



The Raphel Report

**Observations on marketing,
advertising, sales and
promotions
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The Five Magic Words of Selling

It was Gawaine le Coeur-Hardy who gave me the idea.

I met him in the classic short story by Heywood Broun, "The Fifty-First Dragon."

Gawaine was a student at the dragon-slaying school. On the eve of his graduation he was assigned to kill a dragon that was eating the lettuce in the school's garden.

Gawaine said he would accept the task only if he could have an "enchanted cap" to make himself invisible when the dragon appeared.

The headmaster said he would give him something far better than a magic cap - a word! All Gawaine had to do was say the magic word when the dragon appeared, and he would be able to cut off the dragon's head.

The magic word was "Rumplesnitz."

Gawaine memorized the word and when he saw the dragon in the garden, simply said the magic word and slayed the dragon. Within a few weeks he killed 50 dragons by simply using the "magic word" each time.

On his next trip to the forest, another dragon appeared, but Gawaine forgot the magic word! He was never heard from again.

Which proved to me the magic of words.

Is there a word or combination of words that also works in selling?

Is there some special phrase that, once used, increases sales, gives higher profits, provides bigger cars and longer vacations (not to mention an assortment of dragon heads to adorn the walls of your library)?

Is there some combination of vowels and consonants that, once learned, could be taught to others and increase the sales of goods and services and contribute to your economic well being?

Yes.

They were not easy to find. We researched the successful advertisements. We looked at direct mail pieces that pulled a great response. We read the books by advertising experts.

And we found a common denominator!

Every successful person-to-person sale, every good-pulling ad, every record-breaking direct mailer - each had a distinct, obvious and specific appeal from seller to buyer. We found pocketbooks opened faster, credit cards were given more quickly, and, above all, there was an enthusiasm for buying on the part of the customer if a simple five-word phrase was answered properly.

These are the magic five words: **“What’s in it for me?”**

The customer knows what's in it for you when they purchase your product or service. You take their money and put it in your register.

But what’s in it for them?

Why should they buy your product, spend for your services, take home your advertised item?

What makes their weary eyes, seeing hundreds of commercials daily in newspapers, magazines, on TV and billboards, suddenly snap alert when your name appears?

This: the magic five words - “What’s in it for me?”

Direct mail has a head start with these five magic words over all other advertising media. It has a built-in advantage: a me-and-thee relationship between buyer and seller not present or available in any other medium.

Most advertising is for anyone. Direct mail is for someone. Your customer knows that your mailing piece offers her alone something that is different, unique. With all the ways of communicating with customers, there is still something special about receiving a personal letter in the mail. It’s one-on-one. It’s personal. It’s effective. Here's why.

You’re a young man. You go on a date for the first time. You write her the next day and say, “I enjoyed being with you and hope we can get together again.” She would smile, thinking it was nice for you to send the note. Personal. One-on-one.

Now, imagine instead of writing the note, you place an ad in the local newspaper with the same message. Or contact a local radio announcer to broadcast the same words in a paid commercial.

She would be astonished, angry, embarrassed, lock herself in her room with an imagined attack of the flu and probably never speak to you again.

Why?

Because...the direct mail piece was to her alone. She was not anyone. She was someone.

I call the Kahala Mandarin in Honolulu to make a reservation. The operator tells me the room I stayed in before will be waiting for me and they’re looking forward to seeing me again. (What a fast computer to pull up that information while she's taking my reservation.)

Amazon sends me e-mails suggesting new titles to buy based on my previous purchases with them.

Loyalty programs in supermarkets were first used only as a replacement for tear-out newspaper coupons. They became far more effective when they mailed offers to these special customers based on what they previously bought. (Otherwise you have the customer asking, "Why do they send me special offers on dog food when I don't have a dog?" Or a dragon.)

Capture the customer's e-mail and snail mail addresses and send her (with her permission) information on products she has purchased in the past. New arrivals. Special sales. Effective and inexpensive.

When businesses do this, the customer knows they care. They answer the "what's in it for me" question.

Once you learn these magic words, do not simply give lip service. You must act them out every day so the words turn into habits.

Otherwise you will find yourself facing the same problem as Gawaine le Coeur-Hardy. When he knew what he had to do, he succeeded. But when he forgot...he failed.

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