

The Advertising Solution: Influence Prospects, Multiply Sales, and Promote Your Brand With Lessons From the Legends

By Craig Simpson With Brian Kurtz

Foreword

Call it an allergy: I have little or no tolerance for advertising that is not accountable...and measurable...complete with metrics that tell us whether we made money or not and whether we should continue with that “advertising.” The natural next step, of course, is to then do anything we can to beat the winning promotion, again using the metrics of direct marketing.

I learned at the outset of my career to always focus on *measurable response*--media that pays out--and for the most part, I try to avoid getting sucked into using (or buying) advertising or marketing that leads to anyone’s best guess as to whether it worked or not.

So when Craig Simpson came to me to work with him on a book titled, *The Advertising Solution*, I had mixed feelings.

I was inclined to say “yes” immediately (because it was Craig); but I also wondered if I was really the right guy for the job.

After all, as I have written and often said, non-direct marketing forms of advertising such as “public relations,” “publicity,” and even “advertising” (the general kind with no relationship to direct response and measurability), generally give me hives.

I used to speak at events for college students and explain that direct marketing was the only kind of marketing to practice since it’s the only kind of marketing that lets you know how you are doing all the time. I told them:

“If you are needy and crave constant feedback on how you are doing, direct marketing is for you.”

I also told them that making money was nice but the real key is once we make money, we can go on to make a much bigger impact.

And without being focused on measurable results, we have little or no chance to make our maximum impact.

But *The Advertising Solution*? I just wasn’t sure about this one.

Then Craig explained that he was using the word “advertising” in its broadest sense to include direct marketing. And furthermore, he was going back to the original

“advertising” geniuses who invented the methods for measuring response that are the groundwork of what we do today.

As Craig said to me:

“We are going to explore in depth the groundbreaking work of six Legends of advertising, marketing, and copywriting and bring to life some of their most important techniques and concepts, many of them implemented almost 100 years ago. The thesis will be that what they invented is actually the foundation all marketing is based on today. If we want to work most effectively, we have to go back to the source.”

So Craig didn’t have me at “hello”...but he had me now.

I realized at that moment that Craig and I think about the world of direct response marketing the same way and I was “all in” on this project.

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I have talked about my own life’s mission to be the bridge between all of the eternal truths of direct marketing of the past and how those truths can be applied to *everything* we deem as state-of-the-art in the multi-channel marketing world in the present...and on into the future.

And it’s amazing how much the six Legends highlighted in this book realized the importance of measurability, testing, and what makes people tick (and buy) without a computer, the Internet...or yes, even Facebook.

Imagine that.

And it’s amazing to see how much these six men understood, clarified, and demonstrated principles that have become the lifeblood of all we do in marketing today. Both offline and online.

What that means is, regardless of what type of promotions you are doing today, whether it’s direct advertising, online sales, blogging, self-promotion, or anything else, these are the principles you must understand – and use. They are as vital and practical today as they were when they were first put forward.

You can save years of trial and error, and increase your level of success, by putting into practice the discoveries you will make in this book.

Having been a student in one way or another of these six incredible men—true heroes to me and so many others—the opportunity to collaborate with Craig on this book is a dream come true.

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Choosing these six Legends was easy given their contributions:

Claude Hopkins “invented” *Scientific Advertising*; and knowing that he wrote his masterpiece in 1923 and that it still holds up to this day tells you a bit about how influential he was then...and now.

His book is one of very few on a short list I recommend to anyone beginning a marketing career today.

In one of the later editions of the book, it was said that, “*Hopkins is hopelessly out of date, and amazingly current.*” And I admit, as did the writer of the Foreword of that edition, there are things that Hopkins wrote about that have been disproven in various ways.

But the fact remains that he was all about “scientific advertising” in a time when there was really very little “science” available (i.e. the ability to track and create automated metrics wouldn’t happen until decades later).

That is the miracle of Claude Hopkins.

Robert Collier wrote the *Robert Collier Letter Book* in 1937...a dense read...with lessons in writing sales letters for a lifetime.

And while it is not talked about as the “must read” as often as the masterpieces from Ogilvy, Caples, and Hopkins, Craig and I learned as much studying how Collier dissected the sales letter as much as anything in this book.

One of the most exciting things about what Craig and I have done with Collier’s opus, a somewhat forgotten classic, is that we were committed to distilling the gems into usable advice and techniques for anyone writing sales letters today.

Collier, despite being relatively unknown (and less read), might have been the premier sales letter copywriter...ever. It is so satisfying to expose Collier’s wisdom to a new generation.

John Caples was probably the first person to understand direct marketing measurement, metrics and testing methodology.

Tested Advertising Methods is in its fifth edition and is still a must read for anyone who writes copy or promotes anything in any medium.

The fact that this “bible” of proven advertising techniques has continuously been updated to reflect all of the changes in marketing today tells us that Caples was clearly on to something...

Throughout this book we will dive deeply into the world and mind of Caples.

David Ogilvy was a direct marketer trapped in a general advertiser's body. He was a true creative genius and pioneer who understood "direct marketing" before it was ever talked about separately from "advertising."

He did not,

*"...regard advertising as entertainment or an art form, but as a medium of information. When I write an advertisement, I don't want you to tell me that you find it 'creative.' I want you to find it so interesting that you **buy the product.**"*

He did that very effectively, and in this book you will be introduced to his most valuable techniques.

Gary Halbert is a Legend in this book who I had the pleasure of meeting, and his influence has expanded even many years after his premature death. He passed away way too young.

Over the years, I have met dozens of copywriters he mentored, some of whom are the best copywriters in the world today. Through his writings and interviews he continues to influence the marketplace in a major way.

When I started in the newsletter business in 1981, I read a Halbert quote that guided me and helped me grow one of the largest consumer newsletters ever, *Bottom Line/Personal*. He simply said:

"People subscribe to your newsletter for what they think you will do for them; they re-subscribe because they like you."

That shaped the way I acquired new subscribers and how I renewed them...sort of like "they come for the information and stay for the inspiration." I know Halbert influenced everyone he touched and still touches.

I don't know of one great copywriter working today who has not studied Halbert...learned from him...and continuously re-read the incredible body of work he left behind in swipe files readily available to everyone.

Gene Schwartz, the one Legend I knew well and someone I can call a mentor, was (and still is) as influential as anyone who has written copy or marketed products in the history of advertising.

His landmark book, *Breakthrough Advertising*, is considered the most important book ever written on copy, creative...and human behavior. Written in 1966, not one word has been changed in the current edition...and it remains 100% relevant and is considered a

masterpiece and a must read for anyone in marketing or anyone who is even thinking about writing effective promotional copy.

Schwartz was a true Renaissance Man, as well-read as anyone I have ever met, and someone who really understood what made people tick...and buy.

Schwartz was able to get into the psyche of all the audiences he wrote to...and the clients he worked intimately with...and in this book we also share his methodology for writing efficiently and effectively.

I know many copywriters today who follow Schwartz's methodology almost like a religion.

Gene Schwartz didn't write copy—he assembled it. The copywriters who say they learned their craft from him (and from *Breakthrough Advertising*) are some of the best writers our industry has ever seen. And they tell *their* students and followers to read *Breakthrough Advertising* before embarking on their career.

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I think there's a theme here worth noting about these six "old timers":

The universal truths they wrote about are timeless.

Yes, some things will sound and feel outdated since they are not talking about social media or anything digital...but I encourage you to suspend your beliefs a bit as you read this book and consider how much of their work has stood the test of time...and that it transcends technology.

To help you, this book is filled with modern-day examples and advice on how to apply these truths to any kind of promotion you are doing today.

One of my favorite quotes is from one of the great advertising men of all time, Bill Bernbach:

"Adapt your techniques to an idea, not an idea to your techniques."

I don't want to get too dramatic here, but these guys are our "builders of the pyramids," creating something incredible without the use of modern technology.

We are extremely proud that this book will enable the next generation of the best marketers on the planet to apply their genius in the most innovative ways.

And I would not be going out on a limb to say that if our six Legends were alive today, they would see the Internet as the ultimate direct response medium. They would have a

field day applying their genius to marketing online (especially because they would not have to pay for postage).

I believe one of the other great things about this book is that it does a great service for marketers of today. Some of the “teaching books” these Legends wrote are a little difficult to get through. They were written in a style of language that sounds a bit foreign to us today.

But this book has taken the essence of each of these greats and made it easy for you to understand, assimilate, and start applying in your own work.

Basically, we have created, in one volume, a way for you to access these Legends without having to read everything they wrote.

At least not yet.

Consider this a digest for the ages.

And perhaps, once you understand the true value to you of Hopkins, Collier, Caples, Ogilvy, Halbert, and Schwartz you will want more. Fortunately, much of their writing and wisdom is readily available.

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As far as whether this book will be worth your while or not, in general it will be of interest to anyone who enjoys history and would like to learn the ins-and-outs of how advertising works.

More specifically, as a marketer, you will certainly find it to be of value if you fall into one of these three groups:

1) First-time marketers of products or services:

If you are getting into direct marketing of some kind today, it is quite probable that your work will mostly be online; and it’s also probable that you will want to deliver digital content as opposed to physical product if you are involved in the delivery of information.

Despite our Legends “doing their thing” pre-Internet, I want to repeat that everything they talk about is applicable to today’s digital marketing environment as well as the direct mail environment.

You will see that throughout we make specific mention of online applications as well as offline.

Through my 35 plus years in direct marketing, as we went from horse and buggy (i.e. direct mail/print only) to the automobile (online), the smartest marketers I know always diversify their media (channels of distribution) just as they would diversify their investment portfolio.

Hopefully you believe as I do that “multi-channel marketing” should always be at the top of one’s mind.

The wisdom in these pages regarding what these Legends were able to accomplish in print and direct mail is astounding. And everything they did is applicable to how we launch new products and sell our services today.

And note: offline media still scales quite well and often delivers more engaged customers with higher lifetime value.

So...we would encourage you to consider offline techniques to compliment your online techniques when applicable.

Our Legends will help you with both.

2) **Experienced marketers who never heard of these six Legends:**

If you are successfully marketing goods and services today, and you are focused mostly (or even exclusively) online... why would you need (or want) to read about advertising greats of the past who did everything offline?

This is totally understandable and it is actually one of the motivations Craig and I had for writing this book.

While you may not have heard of any (or all) of the men we profile here, I believe you can take almost anything in this book and apply it to your current marketing plan.

And if you are marketing offline, then you really need to know about these six Legends so that you can produce your best work.

Another motivation for us to write this book was to make sure that Hopkins, Collier, Caples, Ogilvy, Halbert, and Schwartz are never forgotten...and if we can introduce them to an audience of world class marketers who aren’t aware of them yet, we know we have done something special.

Their contributions to advertising, direct response marketing, and creative development are as deep as they are wide.

Some information in this book will simply be reminders for experienced marketers...but hopefully all of the material will lead to inspiration and new breakthroughs in how you sell and promote.

As Pablo Picasso said:

“Learn the rules like a pro, so you can break them like an artist.”

3) Experienced marketers who are actually old enough to remember these six Legends:

If you fall in this category, I’m guessing you know many of these principles; and you may have learned them first from one of the Legends we profile in this book.

But are there basics you have forgotten? Is it time for some reminders of what got you here?

For this group, I believe reading this book will be much more than a stroll down memory lane...I believe it will be one reinforcement after another and one inspiration after another so you too can continue to, “...break the rules like an artist.”

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Finally, on the surface, it may look like I am a hypocrite:

That is... I claim to be a “Serial Direct Marketer,” someone who has been a slave to measurable and accountable advertising his whole life, yet I’ve got my name attached to a book about six men who are eternally tied (at least in people’s minds) to a world of general advertising that was often more about brand and image than about getting orders and making money...

But after poring over the work of these Legends, it is clear to me that whenever they could, they bucked the trend to fall back on clients paying them to do “pretty ads” that made someone in an ivory tower feel great about their brand, product, or image. Instead, they worked to prove the worth of the work they produced.

That is why I think this book is so important and instructive...despite the possibility that some may come to it with the misapprehension that it’s about “general advertising” and not applicable to a world where we are all committed to getting a return on every investment we make in advertising or marketing.

You will see throughout the pages of this book that our Legends were way ahead of their time. They invented today’s methods for determining if marketing is providing the desired return on investment.

The life's work of our Legends needed to be shared in a volume like this...and I thank Craig for asking me to be part of it.

I sincerely hope that you will gain as much in the application of the eternal truths covered in this book as the two of us do every day, working with marketers in every category and in every medium.

Therefore, I am the proudest "serial direct marketer hypocrite" who ever lived.

I'll wear that one like a badge of honor...I hope you will too.

Brian Kurtz
Titans Marketing LLC
Former business builder of Boardroom Inc. and Serial Direct Marketer