

We did a lot of research and shopping to make sure we had the right contractors and materials. None of the horrible contractor experiences people warned me about occurred, there were no delays, and the job finished two days ahead of schedule.

One of the most pleasant parts of the process was meeting Marie Alcantor, who sold us all of our kitchen appliances. I can't recall a situation in my life where I willingly gave someone so many thousands of my dollars without hesitation. Read the accompanying story and you'll find out why.

SERVICE ALWAYS TRUMPS PRICE

By Jeff Rubin

My wife and I first met Marie Alcantor in October 2003 when we went to Friedman's

Microwave and Appliance in Pleasant Hill to look at appliances. Several hours later, we had more education about refrigerators, ranges, microwave

> *Inside*



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SERVICE ALWAYS TRUMPS PRICE

> **From front page** hoods and dishwashers than any homeowner has a right to have.

That's all part of Marie's master plan.

"My job here is to sell appliances, but first I have to take care of the customer," says Marie. "At the first place I worked their philosophy was 'sell, sell, sell.' The second place was 'sell, sell, sell and then take care of the customer.' Here it's 'take care of

the customer, take care of the customer, take care of the customer and I don't care what else you do.'

That first day was an experience I'll never forget. My wife, Norma, and I got an extensive explanation of each feature of each appliance. Marie spent about two hours with us that day. We left without making a single purchase.

The next week, after checking some other appliance stores, we were back, with more questions. There was not a single question I asked that Marie did not have the answer to. That day we spent about \$5,000.

But the good service did not end with the sale. During the kitchen reconstruction I misplaced one of the appliance manuals. I called Marie for another copy; she said she'd get one out to me that day. When it arrived I realized she had photocopied each page and stapled the pages together. I can only imagine how much time it took her to do that.

What are the customer service lessons we can learn from Marie and how can we apply them to our own businesses? Listen to her words of wisdom.

"I like everything about appliances," Marie says. "I like



MARIE ALCANTOR

people. I like dealing with customers, listening to what their needs are. At many stores the salespeople don't know what they're talking about. It's very frustrating.

"We get extensive training in customer satisfaction, training and product knowledge and following up. We're told that customer service is first and foremost, always. I do whatever I can do to make any situation right.

"I see myself doing this forever. It's exciting and I love it. I like to talk, I like the appliances, and I like to tell people what they can have in their homes; what's the latest and greatest. And I like to help people. I care if the customer is happy. I take that very personally."

Marie Alcantor may be reached at 925/602-1360.

Put it in Writing Partners

We recommend these businesses, which give discounts to our readers:

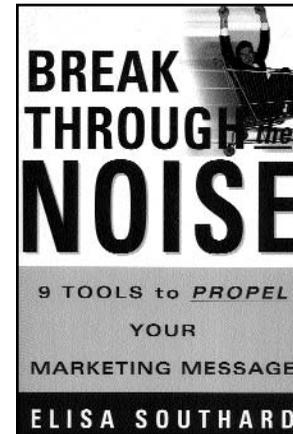
ALPHAGRAPHICS, Walnut Creek, 925/937-4700 (Greg).

CRAFTSMAN TRADE PRESS, (printer), Concord, 925/521-0156 (Ric).

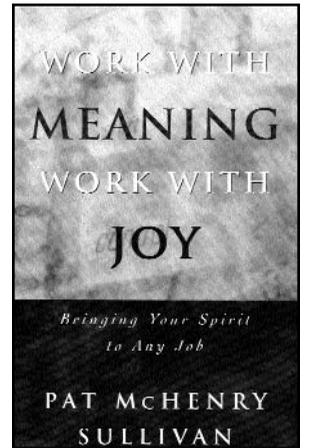
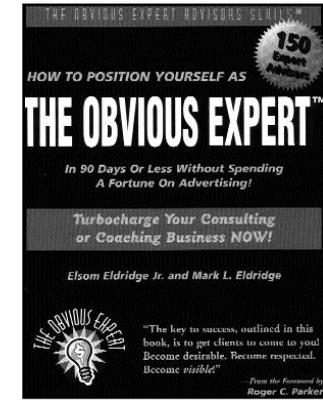
PINOLE COPY CENTER, Pinole, 510/223-8901 (Judy).

SCAN ART GRAPHICS, (pre-press), Emeryville 510/595-2222 (Fred or Ron). ■

THE BOOK NOOK



I'M PLEASED TO RECOMMEND THESE NEWLY PUBLISHED BOOKS, TWO BY MY EAST BAY FRIENDS ELISA SOUTHARD AND PAT SULLIVAN. I'M FLATTERED TO BE QUOTED IN EACH OF THEM. THEY ARE AVAILABLE AT AMAZON.COM.



WHAT JEFF'S CUSTOMERS SAY

"The theory of 'outsourcing' has always been something I avoided at work, taking on all the possible tasks I could handle. Over the years it became more than I could handle and I began seeking ways to make my job easier.

"When it came to the newsletter, I needed not only someone reliable, but also someone who understood our mission and knew how to bring it all together.

"Jeff has exceeded my expectations. He takes the time to understand the organization as a whole and therefore can make the entire

newsletter flow and state our purpose. He keeps me on track – two steps ahead rather than lagging behind and publishing a last-minute document.

"Working with Jeff is easy, fun, and rewarding. We have a wonderful working relationship, but it goes a step beyond – he takes the time to get to know the people who put their trust in him.

"Now if only he did payroll, technical support, and fundraising..."

RACHEL PIERSON

CHRISTIAN CHURCH FOUNDATION FOR THE HANDICAPPED
KNOXVILLE, TN

