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Issue 09, 2008



In This Issue

Ford Saeks Interview.....	1
Messages and Stuff.....	2
Marketing Stats.....	3
Ford Saeks Interview....	4
New Products.....	5
Lists & More.....	6
Ford Saeks Interview....	7
Classifieds.....	8
Ford Saeks Interview.....	9-18
Washington & Legal News.....	19

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Direct Marketing Success Story

*I hope you enjoy our one-on-one Interview with Ford Saeks,
our Direct Marketing Success Story for September 2008.*

by John D. Schulte

[Interview starts on page 4](#)

Messages, Opportunities and other stuff...

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###

Cleveland, OH - September 11, 2008 - In a tough economy, most small businesses can't afford to hire a public relations firm to finely tune their media pitches-until now.

A new website, YourPitchSucks.com, was launched today with the goal of providing professional public relations feedback at no cost for companies preparing story pitches to the media.

The process is simple: site visitors submit their written pitches online. Then a team of senior public relations professionals review the pitch and develop ideas for how to make it more compelling to journalists. YourPitchSucks.com then emails the revised pitch back to the person who submitted it along with an explanation of why the changes were made. The end result is a media pitch that should be significantly more interesting to reporters.

"Press releases don't work in most cases because they're not written properly, and they lack focus and the ability to tell a story," said Jim Kukral, web marketing expert and Founder of the project.

"YourPitchSucks.com provides professional support to improve these pitches as a service to both companies and journalists."

In addition to the free pitch review service at YourPitchSucks.com, the company offers a fee-for-service option for companies interested in more broad public relations support. For additional information please contact Jim Kukral at 216-272-4383 or at jim@jimkukral.com



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Popular at the NMOA

A simple rule of thumb for copy length

When deciding whether you need long copy or short - whether in a landing page, e-mail, or sales letter - follow this simple rule: short copy for generating leads, longer copy for generating orders.

"As a general proposition, an ad in which you are seeking only inquiries should be short, merely leading the reader down to the free booklet and the coupon," writes copywriter Robert Collier, "whereas an ad in which you are attempting to make the actual sale should be long enough to tell all about your offer.

"Some authorities will tell you to write only short, crisp ads, with plenty of white space - others to crowd in every word you can get. Both are wrong. There is no hard and fast rule as to how long an ad should be, except that it should be long enough to tell your story, but short enough to hold your reader's interest."

Source: Collier, Robert, "How to Make Money at Home in Spare Time by Mail," p. 154.

###

Viral marketing on overdrive

According to David Meerman Scott, author of the "New Rules of Marketing and PR," the number of people who download free content is 50X greater when you ask nothing in exchange for it.

He cites as an example an e-book he offered free, with no registration required, that has been downloaded 250,000 times.

Therefore, Scott advises you to drive traffic to an "ungated" landing page (no form to complete and submit before you can download the content) instead of a "gated" landing page where they must fill out a form first and submit their e-mail address before gaining access to your content.

"So many companies create great content and then put a gate on it and restrict the number of people who read it," he says. "It's sad, really. Yeah, they build 500 people in a list, but they could have had 10,000 people exposed to their ideas."

An even better idea: include a strong "bounce back" offer (e.g., another valuable free report) in your free viral content and put it on a gated landing page.

If 10% of the 250,000 people who downloaded Scott's offer had registered for such a bounce-back, he would have added 25,000 names to his e-list at zero cost.

###

Recently found on the web.

We recently came across a brand new way of searching online called 'Searchme.com' - it uses a simple interface just like Google, but it displays the results visually.

It's pretty cool and you can check it out: <http://www.searchme.com>

###

New free keyword discovery tool. Are people searching the Internet for your key words and phrases? A new free tool, Spacky, let's you find out fast. Just type in your key word. In seconds, Spacky tells you the number of searches performed on that key word - Google, Yahoo/Overture, and Microsoft Network. It's a great way to tell which of several key words you want to bid on or optimize your site for is actually the one getting the most activity. To use the Spacky keyword research tool free, click here now: <http://www.spacky.com>

Direct Marketing Success Story!

Direct Marketing Success Story Interview with Ford Saeks, founder of Prime Concepts

Ford Saeks
 Founder: Prime Concepts Group
 Headquarters: Wichita, KS
 Year founded: 1987
 Number of employees: 14
 Yearly Revenue: 1 to 5 million
 Website: PrimeConcepts.com
 Age: 47
 Hometown: Wichita KS (grew up in Minneapolis)
 Family: Fiancé, Aliesa George.
 Son age 20, Logan Vinopal

For over twenty years, Ford has been actively involved in the successful growth and operation of multiple business ventures in a variety of industries. He built his first business at age 16, reaped the profitable rewards and was labeled “A True Entrepreneur.” Since then, he successfully founded ten more companies, received three US. PATENTS, multiple trademarks, and developed a nice collection of intellectual property.

His patented products have sold millions and are sold worldwide through retail stores, mail-order catalogs, mass merchants and electronic retailers. He took risks, used his instincts, and figured out what worked in highly competitive marketplaces. Ford's extensive background in the business world provides his clients with a unique advantage.

JDS: What was your life like when you were a kid? Were your parent’s business owners, or show other entrepreneurial traits?

Ford: John, my life as a child was interesting. The short story is that I was adopted to parents that were divorced before the adoption was complete. I lived with my mother until age 12, then moved out on my own and lived in the housing projects of North Minneapolis paying \$17 a month for government housing. My entrepreneurial traits were created from having to become “street-smart” in a hurry.

I stayed in school, worked odd jobs as a cashier, shipping & receiving clerk, and roller skating rink DJ for groups typically over 500 people. Then at age 15, I received an audio tape program that was filled with several positive and inspirational concepts. It got me thinking in a whole new way. Instead of feeling like a victim, I began to think for creatively and look for opportunities.

That same year, I pulled out the yellow pages and looked at all of the different types of businesses that I could start. Keep in mind I was 15, in JR. high school with no money and odd job experience. I decided to start a Painting Company. (this is a great story if you want all of the details) Bottom line, by age 16 I had three crews of painters working in the city and I was earning \$35,000 a year. Each year making more, learning more. Not bad for a kid from the projects in 1976. I moved out of the projects into a nice apartment and grew my business. I learned how to create compelling offers, back them up with unique guarantees and get prospects to take action.

JDS: Did you have any business people you looked up to, or wanted to be like?

Ford: I knew I didn’t want to be poor and eat macaroni and cheese the rest of my life. When I lived in the

(“Ford Saeks,” Continued on page 9)

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Featured Products for Resale..



AVANI is a new line of Dead Sea products manufactured & developed by Dead Sea America Inc. All of our Dead Sea products are 100% made in Israel. The Dead Sea America Inc. is specializing in the manufacture & distribution of innovative & advanced skin-care cosmetic products formulated from the unique salts, mud & minerals of the Dead Sea, it is the policy of Dead Sea America Inc. to supply cosmetic products that are of the highest possible quality, made with choice natural ingredients specifically chosen for their environmentally friendly properties. None of the products offered are tested on animals.

Since the establishment it has been our primary goal to be different from others in our field by always being at the forefront of current trends & innovation and quality products. We offer a large collection of exclusive Dead Sea cosmetics & beauty products and provide a full-service of private label. Seeking resellers of all types. Visit our website at <http://www.avani-deadsea.com>



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Lists For Marketing & Advertising Opportunities!

Dunn and Bradstreet E-mail DB

Nearly 4 million e-mail addresses are available on this file managed by Infinite Media. Matching e-mail addresses were appended to business data derived from public records, bank records, mail surveys, management interviews and other third-party sources. Selections: Contact name, business/industry type, cottage industry, headquarters/branch, import/export, longitude/latitude, number of employees, sales volume, SIC code, women owned business, year started, state/SCF/ZIP Base Price: \$350/M

Marine Business Journal

Direct Partner Solutions offers a list of 22,695 subscribers to Marine Business Journal. This trade publication targets all aspects of the marine industry from retail to boat building operations. About 38% of subscribers are company presidents or owners. Selections: Job title, gender, state/SCF/ZIP Base Price: \$110/M

Secrets to Hidden Wealth

Net60 LLC has introduced a list of 57,900 consumers who purchased information about foreclosed homes, car auctions, government grants and loans. The unit of sale was \$29. Direct mail and infomercials are the source. Selections: Hotlines, gender, check/credit card, declines, SCF Base Price: \$100/M

Leaflet Missal Catalog

Estee Marketing Group Inc. is the new list manager for Leaflet Missal Co., a publisher and supplier of religious goods. Its file names 67,615 buyers and 6,786 inquirers from the last 12 months. Products sold include Bibles, books, videos, statues, religious art and apparel. The average sale was \$65. The sources are catalog (98%) and the Internet. Religious Lists was the previous manager. Selections: Purchase amount ranges, products, gender, state/SCF/ZIP Sample usage: Catholic Advocate, Catholic Catalog, Franciscan Mission Associates. Base Price: \$105/M (last-12-month buyers)

NEW INSERT MEDIA

JCPenney PIP

Infocore Inc. recently introduced a package insert for JCPenney, which ships 12 million packages annually. Non-standard size inserts are acceptable. Base Price: \$60/M

CWDKids PIP

CWDKids catalog package insert program. Some 284,000 packages are shipped annually to apparel buyers for infants to children under 12. The average customer is 38 and has a \$75,000 income. Up to two inserts will be accepted. Inserts must be at least 3-1/2 by 5 inches. Inquiries will be considered for inserts larger than 5-1/2 by 8-1/2 inches and heavier than a quarter ounce. Sample usage: Clorox, Company Kids, Personal Creations. Base Price: \$70/M

Golf Warehouse Catalog Blow-in

Some 8 million catalogs are mailed annually. Up to two noncompetitive inserts will be accepted. The maximum size is 5-3/4 by 5-3/4 inches, weighing up to a quarter ounce. Base Price: \$35/M

For information regarding these lists, or any other lists for your marketing efforts, please contact your list broker or NMOA list advisor Jerry Mamola at jmamola@optonline.net

Find tips and information on using lists and list suggestions here: <http://www.ListsForMarketing.com>

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("Ford Saeks," Continued from page 4)

projects I had to leave the lights on all night or the cockroaches would rearrange the furniture. The people I looked up to came from books and audio programs. People like Denis Waitley, Brian Tracy and others. Books like "The Magic of Thinking Big" by David Schwartz and "The Power of Positive Thinking" by Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, and "Think and Grow Rich" by Napoleon Hill

JDS: What was your first job?

Ford: My first job was as a cashier and grocery store clerk at age 11. I was a big kid for my age and said I was 16. It was for Milts Market in St. Louis Park, MN. I still remember going there after school and working from 3:30 to 7:30 every night. I was earning about \$.75 cents an hour. After the first couple of months, I was promoted from carryout, to produce clerk, to cashier and inventory control. The owner and my boss was an older gentleman that rarely spoke to me, other than to bark orders. One day, I caught him in the aisle as he was walking by and said, "Hey Milt, How Am I doing?" ... he said, "hey punk, come back and ask me again in six months... A New Broom Sweeps Clean"

At the time, I didn't know what he really meant... After hiring employees for my first company I was 100% clear on his message.

JDS: What made you want to start your own business?

Ford: I knew there had to be a better way of making money than how the other people were making money in the projects. I didn't want to end up in jail or dead. I didn't want to work for minimum wage the rest of my life. After starting my Painting Company, I added other services, light construction, designing and installing wood decks and expanded from residential to commercial projects.

I started my business to take control of my life and my destiny.

JDS: Were you entrepreneurial at an early age? For instance, did you sell lemonade on the corner, shovel sidewalks or deliver newspapers? And if so, did your parents push you that way, or was it more part of your DNA?

Ford: I had a lemonade stand in the summers and living in Minneapolis, Minnesota I certainly shoveled sidewalks for cash. I mowed lawns, raked leaves and did a variety of odd jobs. When I was 15 and had my first car, me and my friends would cruise the city digging out cars from the snow banks made by the city plows. It was great money and it taught me how to sell and negotiate.

("Ford Saeks," Continued on page 10)

Need to know the meaning of a direct marketing related word? Check the NMOA Glossary in our Information Library: <http://www.nmoa.org/Library>

("Ford Saeks," Continued from page 9)

JDS: Were you ever involved in any other business before you started the business you're in now?

Ford: Great Question. I'm 47 now and I've been an entrepreneur all of my life. I've founded over 10 companies, have multiple patents and a wide variety of intellectual property, published books, TV and Radio show host, and sold millions worth of products through multiple channels of distribution.

In 1986, I invented a line of bicycle storage systems that go from floor-to-ceiling to hold bikes in limited space. You've no doubt seen them in SkyMall Magazine, Sharper Image®, Williams Sonoma®, Hold Everything Catalog and hundreds of others. They were sold in Wal-mart, Sams, and Target Stores. Sold through various specialty catalogs, direct mail, retail stores, mass merchants, rep networks and exported to over 47 countries.

Starting the company and bootstrapping it to selling over 30 million dollars worth of products gave me an enormous education and experience.

JDS: Did you ever have a business idea you didn't act on?

Ford: Are you kidding? Did you ever meet a true entrepreneur that didn't have more business ideas than they could possibly implement? I believe that everyone is blessed with at least two or three "big" ideas every day, but most are not "tuned in" to them. Many don't realize how to recognize and identify them. Others are simply too conditioned to ignore them or fall prey to victimhood and excuses.

Sure, there were several ideas that I had, some I even invested several hundred thousand to get off the ground. Some made it and many more didn't. I've learned as much or more from the mistakes as I ever did from the successes.

I created the first convertible "Running Stroller" and "Bicycle Trailer" combination unit. It was in the patent stages and we'd even released them to the market and were growing the company quite nicely. We went to sporting goods trade shows and were the hot product of the year. Then, the following year, a little known company by the name of "Huffy" (huge company) decided to launch their own line to compete with ours. We had the legal advantage but they had the production capabilities in China, better distribution and much deeper pockets. They sold their units retail for \$99. Our wholesale cost was \$130 and retail was \$295. Even though we had a much better product, more features and higher quality, we pulled out after selling \$150,000. We cut our losses and moved on.

("Ford Saeks," Continued on page 11)

Need a list of mail order catalogs in electronic format for your marketing efforts? Just go here: <http://www.mediafinder.com/catalogsearch/catalogsearchform.cfm>

NMOA Direct Marketing Article Archive
<http://www.nmoa.org/articles>

("Ford Saeks," Continued from page 10)

JDS: How did you get into the "business you're in now"? How did the "Big Idea" come to you?

Ford: After selling millions worth of products in the sporting goods industry using multiple channels of distribution I kept getting interviewed about the success of my idea and marketing. That led to others asking me to share my experience and insider secrets. It took about three days to recognize that it was a natural fit to offer marketing services. That's what launched my current company, Prime Concepts Group Inc. A direct marketing company that helps others find, attract and keep their customers through innovative marketing and publicity campaigns.

JDS: Did you layout a detailed business plan for it, or was it more a napkin-sized outline?

Ford: Started with a napkin... then went to a "one-page marketing plan". When I wanted investors or a bank loan, I created the typical 500 page business plan.

JDS: How did you finance your start up? i.e. Savings, Family, Mortgage, Bank/SBA Loan?

Ford: The first few startups were all Bootstrapping. Pre-sales and credit cards did most of the financing. For my other companies, I submitted and was approved for Commercial SBA loans.

JDS: Did you have a detailed spending plan in place for the money you started with? If so, in ballpark percentage terms, how was the money spent; (product/inventory, marketing, employees, tools/equipment, location of operation.) Or was it more, I have this much money to start and I'm going to wing it the best I can?

Ford: I'd really like to say that I followed a strict financial plan, but that would be so far from what I did... Remember, I was a kid from the housing projects. On my first business, the painting company, I went from poverty to over \$35,000 the first year. Do you know what happens to a kid with little financial management from the projects that get's \$35,000 at age 15? They spend \$36,000. Not quite a detailed spending plan.

The first year that one of my businesses hit the 1 million in sales mark, I was so excited. I went to my public accountant with my shoe box of receipts and then the excitement stopped. He showed me that even though I had created over a million in revenues, my take home pay was about \$16,000 and I was in debt over \$100,000.

I immediately enrolled in college classes at Wichita State University for Accounting and Economics. I also implemented in-house accounting software and because such an expert that I created a new company consulting for Dac Easy Accounting software, doing seminars and offering consulting to other businesses.

I learned the hard-way that "you don't go broke making a profit"

("Ford Saeks," Continued on page 12)

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("Ford Saeks," Continued from page 11)

I believe that all business owners and employees for that matter fall into three main categories when it comes to skills sets. The three categories are MARKETING, MANUFACTURING, MANAGEMENT. They either know how to market, sell and promote; how to provide the service or make the product; or understand how to get work done through other people.

While my natural ability puts me square in the “marketing” category, I’ve invested a great deal of time becoming proficient in the other categories. Either you learn to do it yourself or you hire your weaknesses. I believe in leverage and hiring your weaknesses, but you still need to have an understanding to know if the work is being completed correctly.

JDS: As your business progressed, was your growth self-financed through its own success? Or, did you need to raise outside money to grow? If you needed outside capital, how did you get it?

Ford: As my current business, Prime Concepts Group grew, it was self-financed. In other businesses we used a variety of financing options. With some we sold stock, others we presented the opportunity to people that gave us loans, and with other projects we procured SBA financing. The choice to raise capital comes up during startup and growth phases. I would evaluate the options and select the one that would fit best for the situation. Some projects required more financing than others. It was strictly a give and take scenario. How much was I willing to give away to get the financing?

JDS: How did you first start promoting your company?

Ford: I believe in using the power of free publicity and then leveraging it through direct response marketing. Over the years, me, my companies and my products and services have been featured in several hundred publications and in other languages too. I am not a proponent of “image” type advertising. Yes, I believe in branding and communicating a clear image to the marketplace, but don’t believe that putting my logo on busses, billboards, or banners are the most effective way to grow your business. I like direct response marketing because it’s measurable and allows you to create a baseline response that you can compare to new marketing.

I’ve used hundreds of marketing methods and are coming up with new ones all of the time. To promote anything, we follow a simple system of matching the benefit MESSAGE, to the target MARKET, using measurable and effective marketing METHODS/MEDIUMS. Where I believe most others fail if they aren’t achieving the success they think they should have is they have a miss-matched combination of those elements. They are sending the wrong message or no benefit messages, or aiming at the wrong target market or not using the particular marketing method profitably.

JDS: Was there any big break that really got you off the ground?

Ford: No, Just a lot of hard work... Okay, with experience it became much easier. Now with the years of busi-

("Ford Saeks," Continued on page 13)

Visit the Mail Order Museum Here: <http://www.nmoa.org/Museum>

("Ford Saeks," Continued from page 12)

ness and marketing experience it's much simpler to get that "big break" because we have the innovative systems and strategies to hit home runs.

JDS: What was the toughest time you had in your business, and how did you get through it?

Ford: The toughest time in my business was hiring the wrong people and trusting them to do their job. Before I go into details, let me express that I am 100% responsible for everything in my life. The decisions I've made (or didn't make) lead directly to creating the results – both good and bad.

In short, the toughest time I've had was learning that I was over \$200,000 behind on 941 and other taxes. I had a controller that was not routinely completing all of my federal and state tax forms for payroll. But, she was manipulating the financial records to make it appear as if everything was okay. I was travelling frequently and expected everything to be done correctly... wasn't that what I was paying all of that money for?

Anyway, long story short, It took me a couple of years and a whole lot of negotiation to save my business. Yes, that employee was fired and I'm sure there were other financial losses or embezzlement related to her efforts. Again, I should have been more pro-active in the management efforts and take responsibility for all of my results. I caution everyone reading this to learn how to trust others, but make sure you have the checks-and-balances in place to protect your company.

JDS: What do you think was/is the key factor that made YOU successful, when so many others have failed in starting and building a business? Were you just lucky?

Ford: Luck, in most people's definition of the word has nothing to do with it. For me, luck stands for "Leverage Under Correct Knowledge."

The key factors for me would be:

- Developing a prosperity mindset
- Creating a belief in mental toughness.
- Focusing on the belief that I'm a developing human spirit
- Learning from my mistakes, because if you don't life will give you another opportunity to learn again... and again.
- Taking action when others don't think it's possible.
- I have an overwhelming belief that anything is possible.

Sure, I still have my fears and doubts too, but do my best not to let it consume me or dominate my thoughts.

JDS: If you had to choose between good luck and good instincts, which would it be?

Ford: Good Instincts. Period. As I've mentioned, I don't believe in luck.

("Ford Saeks," Continued on page 14)

Direct Marketing Seminars: www.DirectMarketingEvents.com

("Ford Saeks," Continued from page 13)

JDS: When you're making business decisions, are you more likely to go with your head or your gut?

Ford: It's a combination of both. I work to also use both sides of my brain, the creative and the analytical. I start with the creative and then run decisions through more analytical methods. In the end, I go with my gut, but it's an educated decision. I aim to gather as much relevant information I can and then go with my Gut. It's always worked out better in the end.

JDS: When do you do your best thinking?

Ford: Late at night or when I'm doing something totally unrelated to the task at hand. I ride a road bicycle over a 150 miles a week and that allows me to clear my mind. After riding or other physical exercise I am much more "in-tune" to doing my best thinking. I like to meditate, cycle, sail, play ice hockey, and participate in in-line skating marathons. I'd encourage everyone to find something related to physical fitness to increase blood flow, reduce stress and improve their thinking.

JDS: How has today's technology helped you?

Ford: Today's technology has helped me enormously. Prime Concepts specializes in Direct Response Marketing which is based on communication. Technology advances have improved the different methods and strategies to communicate. Beyond the basic internet that most people use, to social media marketing, wireless networking, smart phones, and the ability to track responses and conversions instantly have helped us grow our business, and those of our clients. Using web-based CRM (Client Relationship Management) systems, and project management systems like basecamp.com improve productivity. Webcasts and video conferencing improves our client relationships and increase sales. We use gotomeeting.com and utilize our internal VPN (virtual private network) so can stay in touch with my office when I'm speaking around the world. And the list goes on and on...

JDS: How have things changed in marketing since you started, and how has it stayed the same? What do you think the future holds for marketing your company?

Ford: I think with each new emerging technology I hear of the dramatic shift it's going to make in marketing, but in reality it just adds another method to communicate. I remember studying the impact of Television on the Radio industry... people said at the time that radio would become obsolete. Not true, but you have to remain flexible in the usage of the medium. When the Internet soared, people said that would be the death of television... again, not true, but it has morphed considerably and the strategies used for advertising certainly have changed over the years. It's much harder to capture the attention of mass audiences because of all of the many choices and distractions.

I've seen vast improvements in technology that have had a serious impact on the most effective ways to market. This doesn't mean that direct mail or print advertising doesn't count. It does, you just have to be more

("Ford Saeks," Continued on page 15)

Direct Marketing News at: www.DirectMarketingNewswire.com

("Ford Saeks," Continued from page 14)

selective, creative, innovative and targeted in your approach. The future of my company is bright because our mission is to help people find, attract and keep their customers through innovative direct marketing. That will never end. It's recession proof because as long as we remain a free country with a consumerism mentality there will always be a need for direct marketing.

JDS: What are your future goals for your company?

Ford: To create more of a virtual company so I can utilize talent more effectively beyond my local area. We use a few freelance vendors for special projects and our online tools are making it more effective to manage, but one of our goals is to improve those processes. We are growing into a few new target markets. One is the Banking and Financial services industry, and the other is the medical services industry. Even with the changes, consolidations and economy these represent enormous opportunities for our unique methods of direct marketing services. Our goal is to continue to remain in high demand for our creative services with net profits growth. We have the actual numbers, but those are confidential for obvious reasons.

JDS: How educated do you think you have to be to start and build a business? Do you think you need a college education to be successful? Or do you think any average person can start and build a business in today's world, if they work hard and are persistent?

Ford: No, I don't think you have to have a college education. In fact, it can even hurt depending on the type of business. Hurt, because when it comes to creativity, especially in copywriting, it get's schooled out of them. Most colleges don't teach people how to think or become critical thinkers. Sure, certain professions obviously need to have educational standards. When it comes to marketing, sales, copywriting, and publicity which are the foundations of growing a business, creativity, persistence and innovation go much farther than "formal" education. I might be a bit biased as someone who's built several businesses with a high school diploma and have sold millions of dollars worth of products and services in multiple industries. I'm far from unique. Many of my clients have stories of success without college educations.

Anyone can start and build a business. I believe there is no such thing as money problems... only idea problems. If you want more money, get, create, and implement new ideas. I want to make this really clear, I believe in education, learning and growing. I believe that if I'd completed a college education I probably wouldn't have made some of the mistakes I made. I paid my tuition in the real world which no doubt cost me much more than a few years in College. Just don't use it as an excuse or reason not to try. I hire attitude, desire and persistence over a college educated person that lacks desire or that has an entitlement mentality any day.

No matter what type of business you start or are building, education and continual learning is critical. I read books, listen to CDs, attend seminars, webinars, read blogs, ezines and participate in several mastermind groups. I believe you must be open to be a developing human spirit if you really want to have long term success.

("Ford Saeks," Continued on page 16)

Direct Marketing Printers: www.DirectMarketingPrinters.com

("Ford Saeks," Continued from page 15)

JDS: What are your thoughts about having and/or dealing with business partners? Some businesses partnerships seem to thrive, while it destroys others.

Ford: I think that partners are a tough road in many cases. It's just like a marriage so the fit has to be just right. You have to assign certain areas to each party as the final decision maker so things get done and don't end up in needless arguments or distension. There are pros and cons with partners. Many times it's great because each partner brings unique talents, abilities or assets to the business. Given the choice, I wouldn't have partners because of the added complications. I'm speaking from experience. Several years ago in one of my other companies, I brought in a partner to function as the operations manager so I could focus on marketing. It worked for the first three years and then it went south in a hurry. There were conflicts on the direction to grow, how to spend the money and several other issues. I wanted out at any cost and sold the business. Do your due diligence, research carefully and then consider your gut. Good luck.

JDS: What's the best advice you've received?

Ford: "Believe in yourself, even when no-one else does. Someone's opinion of you is not your reality. Become a prosperity and critical thinker. If a belief you have isn't serving you... change it."

JDS: What most impresses you about a person?

Ford: I'm impressed by the human spirit and its ability to create amazing results. There are millions of stories of triumphs over incredible odds. The persistence to succeed, in whatever definition you want to fill in the blank is impressive to me.

JDS: If you had it to do all over again, would you do anything differently?

Ford: That's a tough question. I do my best to not live with regrets or live in the past, but hey, I'm human. Sure I wish I would have had better financial management skills in the early years. There were a few projects and desires that I feel I could or should have perused to a higher level. When my head hits the pillow each night I celebrate my successes and sleep like a baby. Life's an amazing journey.

JDS: Who inspires you now?

Ford: Aliesa George. She is the president of Centerworks.com a company devoted to improving health through mind body and spirit. Inspiring because for the first time in my life I finally have an example of what a loving relationship is all about. I'm in my late 40's and have had many relationships. This is inspiring because I had no concept of how wonderful a healthy relationship can be until I met her. It's going on four years now and get's better every day. Very inspiring.

("Ford Saeks," Continued on page 17)

Direct Marketing Vendors: <http://www.nmoa.org/Contacts>

(*"Ford Saeks," Continued from page 16*)

JDS: What's the most overrated secret to success?

Ford: The most overrated secret to success: "Find a need and fill it" People don't do what they NEED... they do what they WANT. The secret is to position your productions and services in a compelling way that helps the prospect make informed decisions. I've seen thousands of great ideas over the years. Although, if you have a product or service that you have to educate your customer on why they need it—it can be a long and expensive road.

JDS: What's the most overlooked secret to success?

Ford: Life is full of opportunity. It's everywhere. "That fear is a myth" Fear prevents people from pursuing their dreams and desires. Social norms and memes along with poor mental conditioning by the government, the media, their environment and organized religion have spoiled the masses. The secret is to become a critical thinker and grow your prosperity consciousness. I know I've alluded to this topic throughout the interview, but it's so important for success. Think about your life, career, relationships, habits, and beliefs. If you want to change anything in your life it starts with your beliefs. If you don't think you're good enough, smart enough, or whatever enough... then you won't take the necessary actions to create or follow your dreams and desires.

JDS: Do you have any pointers or words of wisdom to give Entrepreneurs and small businesses that want to follow in your footsteps?

Ford: Live in the present, not the past or future. Use the past to help you avoid mistakes and for experience. Think about the future so you can chart your course to success—whatever your definition of that may be.

JDS: Do you have any words to live by?

Ford: Everyone has their story. Most of it, including mine is just that... a story. What really counts is what you do with your time and resources. Time is the most important asset you have. You can get more money, but you cannot get back this minute, hour or day. Think about how you spend your time? Is it moving you closer or farther away from your dreams. Better yet? What are your dreams and desires? Do you have a dream board, goals list or are you living a passive life in quiet desperation? It's your choice. Even to do nothing is a choice. No excuses. Get going today.

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I would like to personally thank Ford Saeks or taking the time to share his experiences with us. We all truly appreciate it. Thank you! JDS

Do you know of a company founder you would like to see interviewed in DMD, or have an idea for a question you would like to see asked in future interviews, please email John Schulte: schulte@nmoa.org If you are reading someone else's copy of Direct Marketing Digest, don't miss another great success story interview. Just click here to subscribe. <http://www.nmoa.org/Membership/hotline.htm>

Direct Marketing Bookstore: <http://www.nmoa.org/catalog/>

From Bob Bly,

I have seen a strongly worded offer outsell a weaker one - for the same product, at the same price - as much as tenfold.

With that in mind, here are 3 suggestions that can make your offers stronger:

1-Be different.

Don't give away yet another free coffee mug or free bonus report; the best offers are fresh and new.

For instance, the sweepstakes mailing that successfully launched New York magazine offered a unique grand prize: dinner at Gracie Mansion with New York City's mayor. Most investment newsletters offer free special reports as premiums. The Sovereign Society, a newsletter on offshore investing, offered something different: a free Swiss bank account - a gift not given by any other investment newsletter.

2-Offer something that is highly desirable.

Unless you are offering something people really want, your promotion is not going to work, no matter how clever or creative. A publisher was selling a loose-leaf service on how to manage Novell NetWare local area networks. Response rates doubled when a new direct mail promotion offered a disk with free software -- a collection of utilities for Novell networks.

The 100% increase in orders confirmed that these software programs were tools network administrators obviously wanted to get their hands on. The outer envelope teaser read:

"Yours FREE! - 5 Powerful Programs to Help You Manage Your Novell NetWare Network More Efficiently and Easily - See Inside for Details on This Special Time-Limited Offer."

3-High perceived value.

The more valuable prospects think your offer is, the more likely they are to act on it.

Software is a great premium for this very reason. It has a high perceived value: software packages can easily sell for \$49 to \$300 or more. Yet a CD with code on it can be duplicated for about a dollar. So offering some free software can increase response but cost you relatively little to deliver.

In a promotion tied in with their sponsorship of the Olympics, IBM offered a special IBM Olympic pin as a premium. It probably only cost IBM a buck or so each. But the mailer copy hinted that the item could become a collectible, creating an impression of potentially high value.

IBM held a tele-seminar on improving Web site performance. When they offered an audio CD of the conference as a premium in a lead-generating direct mail piece promoting their Web services, it increased the response rate six-fold vs. the same piece without the free CD offer.

Want to learn more? Check out Bob Bly's audio program "Ultimate Direct Response Secrets." It reveals dozens of other ways to improve your offers -- and generate more leads and sales from your direct marketing campaigns. For more information ... or to review "Ultimate Direct Response Secrets" risk-free for 90 days ... click here now: www.ultimatedirectresponsesecrets.com

Washington Newsletter

Legal and Regulatory Issues from USPS, FTC, FCC, States and Industry Groups that affect Direct Marketers.

Rock Star Sues McCain Over Use of Song

When the Republican Party recently ran an ad attacking Sen. Barack Obama's energy policy, with Jackson Browne's song "Running on Empty" playing in the background, long-time Democratic activist Browne punched back.

Browne sued John McCain, the Republican National Committee and the Ohio Republican Party for using his song in the commercial, which mocks the suggestion by Democratic Presidential candidate Obama that voters can conserve gasoline by keeping their car tires inflated to the proper pressure.

"[T]he [c]ommercial falsely suggests that Browne sponsors, endorses and is associated with McCain and the Republican Party, when nothing could be further from the truth," states Browne's complaint, which was filed in U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

In fact, Browne supports McCain's opponent. "Browne's public support for the Democratic Party and its presumptive candidate for President of the United States, Senator Barack Obama, is well-known," the complaint says.

"Throughout Browne's career, he has closely associated himself with liberal causes and Democratic political candidates," states the complaint. "Browne has often performed at political rallies for Democratic Party candidates."

Neither McCain nor the Ohio or National Republican parties sought or received a license or Browne's permission to use his song, according to the complaint. The ad was created for broadcast in Ohio and Pennsylvania, but also was streamed over the Internet, the suit alleged.

The song at issue was released on the 1977 platinum album also titled "Running on Empty," which was Browne's all-time best-selling album. The complaint alleges that the McCain campaign has used songs by Frankie Valli, ABBA and John Mellencamp in commercials and events without authorization, prompting demands that he cease using works by those artists as well.

Browne is seeking \$75,000 in damages and an injunction to stop the commercial from being played. He is claiming the ad infringed on his copyright, and violated his right of publicity under California common law.

A spokesman for McCain's campaign told media outlets that McCain's campaign was not responsible for the ad. But Browne's attorney said that the Republican Party of Ohio was acting as an agent for McCain when it created the ad.

Why this matters: If the advertisement had involved the sale of a commercial product, Browne might have an easy victory; advertisers are required to obtain licenses to use copyrighted works in their ads. However, political speech receives a higher level of First Amendment protection than does commercial speech, and Browne may have a harder time proving his case. McCain may claim his brief use of a portion of the song was fair use. Nonetheless, to avoid litigation, candidates for political office would be wise to seek permission to use works from artists who endorse or support them.

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