

THERE'S A CUSTOMER BORN EVERY MINUTE

**P.T. BARNUM'S AMAZING
10 "RINGS OF POWER"
FOR CREATING FAME, FORTUNE,
AND A BUSINESS EMPIRE TODAY—
GUARANTEED!**

JOE VITALE



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Praise for *There's a Customer Born Every Minute*

“P.T. Barnum was quite an extraordinary human being, and this book is great. It’s time someone wrote the truth about Barnum.”

—Evel Knievel

“A fascinating look at one of the greatest and most misunderstood promotional geniuses of all time. *There's a Customer Born Every Minute* is the next best thing to having P.T. Barnum himself personally reveal his money-making secrets to you.”

—David L. Deutsch, Advertising and Direct Mail Copywriter,
author, *Million Dollar Marketing Secrets*

“This book will hold you spellbound. It is electrifying! It illuminates every creative impulse of Barnum and his timeless marketing genius. Joe Vitale has captured the power of Barnum’s successes and has given us the tools to plug in! If you want to dramatically increase your ability to promote your business, then buy this book now!”

—Allen D’Angelo, M.S., author, *Explosive Marketing:
2000 Ways to Release Creative Marketing Power into
Your Business to Quadruple Your Income*

“Joe Vitale presents a three-ring circus of wise and profit-producing ideas in *There's a Customer Born Every Minute*. The book is as easy to read as it is enlightening. It’s a must-read if you have even a vague interest in money.”

—Jay Conrad Levinson, author, *Guerrilla Marketing* series

“P.T. Barnum became rich and famous because he understood people. This made doing business with them simple. This book reveals the great showman’s business secrets, including his little-known negotiation skills.”

—Gerard Nierenberg, President, The Negotiation Institute,
author, *The Art of Negotiating* and *The Complete Negotiator*

“At a time when 43 percent of Americans cannot recall the name of the vice president of the United States (according to a 1994 Gallup Poll), Barnum’s name remains a household word. Joe Vitale quickly dispels ignorantly conceived myths and rumors, and reveals Barnum for what he truly was (and still is)—a marketing titan whose genius *must* be reviewed and modeled after. Anyone who claims to be serious about business, marketing, and advertising needs to read, study, and keep a copy of this book handy.”

—Hector R. D. Baron, Marketing and
Sales Strategies Consultant, Executive Project Coordinator
of The Billionaire Power Summit in the Philippines

“It’s a Barnum and Bailey world, so it’s fitting that the best business book of the year is one about the most exciting and original businessman of them all—P.T. Barnum. Unlocking years-old secrets, Joe Vitale’s fresh perspective on this legendary master is a joy to read, plus it’s packed with up-to-date insights for today’s entrepreneurs. There really is a customer born every minute, and this book is the best way to learn how to win in the clown-eat-clown circus world of business today.”

—John Martin, CEO, Bold Creative Services

“Definitely a mind-stretching read.”

—Lennie Grimaldi, Publicist, author of *Chased* and *Only in Bridgeport*

“Wow! I *really* couldn’t put this down! This magnificent new book reveals the inner workings of a historic, inventive, and persistently positive man. Joe Vitale has taken the classic wisdom of P.T. Barnum and made it accessible to us all. Amazing!”

—Ron Kaufman, President, Active Learning Sales Training, Singapore

“This book fired up my imagination, blasted me past my limits, and launched a zillion ideas for outrageous personal and professional success. It’s fun, fast-paced, inspiring, and packed with powerful ideas!”

—Rick Butts, President, The Safari Adventure Company

“What could be more fun to read than the business secrets of P.T. Barnum?! This book is filled with practical information I can use right now, and information I want to pass on to my clients and anyone else who wants to further their stretch and achieve more happiness and success.”

—William Wittmann, M.Ed., LMP, Seattle

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For Murray Rogow,
the world's second greatest press agent
(P.T. Barnum was the first)

*I fully believe that if you faithfully follow my methods you
cannot fail.*

—P.T. Barnum, 1891, five days before he died



P.T. Barnum. (Used by permission, The Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, Connecticut.)

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Introduction

I believe this world is in a great measure what we choose to make it, and I therefore propose to point out so far as I can, the methods that are best calculated to enable us to "get on" in it, and obtain comparative happiness.

P. T. Barnum.

Hotel Victoria

London January 19th 1890.

The handwritten introduction (on the previous page) by P.T. Barnum comes from *Dollars and Sense*, one of the many reissues of the famous showman's autobiography. The first time I saw this handwriting in a copy of the book on display in the Barnum Museum in Bridgeport, Connecticut, I assumed Barnum had personally signed the book. Apparently that's what Barnum wanted people to think. Dr. A. H. Saxon, author of *P.T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, told me the handwritten introduction was printed in every copy of *Dollars and Sense*. It was probably a clever marketing strategy on Barnum's part, knowing people would assume the book was a priceless autographed edition and more books would be sold. Hoping for the same thing, I include Barnum's introduction in this book.

(From author's private collection)

Foreword

**Why is Joe Vitale writing about P.T. Barnum?
And how do you win as a result of it?**

“**T**here’s a sucker born every minute” is a quote often attributed to P.T. Barnum. There’s only one problem: Barnum never said it.

Barnum said lots of incredible things, and you’re about to read them in a way that will make them applicable to your work because of one man: Joe Vitale, the P.T. Barnum of today.

Barnum was one of the most advanced thinkers of his time.

So is Joe Vitale.

Barnum was the consummate promoter.

So is Joe Vitale.

Barnum was a succinct and prolific writer.

So is Joe Vitale.

Barnum was a dynamic speaker.

So is Joe Vitale.

Barnum was hypnotic.

So is Joe Vitale—he even wrote the book on it.

Barnum was an idea person.

So is Joe Vitale.

And like all great men, Barnum was ahead of his time.

So is Joe Vitale.

Everyone is looking for the perfect mentor. Most people look for someone who is alive. As an advanced thinker, Dr. Joe had a hard time relating to present-day thinkers, so he turned to history to find his mentor, and found the perfect match. Vitale had the wisdom to study the master promoter and idea man of his time, P.T. Barnum, and through Joe's interpretations, P.T. can be your mentor, too.

If Barnum were still alive, he'd be vying with Joe Vitale for the title of Internet viral-marketing king. If Barnum were still alive, he'd be writing about Joe Vitale.

The first time I came across *There's a Customer Born Every Minute*, I was jealous. The book was so well done, so well written, I wished I had written it myself. I e-mailed Joe, ordered a case of copies (autographed, of course), and sent them to business friends.

Their response was the same as yours will be: Wow!

When you look at the chapter titles and scan some of the ideas contained on every page, you not only admire the years of study and research that went into creating this book, you also can't wait to devour it. Actually, you'll get excited.

Once you dig into Barnum's 10 rings of power, you will become empowered.

Once you dig into Barnum's incredible power to persuade, you will become a persuader.

Once you dig into Barnum's power to promote, you will become a promoter.

Once you dig into Barnum's success secrets, you will understand what it will take for you to become a success.

This book is loaded. It's loaded with thoughts, gems, and insights that you can use the minute you read them.

A word of caution: This is a thinking man's (okay, a thinking person's) book. It will give you pause. The good news is, it will give you hundreds of ideas of how you can follow in the successful footsteps of P.T. Bar-

num. Read it twice. Study it. You'll find, as I did, that it's a book you can carry with you and read for an instant inspiration.

There's a Customer Born Every Minute—and I'm one of them.

—JEFFREY GITOMER

Author of *The Little Red Book of Selling*

Preface

How P.T. Barnum Almost Killed Me Twice (and Why I Don't Really Mind)

I never knew P.T. Barnum, of course. The famous showman has been dead more than one hundred years. Still, his name, business, and influence are alive and well today, and will be well into the twenty-first century. There have been several movies about him, several plays, numerous books, and, as I pen these words, Elvis Costello is writing an opera about Barnum. As long as there will be a circus, the name Barnum will remain associated with it. And as long as I live, I'll never forget how Barnum inadvertently nearly killed me twice.

I was 16 years old the first time. I wanted to be Harry Excello, the world's most famous magician. I went to the circus when it came to my hometown in Niles, Ohio in the late 1960s with the idea of talking to the magician who worked with it. Young and bold, feeling a little Barnum and Houdini in my blood, I walked right into the tent and asked to see the magician.

He came out and we talked. He was friendly and charming, and

seemed more like a used car salesman trapped inside a magician's role in a circus. As we spoke I learned that he loved magic, loved the circus, and loved his work. He introduced me to the sword swallower, another charming man, only he wore a Tarzan-like outfit to show his tan and his muscles. I remember thinking that he looked like a gypsy. I asked the sword swallower how he performed his tricks, but he laughed and said it was a family secret. For a 16-year-old boy in a small midwestern town, I felt as if I was walking among the legends of the earth.

The sword swallower and magician asked me if I wanted to work in the circus for the weekend. I couldn't believe it. I could help clean up the grounds, they said, and take down the tents when the show ended the next night. Wow, I would get to clean up animal dung! I would get to see the circus acts for free and they would pay me three dollars a day. The money meant nothing. The adventure meant everything. I jumped at the chance.

I was in for a surprise. I found the circus to be a business like any other. Events started and stopped on time. People had jobs to do and places to go. They worked, entertained, laughed, cried, and complained. They were paid like any other employee in any other business. I learned that even when something was fun—like being a clown, a magician, or a sword swallower—good business kept the jobs alive. It may have been show business, but it was still a *business*.

This is where Barnum almost killed me the first time.

On closing night, when things were being taken down and packed up, I somehow found myself walking through the entrance of the main tent just as several elephants were being directed out of the tent. One of the animal caretakers yelled for me to get out of the way. I'll always remember the look on his face. He looked angry as well as terrified. He knew a young man was about to be trampled to death. *Me*.

I froze. For a moment I felt as if I was standing in the wilds of Africa and killer elephants were coming to mindlessly crush me like a grape. I remember glancing to my left and then to my right, seeing the empty wooden bleachers on both sides of me, knowing they were too tall for me to reach from where I stood, and realizing I had nowhere to run.

My heart pounded like a wild drum. I could feel the throbbing in my ears. I can still see the elephants coming at me, their huge gray bellies

swaying left and right as their feet thundered on the dirt. I quickly pushed my back against the bleacher on my left, sucked in my breath, tried to become one with the wood, and became very religious. I prayed that I would live. I prayed that I would not be flattened by a beast of the jungle. This was no way for the great Harry Excello to exit the world.

The first elephant passed without coming too close to me. So did the second. I can still smell them both, though. Even today. But the third elephant must have been related to Jumbo, because he was colossal in size and seemed destined to turn me into his next coat. He was so close to me that his canvas skin blocked out my view of the world, but he, too, missed me. All the elephants came, passed, and went on their way. I was safe.

I never forgot the experience. In a way, the near fatal trampling by a herd of circus elephants when I was a boy branded my soul with the name Barnum forever.

The second time Barnum almost killed me occurred while writing the first edition of this book.

I found Barnum to be an overwhelming character. For example, although everyone thinks of Barnum in connection with the circus, he actually didn't run a circus until he was a senior citizen. That was one of his *final* accomplishments. Before that he had been everything from a lottery salesman to an entertainer, bestselling author, mayor, manager, publisher, public speaker, crusader against alcohol, philanthropist, entrepreneur, practical joker, friend to presidents and royalty, and owner of one of America's biggest and most successful early museums.

Trying to follow Barnum's colorful and active career throughout his 80 years, trying to make sense of his exhibitions, working to understand the time he lived in, fighting to make sense of his tendency to pull jokes on the public, digging to unearth his secrets for making any business a success—all worked to make me one stressed out adult.

In addition, I spent every penny I had on old books by and about Barnum, and for traveling across the states to visit museums and historical collections concerning him. I was also pushing aside other projects in order to write this book. I was becoming obsessed. One day, during the writing of the first edition of this book back in 1995, I looked at my savings account and saw it was empty. So was my checking account. So was my business

account. I was spending all my money on Barnum collectibles and all my time on this book. I was neglecting everything else. That's when I realized this Barnum book was literally taking its toll on me.

Many times I nearly gave up, thinking Barnum was far too big a character for me to wrestle to the ground. Many times I felt such tension that I wondered how my heart withstood the pressure. This has been the hardest book I've ever written. The statistics maintained on my word processing program say I've rewritten this book 438 times, and that was just the first edition of this book. I've since rewritten it and expanded it for this new edition. I spent hours, days, weeks, months, researching, writing, rewriting, polishing, testing, learning, understanding, and expressing Barnum's business secrets. This has not been an easy task. I really felt as if this book on Barnum would kill me.

Fortunately it—like the elephants—let me survive, and once I began *using* Barnum's techniques, I also began to prosper. I now live a life of luxury, with numerous books to my credit, and great wealth, as well.

That's why I have a special fondness for Barnum today. He took me to the edge of life and let me see the true joy of living. Nearly being creamed by an elephant was, well, hair raising. (I had hair then.) Researching this book has been—I admit it—inspiring. I've learned new ways to help my clients achieve breakthrough success in business. In short, Barnum gave me for free what he charged millions of people to receive during his lifetime: *Excitement*.

As a result of my invigorating research and writing, you now hold in your hands the first book ever written on the sales and marketing methods of the world's greatest showman—a man who in his day became rich beyond all measure and famous beyond all comprehension; a man who introduced the first superstars to the world and was never afraid of seeking publicity in some of the most audacious ways imaginable; a man so deeply religious that his friends called him Reverend Barnum; a man who survived our bloody Civil War, personal bankruptcy, and some of the worst economic panics in American history and *still* became a millionaire; a man who nearly inadvertently killed me twice—Phineas Taylor Barnum.

Let the show begin!

—JOE VITALE

Acknowledgments

The million-dollar title for this book came from David Deutsch, brilliant copywriter and friend. Barbara Celitans showed extraordinary service by opening the doors of the San Antonio public library's Hertzberg Circus Museum before regular hours and allowing me to look through Barnum's original letters. Mary Witkowski, head of the historical collections at the Bridgeport Public Library, helped me locate rare books, letters, and ads by and about Barnum.

Dr. Arthur H. Saxon, biographer of Barnum, patiently answered my questions and gave me a personal tour of the Bridgeport Barnum would have known. Robert Pelton, past curator of the Barnum Museum in Bridgeport, personally guided me through the museum and photocopied special articles.

Allen D'Angelo donated his time and effort in conducting research and locating many rare articles for me. Penny Perez acted as my special assistant while researching Barnum in Bridgeport. Blair Warren helped me in San Antonio. Colleen of Houston's Colleen's Books and Linda Strike of Optical Insights located rare books about Barnum and his era. Ronnie Reno of Brockton Publishing scanned Barnum's introduction at the front of this book, and his famous talk on making money at the back of this book, so I didn't have to retype either.

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I want to acknowledge my four primary sources for the information in this book: Bryan's edition of Barnum's autobiography, A. H. Saxon's biography of Barnum and his collection of Barnum's letters, and Kundardt's pictorial life history of the great showman. These as well as all other sources are listed in the bibliography.

Advance readers whose input helped shape the final book include Linda Credeur, Rick Butts, Connie Schmidt, Ron Kaye, Greg Manning, Ron Kaufman, Lennie Grimaldi, Robert Pelton, Penny Perez, Larry Weinstein, Mark Weisser, Blair Warren, John Martin, Allen D'Angelo, William Wittmann, Scott Hammaker, Debbie Zimmerman, Brocky Brown, David Deutsch, Hector Baron, Murray Rogow, and Jim King.

Upon my soul, I could not have completed this book without everyone's help. Thank you, one and all.

1

Presenting . . . the Greatest Marketeer of All Time—*P. T. Barnum!*

I know you will not consider a few words of advice from me as impertinence, but will heed them and treasure them up as a legacy.

—P.T. Barnum, 1891, five days before he died

“**Y**ou here on business?” asked the man beside me.

I was on a late afternoon flight from Dallas to Houston, where I lived at the time. Most of the people on the crowded airplane were coming from business meetings in the cowboy city. The fellow beside me wanted to make the short flight go even faster by speaking with somebody, anybody, and I happened to be sitting in the lucky (?) seat beside him.

“I’m flying home after doing some research in Connecticut for my next book,” I said. “It’s going to be about the business secrets of P.T. Barnum.”

I said it with a certain pride. I knew this man beside me, whoever he was, was aware of Barnum’s name. Everybody knows it. I also knew nobody had ever written a book on Barnum’s business ingenuity. I was feeling smug, waiting for the applause. But it never came. The man beside me looked confused.

"It's a book about the circus guy?"

I cringed. I tried not to look insulted or impatient.

"Barnum operated a circus in the *last* part of his life," I explained, trying to point out that Barnum was far more than a "circus guy."

"Long before the circus he ran numerous businesses, made unknown people famous, started dirt poor, got rich, lost all his money, and got rich all over again," I said.

"He was the most recognized name in America and maybe in the world in the 1800s. He knew Presidents and was even considered as a Presidential nominee. He was a clever businessman and maybe the greatest marketing mind that ever existed. His techniques made his museum famous and helped make his circus something every child wants to attend today. The man was so famous you even know his name right now, yet he died more than one hundred years ago."

I caught my breath and let the businessman beside me consider the facts I expressed. Finally he spoke.

"Didn't Barnum say 'There's a sucker born every minute'?"

"No, Barnum never said that," I replied. "Barnum respected people and gave them more than their money's worth. He never said, wrote, and probably never even thought that stupid line. No researcher or historian has ever found evidence that he said it."

I counted to 10 and waited for my fellow passenger to say something else that would rile me. I didn't have long to wait.

"Barnum's methods might work for a big company or for some corporation with a huge general audience, but I don't see how I can use his ideas in my little business."

I realized here was an opportunity to expand this man's thinking. I asked him what he did for a living. He said he owned a small company that refurbished vans. When I asked him how he marketed his business, he said he went to trade shows.

"And how do you make yourself stand out at these trade shows?" I asked.

"We get a big table."

I had him now.

“How many other people get big tables?” I asked.

“I guess most of them do.”

“Do you realize that if you pretended you were P.T. Barnum, and acted more flamboyantly, more brashly, more boldly, you could have a trade show booth that would be the talk of the entire trade show?”

He still didn’t get it.

“Look,” I began. “I wrote a book for the American Marketing Association on small business advertising. I know that it is no longer enough for you to just advertise your business or attend trade shows. There’s just too much competition in today’s world. You have to stand out in the crowd. You have to do something more daring to bring attention to your business.”

“What do you mean?”

“You have to be like the businessman who hung from a towel that was tied to a flying helicopter to show his towels would not tear. You have to be as bold as the publisher who threw a media event announcing his new magazine by hiring the Beach Boys to sing.

“Look at Cal Worthington, the car dealer who ran television ads featuring ‘his dog Spot.’ Every week his dog was some animal, from a dog to a goat to a pig to a giraffe. That’s Barnum-like thinking. These publicity stunts helped Worthington become the most successful auto dealer in history. And it’s that kind of thinking that made Worthington a millionaire. A hundred years ago it made Barnum a millionaire. It can also make you a millionaire today.”

I let the businessman consider my argument while I looked out the window at the Texas sky. If nothing else, the conversation made me more aware of the fact that people don’t really comprehend just how phenomenal this character called P.T. Barnum really was. Not everyone realizes that the sales and marketing methods Barnum invented can be used today. But my daydreaming was soon interrupted.

“We use promotional gimmicks like pens with our name on it and calendars with our logo,” my fellow passenger said. “We get stories done on us in the trade papers, too.”

“And how’s business?”

“It’s good. We nearly went bankrupt at first, but we’re moving along and growing.”

“I’ll be blunt with you,” I announced, preparing this man for the radical honesty I was about to say. “Unless you do something with more guts, you will remain one of the little guys.”

“How do you figure that?”

“Because you have competition and sooner or later that competition will rear its head and take a bite out of you. Whether you survive or not will depend on how stable you are, how smart you are, and how much outrageous marketing you do.”

“Outrageous marketing?”

“Look at Robert Allen. He wrote an investment book called *Nothing Down*. Well, who cares about another money book? There are 2,000 books published every week. To separate his from the crowd, Allen issued a challenge.”

“I think I remember it.”

“He said, ‘Take my wallet and all of my money, leave me with one hundred dollars in cash, drop me in any city, and within 72 hours I will have a piece of prime real estate.’”

“He did it, didn’t he?”

“You know it. And that stunt got him front page coverage in the papers, brought him national publicity, helped make his book a bestseller, and made Allen a multimillionaire.”

“Yeah, but—”

“And look at Tony Robbins. The man was so poor he used to wash his dishes in his bathtub. To make himself stand out in the crowd, he started conducting seminars on firewalking. That grabbed media attention. Now the man lives in the Fiji Islands and spends more money in one day than he used to make in a year.”

“Yeah, but—”

“Or look at Ted Turner. The world thought he was nuts when he created a national cable network. Now CNN gets studied and copied by the other networks!”

“Yeah, but—”

“You can’t be an also-ran in business and expect to survive and prosper,” I continued. “You have to stick your neck out. You have to wedge your name into the minds of your prospects. Once you break into their awareness, they won’t easily forget you. That’s what Robert Allen did. And Tony Robbins. And Ted Turner. And P.T. Barnum. They forced themselves into our minds.”

“Yeah, but—”

“If you want your business to rocket to Mars and back, you have to be willing to take the next step. And the next step just might be off the top of a tall building.”

“Coffee or tea?” interrupted a smiling flight attendant.

Neither of us wanted anything.

“And let’s not forget Houdini or Ali or Stanley Arnold or Edward Bernays,” I said.

“Who?”

“I’m writing about them in my book, too,” I answered.

“Yeah, but Barnum had it easy,” my friend said. “He lived in a time when there wasn’t much competition.”

This guy was getting to me now.

“Barnum grew up with our country, that’s true, but he had competition just like everyone else. And more importantly, he took people and places that others had *tried* to promote, used his own methods, and made his enterprises known around the world. The museum he bought had already been around when Barnum made it a colossal success. He brought Jenny Lind, the famous singer, to America and made crowds flock to see her. But when Lind tried to promote herself without Barnum, she flopped and soon returned to Europe. No one thought the midget Charles Stratton was special, until Barnum renamed him General Tom Thumb and started to publicize him.”

My passenger just looked at me, his eyes blank.

“Barnum was the key,” I explained. “His methods turned otherwise passable people and shows into money making—even historic—events. And you can use his methods today. That’s why I’m writing this book. I’ve discovered his 10 Rings of Power for making any business into a

money machine. I'm writing this book to convey these techniques to people just like you. You need it."

"I need it?"

"Don't you think there's an outside chance that Barnum knew something you didn't? Isn't there a remote possibility that there are sales and marketing techniques you haven't used or heard of yet—techniques that just might make you rich?"

"I never really thought about it."

"Look. The San Antonio public library's Hertzberg Circus Museum has courses where they teach children business skills, graphic arts, and advertising principles by letting them start and run their own little circus. That's pure Barnum. And if this information helps kids learn about business, don't you think it might help you, as well?"

"They're teaching your Rings of Power to kids?"

"No," I replied, smiling. "They're teaching kids how to run a business with the circus as their metaphor. They haven't studied Barnum like I have. Besides, Barnum wasn't involved in the circus until after he was sixty years old. *I'm* teaching adults how to create empires by telling them how to use Barnum's 10 Rings of Power. I call my program *Project Phineas*."

"But I don't think my customers would enjoy seeing me do wild stunts."

"Do you think people enjoy seeing Sir Richard Branson fly around the world in a balloon?" I asked.

"Well, he's likeable."

"He's likeable because he's *daring*," I said. "Besides, people won't care as long as you *deliver* what you promise. Barnum had few complaints from his customers. Tony Robbins, Robert Allen and Ted Turner also get few complaints. Why? Because they deliver. They give legendary service. Their customers leave feeling incredible. The idea behind publicity stunts is to get attention. It's no longer enough to advertise or hand out flyers or sit at a trade show. You have to think more outrageously and act more boldly, and you have to deliver what you promise, or else."

"Or else?"

"Or else you're history."