

BUY NOW



CREATIVE MARKETING
THAT GETS CUSTOMERS
TO RESPOND TO YOU
AND YOUR PRODUCT

RICK CESARI
RON LYNCH
WITH **TOM KELLY**

Praise for *Buy Now*

“We came to Cesari Direct with a lackluster infomercial and they turned it into one of the top 10, longest-running DRTV shows of its time. Whether it’s creating, filming, or marketing new ideas, Cesari Direct is who you want on your DRTV project.”

—Allan Gourlie
Owner, Quick N Brite

“Rick Cesari is someone who [has] changed my life forever. He had the vision and fortitude to help us pursue our dreams of teaching and reaching millions of people, which seemingly happened overnight. I recommend Rick to anyone looking to manifest their dreams through direct sales.”

—Jay Kordich
Father of Juicing and *New York Times* best-selling
Author of *The Juiceman’s Power of Juicing*

“1414 Dexter Avenue in Seattle, WA, is the home of a true, direct-response pioneer. Rick Cesari was the architect behind one of the biggest brands to emerge out of the infomercial world: The George Foreman Grill. Rick and DRTV Cesari Direct set the gold standard and demonstrated to the world that, when harnessed correctly, there are no limits to the reach and power of direct response.”

—Anthony Sullivan
Star of Discovery TV’s *Pitchman* and DRTV Producer

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WILEY

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Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.
Published simultaneously in Canada.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

Cesari, Rick, 1956-

Buy now : creative marketing that gets customers to respond to you and your product /
Rick Cesari, Ron Lynch ; with Tom Kelly.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-470-88801-8 (hardback)

ISBN 978-1-118-00787-7 (ebk)

ISBN 978-1-118-00788-4 (ebk)

ISBN 978-1-118-00789-1 (ebk)

1. Direct marketing. 2. Customer relations. I. Lynch, Ron, 1966- II. Kelly, Tom, 1950 Oct. 8- III. Title.
HF5415.126.C44 2011
658.8'72--dc22

2010037971

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



CONTENTS

Prologue: The Secret to Our Success	xi
CHAPTER 1 Why “Buy Now”?	1
The Direct Response Solution	4
Carnival Beginnings	6
Why Direct Response?	7
Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire	10
CHAPTER 2 The Geeks Inherit the Earth	17
Why Is Direct Response a Great Value?	22
Why Doesn’t Everyone Try Direct Response?	24
What Is a Brand and Why Do I Need One?	27
CHAPTER 3 They Don’t Teach This in College: Rick’s Story	33
The Pitch	36
My Story	37
From Real Estate to Infomercials	38
How to Make a Million	43
CHAPTER 4 Juicing for Dollars	49
The Power of PR	54
Live Seminars	56

viii Contents

CHAPTER 5	Building the Juiceman® Brand	61
	Explosive Growth	65
	Retail Strategy	66
CHAPTER 6	Expanding the Brand: The Breadman®	71
	Validating “the Model”	75
	Selling the Business	77
CHAPTER 7	Sonicare®: The \$150 Toothbrush	79
	Problem/Solution	82
	Credibility: The Key to a Successful Infomercial	84
	Rolling Out a Campaign	86
CHAPTER 8	The Biggest Knockout in History	91
	How a Champion Boxer and a Failed Taco Maker Created Sizzling Success	93
	The Price of Celebrity	102
	Grilling Up Some Big Numbers	105
CHAPTER 9	OxiClean®: “Powered by the Air You Breathe, Activated by the Water You Drink”	107
	The Ubiquitous Billy Mays	111
	The Rise of OxiClean	117
	Unique Packaging Strategy	118
CHAPTER 10	The Customer Is No Dummy	123
	Positioning Your Product: The Next Niche	129
	Get to Your Unique Selling Proposition	132
CHAPTER 11	Channel Explosion: The Next Paradigm Shift	139
	Direct Demographic Media Messaging	143

	Messaging versus Demographic	145
	What Are You Going to Grow Today?	148
	The Intersection of the Internet	149
CHAPTER 12	Free Advertising?	153
	Is My Idea Direct-Response Worthy?	156
	Why Are the COGs So Important?	159
	Long Form or Short Form? That Is the Question	162
CHAPTER 13	Anatomy of an Infomercial	165
	Show Styles or Formats	168
	Long-Form Elements	171
	Show Outline	175
CHAPTER 14	Offer Is King	179
	Why Is Everything Priced at \$19.95 and \$39.95?	183
	How Do Long Form and Short Form Work Together?	185
CHAPTER 15	Beyond Television: Integrating Radio, Web Advertising, and More	189
	Online Marketing Is Direct Response	195
	The Backend of Direct Response	198
CHAPTER 16	Conclusion	205
	Brass Tacks: What Does This Cost?	207
	Index	211



PROLOGUE

The Secret to Our Success

Entrepreneurs, Fortune 500 companies and small companies thinking big come to us every day and say, “Hey, what you did for OxiClean: I want that!” “What you did for the Juiceman Juicer, for the George Foreman Grill, for the Sonicare toothbrush. . . . We want a brand. We want *that!*”

The next thing they usually say is, “But I don’t want a yell-and-sell pitchman like Billy Mays!”

It’s funny that everybody who walks through our door makes some pretty universal assumptions about what goes on here. We don’t—assume, that is. That’s our first rule. Don’t assume. Don’t assume you know everything about anything. That’s the first sign of arrogance and the last sign of learning. Want to stop creativity? Tell people you know everything, and act like it’s the absolute fact. Our job is to walk into every situation with innocence, newness, and freshness, and that starts with ignorance. The same ignorance your next unassuming customer has when he or she finds you in the marketplace for the first time.

Together we have sold somewhere north of \$2 billion worth of product and launched about 30 brands. We are proven to be

some of the world's best salesmen, but it is not because of what we say. It is because we know what to *listen to*.

Ever had a really good doctor? A really good coach? Or meet a really good salesperson? I bet they all had the same common thread. They ask questions—lots of questions. They listen. They observe. They observe even more. They ask other people what their experience has been around you. They align their observations and their learning with years of proven experience. They strategize. They plan. They communicate. They get your commitment and buy in to the result that will benefit *you* the most.

Then, the very last thing they do is . . . start.

That is what we do every day. It is the secret to our success.

Yes, we have had unparalleled success and good fortune. Often we have been in the right place at the right time. We have also had failures you've never heard about. We'll share some here. Yet the truth is, we wouldn't be a leader in the direct response (DR) marketing space based on just a good 25-year run of pure luck. Our expertise is not machismo, or a flag we plant for attention. It is, rather, time-tested, results-oriented, and statistically proven. Our kind of success is one that transfers from boardroom dialogue to actual spreadsheet success, real product sales, increased brand equity, and return on shareholder dividends. Like everything we seek to do, we keep a scorecard and count our success—not with gold trophies, New York gala dinners, or personality features in *Adweek*, but with units sold, customers satisfied, and dollars in the bank—for us and our clients. We're not involved in advertising art. We are in the modern digital, multichannel, marketing business. We sell. We sell more for our clients around the clock, around the world.

While you we're sleeping last night, we were busy selling.

Some of the greatest American companies today have walked through our doors. Our identity and reputation is based on a relatively simple set of principles and understandings that drive sales. In any company, sales is the healer of everything that ails you.

In the following pages, we will share the insights and knowledge we have developed over the years. This is not a book of relative philosophies on how to sell, how to manipulate the consumer, or how to get inside the head of the American housewife to sell another food processor. This is a book specifically on how we have charted a course to successfully create transactions through television, and how the radical shift of media channel explosion and the Internet threw that model on its ear. It's also a down-and-dirty exposé of how we nearly lost it all and came back with new learning and an innovative arsenal of direct marketing techniques that not only has put us back on the map, but realistically pushed us many years ahead of both traditional DR marketers and conventional advertising agencies. We've been successfully working this new model for our clients for the past five years. We have proven it works by growing revenues for our clients and expanding specific markets and individual demographic verticals. Competitive media companies routinely bring their clients to us with confidence. How many companies in the world have had their competitors come—and pay a premium—to add *your* secret sauce to their recipe? It happens in our world all of the time. Why in the world would we let them? We learned the hard way the first three rules of partnerships:

1. Never count the other guy's money.
2. Don't set out to make a million dollars from anybody.
3. Definitely set out to make one dollar from everybody.

If that sounds like hyperbole, read this book. You'll understand every bit of it before you're done.

We have perfected the secret and science of deconstructing a product and rebuilding its identity to match a new innovative category.

We create a *unique selling proposition*, a USP, for any given product. Then we pave a multifaceted, multidimensional sales

path that looks slightly different to each consumer segment that approaches the product in a variety of media channels. You cannot be all things to all people, yet we systematically show our clients how to be more than one necessity to many different customers, while maintaining a broad, cohesive brand message. The beauty is, we do it in the real world, building sales and funding advertising organically the whole way.

In the following pages, we'll tell you how we use something called *Direct Demographic Media Messaging* to build brands with a Self-Funding Direct Response Campaign that crosses diverse media channels.

We'll explain how any company—your company—can use these techniques to launch a product with a high probability of success.

We'll explain why direct response sales never cannibalize retail store sales. In fact, they enhance them.

We'll even tell you how we have employed strategies to make small companies look huge, huge companies look homespun, and corporate giants appear fleet-footed, friendly, and caring.

At the end of the day, just reading this book will make you a better marketer, a better businessperson, and a more valuable asset to your company, whether you have lunch in the boardroom or the break room.

Are you an entrepreneur who wants to launch your own product? This book is your personal manual, which we have created to help you grow and succeed. Please acknowledge us as having inspired you when you write your memoirs!

Are you a CEO or CMO who needs a peek under the hood of direct response to appear more knowledgeable in your next meeting, presentation, or selection of an agency? We are the CliffNotes for the course they don't teach at Harvard. You need this book. Buy one for everybody on your team. You need people who are willing to think like leaders. They know less than you; they need it!



CHAPTER

1

Why “Buy Now”?

When choosing a name for this book it was important for us to grab your attention and communicate to you two things: One, you have a strong need for something. Two, we can fulfill it. That's a hard thing to do in the brevity of a book cover, yet you did pick up the book with some degree of interest. We would like to think that we stacked the deck a little in our favor to get you to take that action. We did, in fact. In the context of this book, we'll tell you how and why; better, we'll teach you how to do it.

Understand that we are interested in your success. Most folks want to hold something that is uniquely theirs alone, a secret. We don't have a secret. The fact is, there is not one; there are many. What this book will give you is the ingredients; the secret ingredients, if you will. Every single person who has used these secrets has gained some measure of success. The key is not in the ingredients as much as in the cook. Certainly, the ingredients count; you, in fact, cannot make a success in this business without them. When you personally apply them, you bring the largest unknown quantity to the mix: the genius that is you.

This much we can tell you for sure. Direct marketing is a humbling experience. We highly recommend you bring a fair share of humility to it, or the business will provide it for you. The encouraging news is that all you need is just one hit. One at bat where you connect, and you can have the opportunity to be financially set for life—if you stay smart and keep your head in the game.

Now, why *Buy Now* as the title? First, it's a command. Not a suggestion, not an insinuation, but a real command that grabs you by the collar and tells you what to do. Does it make you buy? No. Did it make you pay attention? Absolutely! Did we choose

an image of a hand with a credit card to give you the notion that there was something in it for you financially? Certainly. Why did we choose a gold card? Why the bold, open-block red font? Were these all just happenstance created by the book's publisher? Not a chance. That's just one aspect of what you'll learn in this book: how to think at a level of marketing detail that will enable you to weave such a complex web that, in the end, looks beautiful and works so simply. Like in the fairy tale "Hansel and Gretel," our goal as marketers is to lay the breadcrumbs that lead you and your customer home.

Remember, the average American is blasted by tens of thousands of marketing messages a day. How do you grab their attention, engage them with interest, and begin a meaningful sales dialogue in just seconds? It's possible. We do it all the time. Frankly, you probably experience it all the time and don't realize it; you just become interested. You are drawn in.

The Direct Response Solution

We are routinely approached these days by large American corporations that are looking for our expertise and guidance to help them clear one of two primary hurdles. They want to either launch a new brand or revive a quality product that has dying sales caused by lack of attention or shelf crowding. Both are attainable through our methodology. Why the new interest in direct response? The answer is probably driven from a number of directions, but the easiest and most obvious one is the absolutely brutal environment out there for consumer dollars. The economy has tanked, and consumers have closed their wallets. Manufacturers are in a spin, not just to grow sales but to minimize shrinking sales as fast as they can. Stockholders are putting knives to the necks of CEOs, who are no doubt living in fear. The shift that you may not have noticed in the past decade is that "CEO" does not mean what it used to.

Once upon a time, the CEO was royalty, walking through the halls of his or her company like a god or Godzilla, leaving a trail of either bowing subjects or destruction behind. Today's CEO most likely is not the person who started the company, nor even the person hired by the company. More often today, the CEO is the person hired by the conglomerate consolidator or the venture fund that bought the company, in the hopes of reselling it to the next-highest bidder. That is the ill of the American corporation. The most senior plant manager, executive secretary, or marketing director usually has a greater idea of the lifeblood of a company than the well-educated Columbia grad who is now saddled with title of CEO *and* the blame for shrinking sales in a shriveling economy. If you are running a company in which you did not rise to the top organically, you shouldn't do a thing until you spend a week working in every department at the level at which you can do the work. Get trained in the business *before* you try to run the business.

Whom does the CEO traditionally turn to when sales need to increase? The chief marketing officer (CMO), who has an acute interest in saving his or her own skin. Blame the sales on the sales guy; and don't forget to cut his or her marketing budget and tell staff they are now accountable for every penny. Sounds dumb, but people do it all the time.

That's where we come in. One way or another, dozens of companies show up every year at our office wanting to talk about this mysterious form of advertising that allows you to directly measure sales against advertising spend. Understand, direct response marketing is not taught as a major at any university in the world. Most don't have a single class in it. All of the true experts in the field you can count on your two hands. The truly unusual fact is that direct response is one of the oldest and most perseverant forms of marketing in the history of the United States, and probably the world.

Carnival Beginnings

Now, you may know a man named Mel Arthur, he is the face and voice of the Internet phone connection device MagicJack. This is not Mel's first rodeo. He has been around the pitch business for years and has had great success on the shopping networks. Ron met him one afternoon while directing a show called the "FlavorWave Oven," in which Mel's company had an interest. He relayed a story on how he got started in the business as a kid. Mel, Ron Popeil, Arthur Morris, and a guy named Charles Bronson—yes, *that* Charles Bronson—used to go down to the Atlantic City Pier as kids, and one of their fathers (which one escapes me) would pick up cases of product that these 10- to 15-year-olds, would sell on the boardwalk all summer long. One day it would be flatware, the next day cigars, linens, handbags, kitchen knives, or beauty cream. You name it, these kids were direct-marketing it. Mel relayed that the joy he has always had from this business is in the connection with his customers. Dating back to those Atlantic City days, where he'd get return customers who were happy with the last product and engaged by his entertaining pitch style, and who looked forward to his next product. Mel really shared the joy of selling—giving people a good value on a product that would help them solve a real problem in their lives.

Something clicked. I recalled my college days of being a lifeguard on the Florida beaches. I got so bored, and wanted to talk to the girls, so I started selling suntan lotions. It was really simple. People on the beach all had the same problem and didn't know it. They were at risk of getting sunburn, and hurt, and I was pointing out the problem, offering them a really good solution, creating a transaction that made me money and helped them at the same time. In that quick flashback, I realized that Ron, Mel Arthur, and I shared a certain DNA that all natural salespeople have, one that makes us a little different from the rest of the

world. We know in our core that selling is good. Selling helps people. People are grateful to be sold something they truly want and need. Unlock this door in your mind and you will sell more, sell better, and care about the people you are selling to.

Why Direct Response?

The question of whether direct response is a valid form of marketing and launch vehicle is fair.

We’ve sat in hundreds of focus groups and asked thousands of consumers what they think of infomercials. They are, at best, bemused by them; at worst, they are hostile, even volatile about the style and tone that the word “infomercial” connotes. We understand; we still have successful clients to this day who resist the word “infomercial.”

Ask the next question and you will find that about 90 percent of the exact same consumer group have called the number on the screen; they’ve even purchased. Most, more than once. Many don’t even realize they have until pressed. Dig deeper and they will tell you that not only were they compelled, most felt they made an informed buying decision and were ultimately satisfied with the product. Why? They discovered through the program that they needed it.

Do you see it? All marketing is bad—unless, of course, it is for something I want and need.

What, after all, is an infomercial? It’s really an entertaining seminar directed at a specific demographic segment that has a common set of problems. The seminar offers an explanation of an innovative solution and an opportunity to participate in trying that solution. In it, you learn the details of the innovation, and typically hear from the experts who created it, the outside experts who endorse it, and long-term and new users who rely on it. Infomercials come in primarily one length: the half-hour show; 28:30, to be exact, is the most prevalent. The offshoot of

the half-hour is the 2-minute, 1-minute, and, now, 30-second spots. In the industry, these are referred to as “short forms.”

Do you own a George Foreman Grill? Have you brightened your laundry with OxiClean? Gotten a better dental checkup with your Sonicare toothbrush? Or rented a Rug Doctor to clean your carpets? You are an infomercial customer. If you have considered yourself a potential customer for Viagra, Cialis, eHarmony, Overstock.com, GEICO, FreeCreditReport.com, TD AMERITRADE, or even ordered a pizza over the phone, you’ve been touched by our industry. Even if you tried only one of these products after seeing it in retail, you’ve participated in the most powerful marketing model ever created.

We are not pet rocks. As an industry with a reputation for cheesy products, slimy hosts, and phony testimonials, our industry has consistently bounced back with reputable products, quality brands, and truth-in-advertising. If you think infomercials are just for shoddy start-up gadgets or stand-alone companies that operate in the dark, think again. Hewlett-Packard, Nintendo, Range Rover, Johnson & Johnson, Microsoft, Kodak, and many more blue-chip organizations are turning to the direct response sales model because it is respected by the consumer and is an efficient and consistent form of detailed messaging; most importantly, it can be very profitable while building the brand.

This need to explain complex products in pragmatic ways has been utilized over and over, with great results by others, including Apple, Thermos, and Carnival Cruise Lines. We even saw Barack Obama create unique infomercials during the 2008 political season in an attempt to gain ground against opponents. Obama went as far to have his dubbed into Spanish to make sure he had reached a voter segment whose support he felt he needed to win. Apparently, it worked.

Today, our direct response economic model magic resides in the fact that we often, initially, can swim against the tide of