



The Raphel Report

**Observations on marketing,
advertising, sales and
promotions
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KISS and Tell

I was listening to an interview on an FM station. The guest was W. Attlee Burpee whose business was selling small packages of seeds for flowers and produce. The host asked him his secret of success.

“My slogan,” he answered.

The host asked him what it was.

“Burpee's Seeds Grow,” he answered. “The first word tells you who we are. The second word tells you what we sell. The third word tells you what it does. Burpee's Seeds Grow.”

What a great explanation of good advertising! It follows the basic KISS formula advocated by many advertising experts: Keep It Short and Simple. (There are others who say another explanation is “Keep It Simple, Stupid.”)

What a simple easy-to-remember and effective slogan/theme!

Too much advertising is (a.) confusing (b.) difficult to understand (c.) doesn't relate to the merchandise - the list is almost endless.

A common fault in advertising: you give a special value that interests your customers. Then, as they continue reading, they need a magnifying glass to read the tiny print listing the reasons why they can't have what you initially promised.

Promising a benefit is a basic rule to use in your headline to have customers keep reading your ad. Don't negate the offer later on with “exceptions.”

The poet Robert Service wrote a line that said it well: “A promise made is a debt unpaid.”

Many businesses promise a specific result if you buy their merchandise. But wait, there in the small print at the bottom of the ad, they list items that don't follow the promise made in the big type headline that caught your attention.

Here are three examples of what advertisers say up front, then what they say in small print.

1. What they say up front: “Buy this car for only \$299 a month.”

What they say in small print at the bottom of the ad: “\$3,245 due at

signing.”

2. What they say up front: A large department store sends a mailer offering “20% off everything in the store!”

But wait: there, at the bottom of the postcard in tiny print, are more than 200 words (count them) on the items NOT on sale: “Designer clothing, name brand cosmetics, the towels and pillowcases department” and more and more and...hardly keeping it “simple.”

3. What they say up front: I received an e-mail for a manufacturer's offer for light bulbs saying, “Print this coupon and save \$1.00.”

What they say in small print: “Only good on PC's.” Well, me and my iMac are out of luck.

Singer Tom Waits said in well in one of his songs: *“The large print giveth and the small print taketh away.”*

Here are six rules, directions, guidelines for you to use in your advertising to give the customer confidence.

1. Keep It Short and Simple. (The KISS formula in action.) When new staff members are hired by the Nordstrom department store they are given an employee handbook. It has only one page and one rule. Rule#1: Use your good judgment in all situations. There will be no additional rules.” KISS!

2. Guarantees. They will increase sales because they give the customer confidence in buying from you. Research tells us less than 2% of your customers will ask for their money back when returning merchandise.

Here's the Guarantee from the Lands' End catalogue: “Guaranteed. Period. If you're not 100% satisfied with any item, at any time, make an exchange or return it for refund of the purchase price. No if, ands, or buts.”

Do those last five words inspire confidence in the mind of the buyers?
(Answer: YES!)

3. Avoid exceptions. Circuit City opened a new store to replace an existing store in our area. They sent a mailer to customers who had purchased merchandise from their old location. They enclosed a “gift card worth 10% of your total purchase.”

Well, with some caveats:

Bad: You had to spend \$50 or more.

Worse: The discount did NOT apply to Polk, Bose, Velodyne, Sharper Image, Disney products, gift card purchases, delivery fees ... and more. If you're having an opening celebration and you want me to come, see and buy, make your offer good for everything in the store.

4. Make it understandable. Can I have a show of hands of those who see but can't read the tiny white copy on your TV screen at the end of an advertisement for a bank loan or car offer? Do you wonder what those hundreds

of unreadable words really mean? Do they negate everything said up to that point? Are you now wary, uncomfortable, disbelieving?

5. But how much is it? Canon ran national ads of its Pixma photo printer to use with its cameras. Six different models were displayed with descriptions but with no prices! Surely some were an acceptable cost to interest me. But I did not know if they were affordable for me to buy or so expensive they were afraid to tell me.

6. Know what your customers like. Remember some personal information you discover in your conversations with them. Joe Girard, America's #1 automobile salesman, when talking to a first time car buyer, found out his/her birthday, hobbies, favorite candy, names and ages of the spouse, and the children.

When the customer returned a few years later for a new car, Joe had the person's favorite candy, a gift relating to his hobby and had sent birthday greetings to every member of the family the previous years. He was on third base heading for home with the sale before the customer sat down.

Whenever you say, write, market, advertise or promote an offer from your business, it's always best to leave your customer with a "KISS.