



# The Raphel Report

**Observations on marketing,  
advertising, sales and  
promotions  
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## Speaking Stories

One of the most difficult challenges business people face is public speaking. Because I've spent many years learning and practicing the art of speaking before an audience, I decided to put together some of the tips I've learned over the years in a new book, "Speaking Rules!"

"Speaking Rules!" will be published next year. As part of the book, I compiled stories that have helped me amuse audiences throughout my career. Here are a few of my favorites. You are encouraged to adopt and adapt them for your particular audience...and, of course, add stories of your own. And I wouldn't mind hearing some of your best stories. They might get into the new book!

### **1. Troubles? We got troubles right here in our business!**

*(The business mentioned in this true story is a supermarket. But you can change the name of the business to relate to your audience and it works just as well.)*

I was talking to a supermarket owner the other day and asked, "How's business?"

"Not bad," he said. "But it would be great if it wasn't for all the government rules and regulations."

"Really? Like what?" I asked.

"Well," he said, "I had an inspector come in the other day from the State Labor Department. He said, 'I understand you're paying less than minimum wage to your employees.'"

I replied, "Not me. You've got the wrong store. There's the butcher. Pay him \$800 a week. Can't be him. There's my secretary Frances. Pay her \$500 a week. Can't be her. (Pause) Oh, I've got the halfwit that works here. Pay him ten dollars a week and all the whiskey he can drink..."

"Aha!" said the inspector. "That's the guy I want to talk to."

"Aha," said the owner. "You're talking to him."

### **2. Giving rewards**

*(You can switch this from a bank to any business that's represented in the group to whom you are speaking.)*

A local bank wanted to be competitive with other banks. They decided to emphasize their customer service. They ran an ad saying if any of their tellers didn't say "thank you" at the end of a transaction, they would give the customer three dollars.

A few weeks later I went to the bank and made a deposit. No word from the teller. I said, "I think you owe me three dollars."

"Why?" she asked.

"Your ad in the paper. It said if any teller didn't say "thank you" at the end of a transaction, the bank would give me three dollars."

She thought for a moment and then said, "Oh, that was last month's promotion. We don't do that anymore."

### **3. Pessimist vs. Optimist**

I went for a haircut. My barber knew I did a lot of traveling and asked, "Where's your next trip?"

"I'm going to Rome," I replied.

"Really?" he said. "What airline are you taking?"

"Alitalia."

"Bad decision," he said. "It's a terrible airline. They take off late. The flight attendants are miserable. The food is horrible. Where are you staying?"

"The Excelsior."

"Bad choice," he said. "Everyone thinks it's a great hotel but it isn't. They won't have the room you reserved. You'll have to wait till mid-afternoon to check in. The food is really expensive. Are you doing any sightseeing?"

"Yes," I said. "We're going to St. Peter's Square to see the Pope."

The barber shook his head in disgust. "Are you kidding? You'll be in this huge square with thousands of people. The Pope will appear in a tiny window and you'll barely see him."

A few weeks later I returned. I went to the barber for another haircut.

"So, how was your trip to Italy?" asked the barber.

"Great!" I said.

"What airline did you take?"

"Alitalia. And it was a great trip. Took off on time. Arrived on time. The flight attendants keep bringing us food and snacks. Even wine – as much as we wanted."

"Really," said the barber. "OK. Where did you stay?"

"The Excelsior," I told him. "It was fantastic. Huge room. Giant bed. Fresh fruit every day. Overlooking the river. Marvelous."

"Uh," said the barber, now getting a little annoyed. "And what did you see when you were there?"

"Well, remember I told you we were going to see the Pope? We went to Saint Peter's

Square and the Pope came out on his balcony, waved to the huge crowd and suddenly stopped and pointed to me! He motioned to the Bishop next to him who quickly came down to the Square, pushed through the crowd and brought me back to the Pope.

“Really? Then what happened?”

“Well, I walked into the room and the Pope greeted me and I kneeled down in front of him and the Pope put his hand on my head.”

“Wow!” said my barber. “And what did he say?”

“He said... ‘Where did you get such a lousy haircut?’”

#### **4. How’s Business?**

*(This story is best told with a “Down East” Maine accent. Otherwise it does work, but not as well.)*

I was vacationing in Maine and saw a lobster fisherman working on his boat. I approached him and asked, “How’s business?”

He said, “Well, let’s see. Monday, I sold two lobsters. Tuesday I didn’t sell nothin’. Wednesday, the man that bought the two lobsters brought them back for a refund. I guess you’d have to say that Tuesday was my best day.”