



# The Raphel Report

**Observations on marketing,  
advertising, sales and  
promotions  
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## **From The File In My Desk**

When taking on a writing assignment, a column or a product to promote and/or advertise, I open my desk drawer, pull out my "idea" file and skim through the accumulated collection of articles, reports and anecdotes to find just the right item, idea or story to use.

On their own, they don't have the required words or finished thoughts to complete any project such as this monthly report. But, by themselves, they provide interesting subjects or fun bits of information that I can integrate into my writing to enhance the message.

Here are a few:

### ***Closing the Ginnungagap***

In ancient Norse mythology there is a world called Ginnungagap. The location is the void between worlds. The void exists today: It is the space between you and your customer. It is the must-cross-over bridge to build customer confidence.

Your journey to close the gap begins when you realize there are only two reasons anyone buys from you:

1. Good feelings
2. Solutions to problems.

Offer one and your customer is interested.

Offer both and you make a sale.

It begins when someone first comes into your business (the front door or when browsing through your catalogue or web site).

But you do not have to please everyone. Stanley Marcus of Neiman-Marcus fame said, "I have always believed if I can please the 5 percent of our customers who are the most discriminating, I'll never have any difficulty in satisfying the other 95 percent who are less critical. The latter know the difference between good and bad. But the former recognize the difference between better and best."

He knew. And so can you please those discriminating customers of yours by giving them good feelings and solutions to problems . . . and thus close the Ginnungagap.

### ***Don't Yell At Me!***

I often wonder at the success of the TV commercials where you have to run to the set to turn the volume lower because the announcer is screaming at you to (A) buy a cell phone service or (B) eliminate your bald spot or (C) purchase carpet for your living room at rock bottom prices or (D) name the product.

Do sales increase in proportion to the volume of sound?

There's an island called Ulawa in the Eastern Solomon Islands. The natives believe you can frighten trees to death by simply yelling at them. If a tree is too big to chop down, they believe you can kill it by creeping up on it very early in the morning and, suddenly, direct a loud piercing scream to the offending tree.

The tree doesn't fall right away so they have to keep yelling at the tree. Every morning for a month or more (probably coming from a different direction each time so the tree can't anticipate their arrival).

The natives believe the tree finally goes into shock and dies from being yelled at so violently and so often.

Now some trees do fall and die from old age or hurricane winds. But the natives are convinced the trees fall because of the yelling and screaming.

Today most of the trees on Ulawa still stand. But there remains the persistent belief among the natives that the only way the trees will fall if you yell and scream at them.

Perhaps some people buy the cell phone service, the hair replacement tonic or carpet because of the yelling. Not me. I have another solution: turn off the TV.

## **Tell me why others like you and I'll buy from you**

The first 15 pages of Harvey McKay's bestseller, "Swim with the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive" are filed with testimonials.

No foreword. No acknowledgment. Testimonials!

Not on the front or back of the book jacket cover. . .but the first 15 pages!

What was he doing? This: making you feel you will make one of the best decisions of your life by buying his book.

That's what testimonials are all about – other folks saying why you should buy a product or service.

They tell the story of the car salesman approached by one of his recent customers and asked, "Are you the salesman that sold me my car?"

Salesman: "Yes."

Buyer: "Well, would you mind telling me again the advantages of this car?"

The customer wants to be reinforced that the decision he made to spend his money was a wise one. Surveys tell us ads for a product are read ten times more by people who own the product.

Life insurance agents grow their business by asking new clients to use the same techniques that worked through the years: ask the person just-sold for names of others that might-be-sold.

So why aren't more testimonials used in advertising?

Automobiles: No testimonials.

Department stores: No testimonials.

Supermarkets: Few testimonials. Despite an ADVO Survey that asked people what part of a supermarket newspaper ad they read first. The percentage who said "testimonials" was 90 percent. The percentage of supermarkets who use testimonials in their ads – about five percent.

Testimonials are the ultimate aphrodisiac for a business. If you make someone happy they will tell three other people. If you make someone unhappy they will tell eleven other people. Keep the odds on your side. Not only make people happy but also ask them to tell others of the pleasant experience shopping with you.

## **Finally...a few quotations:**

"The definition of success is how you handle your disappointments."

--Joseph Papp

"Each consumer encounters 3,000 marketing messages a day."

--Tim Sanders, Yahoo Chief Solutions Officer

"Seize the moment. Remember all those women on the Titanic who waved off the dessert cart."

– Erma Bombeck

*I know I will use these quotes -- somewhere in future columns...*