

Completely Whack-a-Doodle Crazy with a Side of Crazy

Marketing is actually pretty simple, but at the same time it has to be very deliberate. You really and truly have to ignore everything that you see other businesses doing in your local area.

99.99% of them are doing it wrong, getting really poor results and blaming the economy, the government or the people that live in the area around their business.

They are 100% wrong to blame anyone of these factors. But they have convinced themselves that these things are true, which is why they are so reluctant to consider any other options.

Most look at advertising their business about the same way as buying toilet paper for the office. It's just something you have to do, so they robotically run their weak ads expecting the same poor results as always.

They don't believe that the results could be remarkably better by just doing a few things differently.

You can sell in any economy, any economic situation, if you approach the marketing in the right way.

Early in this book I talked about the A.I.D.A formula. I'm repeating it here so you grasp it fully. Every marketing piece that you create must fit into or follow this formula.

1. Capture their interest with a super powerful headline.
2. Immediately start creating interest in your product by telling a compelling story.
3. Build desire, using powerful words and phrases make them desire what you are selling.
4. Give them a powerful call to action. Not a fist full of options, but a single call to action.

Most important of all? Don't be boring!

Give them a reason to read beyond your headline and tell your story in an interesting and compelling way so they not only remain interested and intrigued by what you are saying, but become more and more interested as they work their way through your sales copy.

Sales copy. Ain't that a hoot?

Look at all of the advertising your local newspaper or where ever businesses advertise and see if you can find the sales copy. It ain't there. Trust me, it's just not there, nobody but expert marketers actually use compelling sales copy.

You my friend have to be different. You have to change your ways.

Keep in mind, most people that will see your headline have absolutely no interest in what you are selling so as you create your sales copy don't speak to them, trying to get them interested.

Speak to the person that is interested. Paint everybody else out of the picture and have a one on one conversation with the person that truly is interested in what you have to offer.

When you do this, this one on one conversation? To the reader, the prospect, that's exactly how it will feel. As if you are speaking only to them.

Ding Dong the witch is dead!

Okay, so she's not a witch and as of this writing she's not completely dead, but the writing is on the wall and her vital signs are very weak. She can't possibly make it; the story is near its end.

Of what am I speaking? Newspapers.

I love newspapers! Over the years I've used them to sell hundreds of thousands of dollars in products and services, but their circulation and overall readership is dead.

It's sad, really and truly sad, but the world marches on and technology and instant up to the second news reporting has murdered the newspapers.

They've had to cut their budgets, reduce their staffs and all of this is only going to hasten their demise. They just don't have the people to even adequately report the local news.

Up until 2016 I was still running half page newspaper ads with pretty good results to sell my little plants, but without a doubt, everybody that showed up had white hair.

I was completely missing the younger demographic and they are ones that buy more plants, have more energy to actually dig holes and plant things.

Older folks, like me, love to garden, but like the rest of the world I have to face the facts, I just can't do as much as I once could. As a plant buying consumer I most certainly would buy fewer plants today than I did even ten years ago.

That left me with a dilemma. Now where do I advertise.

Facebook? Yeah, that's what I'll do. I'll sell my plants on Facebook.

Duston and I (my son) dabbled with Facebook ads in the past, driving people from Facebook to a very long webpage with photos for our plant sales. It worked pretty good but not great.

People on Facebook and all other forms of social media have really short attentions spans right? You need to speak to them in small, 140 character, sentences right?

So Duston says to me, why not just put the entire ad in a Facebook post with a few photos and promote the post?

Think about what is happening here folks.

The world says you have to speak to people on social media in itty bitty word segments. 140 characters at most. We decided to ignore the norm and follow our gut instinct about what we know about people and marketing.

I created an 879 word Facebook post to sell a few plants!

Not 879 character, but 879 words. Real words, not acyrnoms, not social media icons, emotocons or abbreviated jibberish, but ***real words.***

I did break one rule because social media people are a little bit special.

They are lazy as hell!

But before I explain that I have to say this. First time we ran the Facebook ad in the spring of 2016

Alright, alright, alright I have to stop right here.

I'm writing this book in the summer of 2016 but I hope that people will be reading it in the summer 2036 and they are going to laugh. Facebook! What a joke! What kind of a dinosaur is this guy?

Dismissing a single word or anything that I am writing here would be very, very foolish. This isn't about Facebook. Facebook is just a vehicle to deliver the message. Just like a donkey can be a vehicle to deliver turnips, so can the fastest jet in world or the fastest train in the land deliver the same turnips. The turnips will never change, but how you get them to the farmer's market can and will change.

It ain't about the vehicle used to deliver the message, it's about a message that resonates with real people.

Back to the first time we ran our Facebook ad in the spring of 2016. This was an early spring ad, I was a bit reluctant because it was still cold out, the plants didn't look that great because it was cold out, but I wanted to test Facebook all by it's lonesome, without a newspaper ad running at the same time. I didn't want skew the results by adding in another variable.

The early season facebook ad hit it out of the park.

53 to 1.

For every dollar that we invested in Facebook advertising we sold \$53 worth of our little plants.

Ding dong, the witch is dead.

No longer could I run a \$600 newspaper ad to reach wonderful people with white hair. As much as I love those folks, the writing was on the wall, I had to end my very long run with successful newspaper advertising. Time marches on.

Now let's review the 879 word Facebook post that used several times in the spring of 2016 to sell my little plants. Which rule did I break?

After running the ad a couple of times I finally decided to put the date, time and location right below the headline because people kept asking.

Good idea or bad idea I'm not sure, but keep in mind, that on social media we see a lot of national and international ads so making sure they understand that this is a local event is a good thing.

Here's the ad just as I ran it. Note the simplicity of my headline. That's all that a plant lover or a gardening enthusiast needs to hear, especially in the spring when people are "in heat" to buy plants. Which is a true statement. Timing is everything.

Huge Plant Sale!

*Friday, Saturday and Sunday. 8:00 to 5:00 each day.
Mike's Plant Farm, 4850 North Ridge Road, Perry, Ohio 44081*

3, 263 plants must be sold, only \$5.97 each!

It's completely whack-a-doodle crazy to sell these plants this cheap but I have way too many and I need the room.

Just potted some really fun hosta varieties and as I write this the girls are shifting Japanese Red maples to bigger pots because they are too big! Still \$5.97.

This is just a partial list of what you can get for just \$5.97. Pink Whisper Potentilla, Gold Finger Potentilla, Java Red Weigela, Tango Weigela and Variegated Weigela. Variegated Weigela has a beautiful Pink and White Flower combination.

Listen. I have completely lost my mind and I have ordered more starter plants than I can possibly fit in this place. I'm serious, I have to move some plants! If you miss this sale, you are truly missing out.

We have Blue Mouse Ears Hosta! Blue Mouse Ears is exactly as it sounds. The leaves are blue and look like mouse ears. Cute as cute can be!

We have lots and lots of super colorful Coral Bells, Annabelle Hydrangea, huge snowball flowers! All kinds of perennials, some of the most amazing sedum varieties that you will find anywhere! Tiny Rubies Dianthus, amazing plant!

Firewitch Dianthus. Once they start blooming they fly out the door. Seriously. And they are in bloom now!

Listen carefully. I have a handful, and I mean a handful of Nikko Blue Hydrangea and All Summer Beauty Hydrangea. Huge snow ball flowers! Nikko Blue is famous for its deep blue flowers and All Summer Beauty will knock your socks off. Absolutely spectacular.

Holy cow Batman! I almost forgot. I've got a huge selection of French Hybrid Lilacs. French hybrids are the most fragrant lilacs on the planet! \$5.97 each! How crazy is that? Trust me, it's white coat crazy. If I'm not here when you get here, you'll know they threw me in the asylum for selling these so cheap!

Listen, you better print this out, grab a red or blue ink pen and start circling the things you want.

Got a neighbor that's making you crazy? I've got a really nice selection of upright Arborviate so you can make a privacy hedge and not see that dufus anymore.. These are really nice. As a matter of fact, they are so big they keep falling over. You need to come and get them, plant them in the yard and get the privacy you deserve!

Want to grow your own fruit? I've got some huge strawberry plants in one gallon containers. These things will explode in your garden and make lots of berries this year. This truly is an "instant strawberry patch!" I've also got a big, big, selection of blueberry plants. Only \$5.97 each, really nice.

Oh yeah! On my ratting through the plants mission I also found a handful of "Pink Lemonade Blueberries". You ain't gonna find these in the big, gangly, no personality box store.

How about trees. I've got Redbud trees, White Dogwood, Chinese Dogwood, Red Oak, Pin Oak, really big Burr Oak trees and some River Birch trees that are almost 4' tall! \$5.97 each.

How crazy is that?

Listen this is just part of a huge, huge list of plants that I'm selling for \$5.97 each. It's crazy I know, but that's my thing. I'm the guy that sells thousands and thousands of plants for only \$5.97 each.

Okay, so I have one stinkin plant in the nursery that I can't sell for \$5.97. I have the most awesome collection of really rare Japanese maple varieties that you will

find anywhere. Seriously. Many of these are as rare and hens teeth and beautiful. \$39 bucks each!

What am I thinking? I need help.

Everything else in the joint is priced at \$5.97!

Want a Japanese Red Maple for only \$5.97? I've got'em! Really nice ones. Let that sink in. Japanese Red Maples, for less than six bucks? That's crazy with a side of crazy.

We'll be open Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 8:00 a.m. til 5:00 p.m. Get here early! Stuff sells fast! When you pull in drive out back, past the outhouse, past the donkeys (they're running for president!) and park by the orange tractor.

My neighbor Richard also sells plants and he has some awesome stuff! Me and Richard, we share a driveway. Why? I have no idea. Apparently that's how they did it out in the country 100 years ago.

We also share a love of plants. Richard even lets you dig your own for a great price!

Seriously though, Richard has some really nice plants and he's a super nice guy. Some things are dug, somethings you can dig yourself. Make sure you check out his stuff and say "Hey!" to him and Donna while you're here.

Mike's Plant Farm, 4850 North Ridge Road, Perry, Ohio 44081. Plug that into your GPS thingy so you don't fly past the joint. Phone? Nah. I don't do phones. I'm the old cranky guy in bib overalls. Come early, I get extra cranky in the afternoon.

Now grab mamma and get in the dang blamed car before all the nice stuff is gone!

Right below the headline I make a very bold promise, along with an appealing price. 3,263 plants must be sold, only \$5.97 each.

That happens to be my USP, Unique Selling Proposition, by the way. I do my best to price almost every plant in my nursery at \$5.97 each. Why?

Because nobody else does that. We sell our plants at a smaller size, in a smaller container so there's plenty of profit on most plants at that price point.

A USP is important because it is powerful. You have to be known for something significant. You can't be just plain vanilla like the rest of your competitors.

Using language like whack-a-doodle crazy and referring to my plants as cheap resonates with people. Trying to be politically correct and calling my plants "affordable" would be nuts.

People like the word cheap! But at the same time I am using "reason why" language to explain why I need to sell these plants now.

In the next paragraph I talk about fresh potted "fun Hosta varieties".

Everybody else sells Hostas, I sell really fun varieties and I go out of my way to look for Hostas with sexy names like "Cotton Candy", "Blue Mouse Ears", "Baby Booties", "Sweet Seduction".

If it doesn't have an awesome name I don't order it. I want these interesting names in my ads.

"The girls are shifting Japanese maples to bigger pots, still \$5.97" That screams; "This is a bargain, I have to be at this plant sale!"

Then I start listing all of the plants that we offer at \$5.97.

But then I go into a "pattern interrupt" and say; "Listen. I have completely lost my mind and I have ordered more starter plants than I can possibly fit in this place.

I'm serious, I have to move some plants! If you miss this sale, you are truly missing out."

This says a couple of really important things;

1. It's more "reason why" copy as to why this really is a great sale.
2. It drives home the fact that this is a "must attend" event. It's an event!

Then I spend a paragraph selling "Blue Mouse Ears" Hosta. Most garden centers mention the plant. I am deliberately "selling" this one because it has the "cute" factor. Is the plant really that special?

It's okay, but in selling it the way that I am here that's enough to make somebody get in the car to come and get that one plant.

I know that when they get here and see other shoppers dragging around wagons full of plants they too will get caught up in the frenzy and starting loading up a wagon.

I know that I only need one reason for them to show up, so I spend a lot of time telling my story and selling individual plants.

Then I sell the "Firewitch Dianthus", making them realize that these too will not last long. I don't mention that I have 600 of them. But I'll tell you we sold every last one of them!

Nikko Blue and All Summer Beauty Hydrangea. People love these huge snowball type flowers. "I only have a handful."

That's true, my supply was quite limited, just another reason to come to the sale right now!

French Hybrid Lilacs are in huge demand. I don't even grow these, I buy them locally for \$5.00 each and sell them for \$5.97 because I want to feature them in my ad.

I only make 97 cents on each one, but I sold 400 of them in four weeks and having them in the ad gave dozens of people a reason to attend my sale.

Holy cow Batman, white coat crazy and insane asylum!

Who uses that kind of language in an ad? Remember what I said? Don't be boring. Make the ad interesting. Tell your story, your complete story. Make people want to meet you!

It's Saturday morning and I just happen to be standing next to the driveway in my "bibs" and a van pulls in. They pull right up next to me and stop, the window goes down and the older man in the passenger seat says;

"Are you Mike?" "Yes I am." "We're from the insane asylum, will you please get in the van?" To which I replied; "Thank God! I was wondering when you people

were going to show up!" As I opened the side door on the van. We all had a good laugh.

You have to make people read every word of your ad, you need to use a lot of words, you have to tell your story in a compelling way.

"Print this out and grab a red or blue ink pen". This is powerful, it gets them involved with your ad, they truly start engaging and taking ownership of my plants long before they get to my plant sale.

It's specific, I used to use that language in my newspaper ads and if they showed up with my ad in their hands, as many did, but used a highlighter instead of red or blue ink, in a joking way I'd give them grief about it.

They love it. They absolutely love being able to do business with real people and not big box store robots.

Make people feel welcome. Make them feel at home in your place of business. It makes them want to come back and to tell others.

Calling their neighbor a dufus? Golden. If they feel that way about him they love the fact that I'm telling it the way that it is.

I'm not suggesting that all neighbors are dufuses, just the ones that truly are. I got this language from my customers.

When they come looking for a plant to hide their neighbor's trashy yard they are completely unreserved in what they say or how they say it.

When I call their neighbor a dufus I'm "joining the conversation that they are already having with themselves".

Want to grow your own fruit? Of course they do. Again, I'm joining the conversation and I'm selling an "instant Straweberry Patch". Everybody else sells scraggly bare root strawberries. I sell an instant strawberry patch.

Again, "I found a handful" of Pink Lemonade Blueberry plants. True story, didn't know that I still had any and a handful is all that I had.

One more reason for them to hurry. And I go onto bash the "big gangly, no personality box stores". Something else that resonates with them.

But I wasn't walking through, or strolling through my nursery when I found those plants, I was "ratting around". It all matters. It's all part of the story. After I mention the trees I start to tell my story. I explain why I sell my plans for only \$5.97.

Then I throw out the disclaimer that I have "one stinkin plant" in the nursery that I can't sell for \$5.97, but I do so in such a way that makes \$39 a bargain, which it truly is.

"What am I thinking, I need help." This just makes my ad so unique, so interesting, that it makes them want to come and meet this personality.

"Everything else in the joint is priced at \$5.97!" Who refers to their place of business as a "joint"? I do. It's fun and it's intriguing. Japanese maples for only six bucks. That's "crazy with a side of crazy". You're probably thinking that only a crazy person would run an ad like this but I have two things to say about that.

1. My customers absolutely love it. They comment about it and on Facebook they share it like crazy! To the tune of 220 shares. Who shares an ad? They share mine! They tag their friends in the ad like crazy calling their attention to it.
2. Fifty-three to one.

Invest one dollar in advertising and I got back 53 dollars.

Not every week mind you, that ROI did drop as the season went on, but every single weekend this ad, or an adjusted version of this ad, packed my little nursery with "rabid plant buyers".

In my pre-close I share the dates and times, but I also start to paint of a picture what they can expect. An outhouse? Donkeys?

Donkeys running for president? An orange tractor. All of these things are visual cues letting them know this "ain't your typical urban garden center".

My neighbor Richard? We share the driveway? Why mention these things? Couple of reasons.

1. Richard is a great guy and if I can help him sell a few plants that's awesome!
2. Sharing the driveway lets me paint that picture of a place out in the country.

3. My prospects get to shop at two "country" nurseries at the same time.
4. I paint a picture of Richard as a super nice guy, I mention his wife Donna. This makes them real people.

All of these things are just a means of piling on the "reasons why they need to come". It's spring, they are working in the yard, buying flowers and plants etc.

Deep down inside they do not want to shop at a box store. It's nostalgic, people long for a bit of yesteryear. That's what we offer them, on top of awesome deals.

An outhouse? Actually I had one of those silly, blue, carnival looking porta-potties and I hated it.

So I went and bought the interior parts of a port-pottie and I built an authentic looking outhouse for one reason and one reason only. To create an atmosphere.

"Plug that into your GPS thingy so you don't fly past the joint". Just more down to earth, country boy language. Things that nobody else dares to say in an advertisement.

"Phones? I don't do phones." This is true. I don't even have a telephone line at the nursery. I don't want to talk you on the phone playing 50 questions like; "How big are they?" "Do they come in yellow?"

In my situation giving them a phone number is giving them a diversion, a reason not to come. I don't give them that option. Are you curious? "Grab Mama and get in the dog blamed car". That's the option that I give them.

Why?

Because I deliberately do these plant sales as events. I know that if I have 10 or 20 families at my nursery all shopping at the same time, each family buys more.

There is a great deal of "social proof" when they see others loading plants into a wagon and they too start filling a wagon. This is a proven fact, my growers across the country reaffirm this all the time.

And . . . once you come to my place it's a bit addicting. It's very much a country atmosphere, we give little kids trinkets or small plants, once in a while one gets a tractor ride and they all get to interact with the donkeys and we give them treats to feed the donkeys.

We make them feel at home. They have to come back because they like the way the place “feels”.

Personally I'm not fond of selling plants retail. It's time consuming and since I'm the expert people expect me to answer a million questions, help them design a landscape etc.

I don't mind doing that, but I can't do it every day or I'd get nothing else done. So I create events like this seven, nine or ten weekends a year.

During these events we pretty much wipe the place out and spend the in between time filling it back up for the next event.

So there you have it!

A 879 word Facebook ad and it only took me 4,241 words to explain to you why this is so powerful.