



## FOREWORD

**Mosby Grey is a fictional character**, a narrator of sorts, loosely based on a combination of characters - not the least of which is John Singleton Mosby, Colonel of Company A/43<sup>rd</sup> Battalion/Partisan Rangers, the most widely recognized guerrilla command during the “War of Northern Aggression”.

Operating in Federal territory, and mostly at night, Mosby’s Rangers became a feared and effective force of 800 men that kept over 30,000 Northern troops at bay through an impressive array of tactics that were far ahead of their time.

Mosby was adopted because he fought with hit-and-run tactics; operated with a very small force; and, like most units within the Confederacy, had trouble with supplies and logistics. Not unlike the contemporary small businessman or retailer.

These articles were created for the small retailer. The person who must do everything to keep their business operating under extremely adverse conditions. Small retailers often lack the opportunity (translation: often lack the money to pay) for professional advice and are, therefore, often at a serious disadvantage to their larger and more heavily funded competitors. Thus the use of Confederate simile.

While many advertising and marketing articles and books have been written using military tactics and strategy as a base, few have really delved into the realities of warfare; few have attempted to simplify advertising and marketing concepts to a level that non-practitioners could understand, appreciate or grasp quickly. Thus the need for a primer or hornbook - an elementary review of the subject.

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*“Mosby Grey’s Advertising Hornbook” a Compendium of Marketing Minutiae*

Today begins a totally new experience for most of us, and a new chapter in the never-ending fight to understand the dark world of marketing, advertising, and public relations. You see, today we begin, and possibly end, a series of articles designed to elicit the wrath of the entire advertising and marketing community by revealing their hidden secrets. No smut, no rumor. Just hard cold facts and, heaven forbid, a lexicon of the language the people in this strange demented business speak. By the time we’re through, you’ll be able to do something they haven’t been able to do since Volney Palmer began the crazy business of advertising in 1842 - communicate effectively.

If you currently use an ad agency, imagine how humbling it will be to your agency’s president when he finds out that you know what a GRP really is (and he still can’t figure it out); imagine the consternation of the rep from the local station (radio or tv, it doesn’t matter) as you explain why one ROS spot a day, for three days over one month, does not deliver a sufficient level of reach and frequency against your target market, within your trade area, as defined by your geocoded customer list.

Together we’ll wade the murky waters of advertising as Diogenes wandered the streets of ancient Greece - only, this time, we’ll find what he was looking for ... in overwhelming abundance. From the fine points of typography to the nuances of the numbing numbers used in every step of advertising and media, we’ll cover - or uncover - it all.

Join us, as we conduct our guerilla war with perspicacious jocularly and drive the awful wretches to their knees.



### *How to Tell a Pawn from a King...*

I bet that if someone were to ask what your typical customer looked like it would be just like the last person you sold something to. Right? The bad part is that an awful lot of expensive decisions are made on just that kind of customer analysis. “Visual Indexing” is what it’s called, and it’s about as reliable as a birddog that chases rabbits.

With about 80% of your business coming between the end of October and the end of the year, the perfect time to start figuring out who your customer really is should begin several months before that critical time. In the first place, the people who buy from you will probably come from all walks of life with decidedly different checkbook and bankcard balances. The first thing to remember is that looks can be deceiving (like watching the Ballet Trucaderos). Besides, people who really have money don’t have to dress or act like they do - and most of them don’t. It’s the people who don’t, but wished they did, that act and dress like they do. Got that? The second thing is that you want more customers like those customers who buy the most more often.

Starting tomorrow, get the address of every person who buys something from you. Note how much they spend and what they spend it on. Keep adding to the list throughout the holidays. When you’re ready, start grouping the dollar sales and product sales by address on a map (you could use color-coded pins on a map of the city as each day progresses to get a running tally). Pretty soon you’ll start to see a pattern emerging, with some neighborhoods having a lot more pins than others; some areas won’t have any. You’ll probably also notice that people in some areas are buying one type of product, others another. What you want to do now is figure out how to sell people who are like those people who live in areas that are like the areas where your best customers live.

What you have just done is coded your customers by geography and you can now start advertising and direct mailing to those areas alone, or areas just like them. Simple. By the way, you are now on your way to becoming an expert in geodemography because you have just “geocoded” your customer profile.

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## *“Turning a Shotgun into a Rifle”*

No, we don't mean re-tooling the barrel or switching to slugs (there are enough of those already in advertising and marketing). What we plan to do is improve the gun, bullet, target, and marksman all at the same time. Then, even if you do use “slugs”, they will be more effective coming out of the barrel.

For you non-shooters, a shotgun is great when you have a target that's too difficult to hit or there are too many targets for one round; but when you can see the target real well, and you know how to handle a rifle - correcting for windage and elevation, knowing the distance to the target, knowing the range of your weapon - you can squeeze off a round and score a 10X every time. That's what we are going to learn, how to hit the target with as much efficiency as possible. Afterall, a shotgun needs a lot of power behind all those little pellets to have any impact. It's the same thing with advertising. Bet you never thought about it quite like that, did you?

The last chapter told you how to figure out where your customers were (the pins in the map?), now we are going to figure out how to get more people like those people into your business.

First, stay away from shotguns (broadcast and other mass media) unless you have plenty of ammunition (M-O-N-E-Y), or you just like to hear a big noise. We will talk more about that later.

Second, try and figure out how many of those people who are like your customers there really are in the market and where they are; then how many of those are really going to want what you have to sell; where you are selling it; for the price you are selling it at.

The target starts getting sort of small, doesn't it?

Now, tell them what it is you have to sell; where you sell it; and for what price. Simple. And keep it simple. In fact, remember the KISS concept (Keep It Simple, Stupid). You don't need to try any trick shots until you have mastered the basics of hitting the first target first - trick shots develop later.

Last, remember that the people you are talking to are like the people who are already buying from you. So, talk to them like you talk to your customers. Use a rifle: in this case, maybe direct mail or flyers or neighborhood papers. In the right hands, a .22 can be more effective at hitting the target than a cannon loaded with grapeshot.

Wait a minute, before you go off half cocked, your pinned map might show that you have two totally different targets - at least geographically: one local; and, if you happen to be located where a lot of convention and tourism takes place, an out-of-town target.



Well, guess what?

The same kind of neighborhood patterns are going to appear because people who travel happen to have similar habits and patterns. They have a tendency to buy the same types of products. You might even find that some of these people are fairly regular customers - stopping in and buying from you whenever they are in town. If that's the case, start planning on sending out sales information and brochures to these people, and their neighbors, on a regular basis. You might be surprised how many mail order sales you can generate and, in the process, begin a whole new profit center.

Either way, whether you target locally or beyond, once you know "who" and "what" you can find more and more of them. Just generate your list using geodemographics (remember that one?).

Oh, one other thing, an expert shot doesn't need a lot of expensive equipment to be good, he just needs to know how to use what he's got. Good hunting.

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*“Separating the Wheat from the Chaff”*

Ever really listen to a bunch of advertising, media and marketing people and wonder just what in the blue blazes they were talking about? “ADI’s, DMA’s, MSA’s, etc., etc ... ad infinitum ... ad nauseam”. Oh sure, there’s a lot more than these few and we will gradually cover the rest, but these are as good a place to start as any.

Anytime anybody starts to use a lot of jargon that nobody else understands it’s a sure bet that there’s a wolf prowling the pasture. Kind of like lawyers, politicians (interchangeable with lawyers), and used car salesmen. In other words, if they had wanted you to really understand what they were talking about they would have used plain English. Or at least plain American. Or Southern, whichever. If they were truly erudite they would have used the more precise “PV” (Pure Virginian) version of the “Mother Tongue”.

The federal government has stipulated specific definitions of markets that are based on numbers of households and population density known as Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) and the smaller (and now defunct) Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs), giving way to the more profound CMSA or Central Metropolitan Statistical area. These are definitions handed down by our illustrious benefactors in the District of Columbia who have empirically deduced that if they move one step beyond the “Beltway” they will fall off the face of the earth. Needless to say, the larger the scope of the definition the lower Richmond falls in the hierarchical ranking of major cities. If you look real quick out your window you might see billions of dollars in federal subsidies flying past your window. If you look real hard at your advertising co-op dollars, the same thing starts to happen. Unfortunately, nobody seems to notice that the Richmond area is growing about 25% faster than the rest of the country. Depending on who you talk to, the Richmond MSA had a population of a little more than 630,000 in 1980 and is expected to have somewhere around 720,000 today. In terms of households, it went from almost 230,000 to around 275,000 - that’s over 20%. I mean, really, we have not had this much of an influx since the 4<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts cavalry rode in on April 3 (1865). If you want to have some fun, notice where people bought their cars. You know, the little self advertising piece of chrome on the trunk lid of a car? You’d be surprised how that can help pinpoint in-migration.

Then there are the abstract definitions of a market that are really befuddling - ADIs, DMAs, etc. - and play havoc with advertising and marketing dollars. These geographic definitions are arbitrary and totally suspect - and yet billions of dollars are spent every year on how a market fares by their definition. ADIs and DMAs are media definitions of markets based on where people are that listen to, or watch, media more than from other areas. ADI stands for “Area of Dominant Influence” and DMA for “Designated Market Area”. So, if somebody lives 100 or 150 (air) miles



from where the signal originates, but they watch and listen to stations from that city, they are counted - and everybody around them - in that market. Nobody asks them where they shop.

ADI's are market definitions created by Arbitron and DMA's are created by the A. C. Nielsen Company. Since they both represent coverage areas, it always strikes me as a little peculiar that they are never quite the same in count. For example, the Richmond ADI has about 2,200 more people than the Richmond DMA. Not enough to put a burr under the saddle, but enough to wonder who is - and is not - being counted.

Now, just to confuse you a little more, and so the numbers can work any way media people want them to, an ADI is further broken-down to a TSA (Total Survey Area) and a Metro area. Now all this makes a lot of sense if you are marketing a product nationally and have a lot of distribution throughout the area; or, if you have a lot of stores in a given area (like a department store, grocery store or bank). On the other hand, if you are a single site retailer, is this geographic coverage worth the price that you have to pay? Probably not. Afterall, how many people within a given geographic area really represent your customer base? And if you have specialized products or services the numbers come down dramatically and the cost to reach them goes through the roof.

So what's a person to do? Well, dig in and keep your powder dry until the next chapter when we carry the battle to the aggressors.

Let's see now, I believe we were whittling away at a few conceptions, perceptions, and misconceptions dealing with the jumble of acronyms that the advertising industry uses to camouflage market definitions - and what those mean to you.

Well, we have given a brief overview of ADI's and DMA's, how they are arrived at and what they mean. Sort of. Afterall, some of those people in advertising are known to scratch their heads, think a little bit, and come up with entirely new definitions if they can't think of the right one - and who's to know the difference? Kind of like whether a mare can tell the difference from a stud and a gelding. Anyway, if you read last month's column you know the difference and they probably still don't (you see, advertising people don't read this column for two reasons: 1) they already know it all; and 2) well, figure it out). That's to your advantage.

Now, let's suppose that it is to your advantage to advertise on radio or tv, or both. All market information and ratings are generally given by sex and age; i.e., women 18+, men 25-34, adults 54+, etc. I don't know about you, but I have never known a retailer to have such broad target markets - for all the products they

sell. Oh sure there are exceptions, but darn few when you really think about it. So here is where we reconnoiter behind enemy lines.



Understand that the numbers and ratings are quantitative - tonnage, fill, reasons to get a lower GRP (Gross Rating Point), TRP (Target Rating Point) or CPM (Cost Per Thousand) cost figure. The idea is to make you think you're getting a lot more than you are paying for. You wind up buying high numbers and low cost (and probably not enough sales to justify the cost) and they wind up with a schedule. (NOTE: remember that if an agency negotiates a price they get a 15% commission off the top; if you buy your own media, the media keeps that 15%. Now you know why they like dealing with you directly).

What you really need to ask them is:

“excuse me, kind person, I’m only an ignorant country person, but what do your (listeners/viewers) buy? Do they really buy my products? How often do they buy them? And what do your (listeners/viewers) really look like? Do they look like my customers? Please be so kind as to elucidate on these simple questions?” (As they lift themselves up on one elbow from the floor, you continue...) “Would you be so kind as to look at the pins I have in this map and tell me how well you reach these simple, loving people?... And people like them? Oh, kind person, how much will the cost be then?”.

It does not take long to figure out that they’ll probably skedaddle quicker than Rush’s Lancers at Cold Harbor. No, they won’t be gone entirely, they’ll probably drop their lances and shoulder plates for carbines and sabres before they charge again. And charge again they will. (This time we’ll change tactics and ambush them).

This time “they” will probably counterattack with a computer-run using Cluster-Plus (a system based on geodemographics, remember that?), tied to their diary returns, which indicates what products they do well with. Okay, good strategy. But that gives us a perfect opportunity to draw down on them from covered positions:

“Excuse me, kind person, since I’m STILL only an ignorant country person, could you explain, to this simple mind, how a statistically unreliable sample can be extrapolated to cover the entire (listener/viewer) audience? Could you be so compassionate as to explain what YOUR geocoded audience buys or needs? Not to mention how all this relates to MY customers? *So you see, instead of saying things simply, everybody wants to impress with “I know more than (they/you) do”.*

Now, what it really comes down to is this: I have spent two precious columns saying a whole lot, when it could be said quite succinctly, by you - to them:

*“Could you explain that to me in language I can understand?”*





**Remember, it's not the pretty uniforms and parades that win a war, it's logistics and tactics and capacity. Above all, it is knowing your enemy and having a commitment to winning that can often turn the tide.**

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*“Creative Strategies That Can Turn the Tide”*

**“Creative”**. An interesting word when used in the advertising context. Most of us like to think something is “creative” if it does what it is supposed to do (i.e., sell something) or is extremely innovative (i.e., sells something AND doesn’t cost an arm and a leg); but I have know some of those shinney-toed, silk-suited, silver-tongued, etceteras from the advertising industry who believe that something is creative only if it wins awards from their peers. If it happens to sell product (God forbid!) ... so much the better.

Well, I am here to tell you that you don’t need to go for a walk through a cow pasture any longer. No, sir. We’re going to strip away the secret from the term “creative” right before your eyes. We’re going to draw sabres and cut a swath through the on-rushing hordes. What we are going to do is help you SELL more of whatever it is that you market ... and listen for the weeping and gnashing of teeth from the so-called “professionals”.

First, let’s set some groundwork that has to be done before anything else can be addressed:

You have to know your product(s); How is it different from anybody else’s; Who your market is and why they buy; Why they should buy from you.

Seems simple doesn’t it? And that’s the ultimate key - Keep It Simple, Stupid! (Remember: “KISS”?). Why? Because there is more advertising out there competing for your customer that there are fleas in a pack of hounds. Here’s an example:

Over \$100 billion is spent on advertising annually; It works out to over \$400 for every man, woman and child in the country; These dollars buy roughly 560 messages per day, per person; Of these 560, people will “recall” only 76; Of these 76, only 12 will be “remembered”; 3 of the 12 will be remembered negatively.

***ONLY 2% (9) WILL BE REMEMBERED POSITIVELY!***

You have to be in that 2% or you are wasting your money. And no matter what media you use, if your “creative” product isn’t right - you’re wrong.

On the surface it does seem awful simple and that might explain why everybody is an advertising expert, why everybody thinks they can “create” an ad better than anyone else. It’s kinda like eatin’ and cookin’. Everybody knows how to eat, and think they know what’s good, so they cook what they like to eat but can’t get anybody to eat what they cook. What you have to do is find out what they want to eat and cook that.

Same with advertising.



Advertise what people are buying (want, need, use = volume); tell them why they should buy it from you (price, convenience, quality, service); tell them in their own words (targeting); and tell them who you are and where you are.

Most people scan ads, they'll stop and look/read/listen if something catches their attention. If their curiosity is piqued, and they like what they see or hear, they'll "remember" it. That's where you want to be. If people remember, it is because you have told them something they did not know before or needed to be reminded of. And remember, not everybody wants to buy what you have to sell; and not everybody who wants to buy, wants to buy it today. Advertising has a cumulative impact - a person needs to see or hear an ad three or four time before they start to notice it. And you might have to run that ad eight to twelve times before it reaches everybody you want. In fact, studies have shown that the better ads keep producing after years of use without any changes.

The reason there are so many new ads all the time is because the people who place them get tired before the target does (not to mention the fact that ad agencies make more money on production than media. So, the more ads they make for you ...). Everytime I hear someone say "the last ads I ran really worked, now we're doing a whole new series..." is like handing me a lemon to suck on. Why change horses in the middle of the stream unless you want to get wet?

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*"Does a Falling Tree Make a Sound if*

*There's No One Around to Hear it?"*

Ever wonder about that little philosophical exercise? It's probably easier to figure out how many seed ticks there are in a Virginia field after a mild winter. The point of all this is to get a better understanding of your advertising, especially its impact.

Too often a marketer places ads or runs commercials that are about as common and pedestrian as a blue uniform in a Yankee army (and some are about as tasteless). These advertisements fall into the category of "clutter" because that's what they do: clutter the pages of newspapers and magazine, clutter the airwaves, and generally serve as "filler". These are the ads that no one sees or hears. They are the trees falling in the forest.

How do you step away from the thundering herd? Creativity, of course. But there is a fine line between creativity that works and creativity for the sake of being creative. One separates you from the crowd, identifies why you and your products are right for the people your trying to sell to, and produces a positive return on investment; the other may well separate you from the crowd but rarely accommodates the other requirements.

Ever sit in on an advertising agency presentation? Most will identify their point of differentiation as their creative product and, in so doing, indicate the number of awards their advertising has received. Bully! Kind of like McClellan - looks good on parade but can't fight worth a darn. And most of those awards are received for "pro bona" accounts that get the work for free, or out-of-pocket expense, in exchange for creative latitude. Unfortunate too, many of the pieces that win awards do so without regard to actual budget, actual cost, marketing objectives, media schedule, or results.

- Now, let's jump this fence and attack the problem head-on. To put some creativity into your advertising program really requires that you do some very basic things:
- step away from your business and look at it objectively;
- look at your business from the eyes of your customers;
- look at competition and really understand what they are doing;
- "talk" to your customer in their own language;
- give your customer the benefit of the doubt -
- that they are intelligent ... discriminating ... not prone to hyperbole, pressure or misdirected pathos;



- remember that your customers are sensitive to product quality, value received for dollars spent, and complementary, supportive service;
- that you value their business and you recognize that they are responsible for your success;
- think a little harder, stop and ask yourself if your ads or commercials would get you to buy your own product or shop in your store - and answer honestly.

Now all you have to do is incorporate these elements into your advertising. Results-oriented creativity is difficult to do consistently. It is like Lincoln trying to find a general who could fight Lee and win. A tough job to fill.

In the final analysis it's all quite simple. It comes down to having a real understanding of the people you are doing business with, or those you want to do business with. It boils down to understanding your market and talking to them in their own language. Not yours.

Let me add that as we enter the 90's we are starting to see some interesting shifts in the marketplace. Marketers who miss some of these signals are going to be left in the dust.

Consumer perceptions and attitudes are more cautious, pensive and practical. With the operative word being "practical". Quality, value and service will serve as the watchwords and the guidelines for the next decade - and perhaps beyond.

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## *“How to Get an Edge on Your Sword”*

Look at the advertising that’s going on around you. Kind of “reconnoiter” what your friends and enemies are doing. Take a couple of minutes and cut-out, and/or tape (VCR or audio), the ads and commercials YOU like. Now cut-out and/or tape the ads your competitors are going to market with. Now put all of these next to YOUR ads.

See anything different? Sure you do. Now, let’s set aside the ads of the companies that are successful in the market. Is there still a difference? Of course there is, and the difference is probably becoming more apparent.

Now let’s ask the simple question, “Why?”.

It doesn’t take a genius to figure out that the best ads have a lot in common:

- they are basically uncluttered;
- they have a strong visual and headline;
- they take advantage of the space available to them;
- they do not try to get too many points or products in one ad;
- they communicate to the people they are trying to talk (sell) to.

Years ago somebody once told me that you knew you had a good ad when you could cover up the name of the company and everyone would still know who the advertiser was. You know, that really has not changed; except now you have add “... and they have a product/service I need/want”.

You have to remember that your customers are people who respond like you do; they react to the same stimuli. But you have to THINK like they do before you create or approve your next ad or commercial. I know, your ads and commercials are better than anybody’s - that’s why you’re where you are and your competitor(s) just made a public offering. Kind of like Joe Hooker saying he’ll show Bobby Lee how much better his troops can fight. And you know who won that argument (then again, maybe you don’t). I could also tell you that ol’ “Fightin’ Joe” lent his last name to something else - today they’re called “ad agencies”.

No, the key to good advertising is r-e-a-l simple: come up with an ad that make people, the people that you want to reach - read (or see/listen to) it.



Mass media (radio, TV, and, to a lesser extent, newspapers) require a more subtle and universal approach to be effective. These media are intrusive, costly and require either a lot of money or a lot of thought to be anywhere near effective. Bad ads mean you have to spend a lot to get anything back, good ads mean you spend can less, but you better be right in what you say and who you say it to (we'll cover broadcast creative tips next time).

Print advertising is becoming a lost art because most people do not read newspapers or magazines to the extent that they used to, therefore, less emphasis is given to doing good creative. Far too many advertisers attempt to do much in an ad and, in the process, fail to accomplish their objective:

- Grab the readers attention
- Get the reader to notice what the ad is about and who the advertiser is
- Catch the point the advertiser is trying to get across
- Remember the ad
- Act on the ad

Research has shown that most people look at an ad in a “Z” scan; left-to-right across the top, diagonally from upper right to bottom left, then across the bottom from left-to-right. That why most ads have a headline at the top, usually over a visual, subheads scattered through the body copy (to keep the reader interested), and place the company’s name, address and logo in the bottom right corner. Notice too, most ads that follow this pattern are not overburdened with copy. The idea is that you don’t have to tell the reader everything, only enough to have them want to act on the information you have provided.

Well, the bugle sounds and we’re off on another ride around “Little Mac”.

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## *”Loading The Cannon With Grapeshot”*

Grapeshot is a fierce weapon when it’s used effectively. You see, “Grapeshot” is a cannon load that is made up of a lot of explosive and a lot of little balls of lead. Kinda like a giant shotgun. You can imagine the damage grapeshot can do - especially if the cannon has some gunners who know what they are doing; or, if you have a whole lot of them (cannons, that is). In advertising, broadcast is the equivalent of a cannon loaded with grapeshot. You load the cannon (the medium) with a charge (the number of spots) and the shot (broad reach) and you light the fuse. The cannon goes off against the on-rushing hoards, the ones you hit get the message - the ones you miss either don’t know any different or they thank their lucky stars they WERE missed.

I don’t know about you, but I have a tendency to really dislike people who shoot at you too much (excess frequency), with really b-a-d shot (miserably bad commercials). When that happens I either kill the messenger (turn off the tube/radio), or I start to really dislike the side firing the cannon (the advertiser).

Remember GRP’s and TRP’s? Well, research has shown that the optimum level of EFFECTIVE exposure is THREE TIMES. Now, what that means is that I might fire the cannon a dozen or more times, but if I can get close to you at least three times I’m going to get your attention - really get your attention. To do that takes a combination of things that most advertisers haven’t the foggiest idea of how to do it, because - remember - this is a cannon that spits out a whole lot of devastating power.

Before we go any further, let me say that cannons are expensive. They take a lot of men to crew them; they require a lot of maintenance; they work best in groups; and they have to be supported by all of the other service arms (infantry, cavalry, etc.).

Expensive. So, if you have to ask the price ... you probably can’t afford it. And, you better have a target that isn’t too difficult to hit. Look, it’s one thing to fire away at a whole regiment with the prospect of hitting something than it is to try and pick out one squad, or even one person (like a colonel or general). To do that you need sharpshooters. No, cannons are weapons of mass destruction.

Since frequency of message is so important against a huge target (to overcome the other clutter; and, to get your point across), a lot of advertisers rely on a concept known as “Doughnuts” (or, “DoNots” - depending on your point of view). These are spots (radio or TV) that have a standard intro and out that take up about 10-15 seconds, with the rest of the spot reserved for specific sales related items. A lot of car dealers and supermarkets use this technique. This gives the advertiser a continuing level of awareness and memorability without major cost outlays - and ... AND ... - the “hole of the doughnut”, which highlights one or more brands of products, is usually paid for with Co-Op dollars. Viola ! C’est la guerre!





A major consideration is the type of creative approach: a “Product” Lead; “Personality” Lead; “Humor”; “Facts”; “Price”; “Benefits”; ad nauseam ...

The key is: produce commercials (cannon loads) that tell the people you are trying to communicate to what it is you have to offer in very broad terms.

If you are going to use a cannon ... THINK cannon. It is designed to reach masses. If you add supplemental media, THINK how it is to be used - and against whom. With the advent of VCR's and CamCorders, TV production seems inherently easy. It isn't, and should not be left to amateurs. Neither should radio production. It takes a very strange type of person to condense a selling message to 15 - 25 seconds that is effective and attention-getting. Not every one can do it. Pegram proved that to McClellan, Pope, Hooker, Meade, et al.

As we strike tents and begin saddling-up, a “Gallup”-er has brought us a communique that among the least respected occupations are advertising practitioners (please note their terminology: “practitioners”, not “professionals”). Somehow I understand that.

The next time in the saddle we'll reconnoiter some creative approaches that have worked gloriously and some that have been disastrous. 'Til then, keep you eyes peeled for the carpetbaggers and keep an edge on your saber.

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## *"Fighting With the Right Ammunition"*

'Course, it could read "Don't Try to Fire the W-R-O-N-G Ammunition" just as well. Sorta like asking if a glass is half-full ... it depends on your perspective. Anyway, load a gun with the wrong size cartridge (bullet or load) and either it won't shoot - or it'll blow up. Advertising with the wrong creative can do the same thing. And, Lord knows, the whole wide everlovin' world is full of creative geniuses. Just ask somebody about ads they've seen or heard (including yours!) And see what they have to say.

Some of the best (as judged by the ad industry) advertising that's ever been created hasn't necessarily sold a whole lot of product. Somehow that doesn't surprise me. I had a dog once that could work a field in trials better than any in the country - put that same dog in a real hunt and he wouldn't ... couldn't stand the sound of guns. Advertising is like that too, an ad or commercial might look good before it hits the public but doesn't do anything but win awards (ad industry awards) afterwards. Take that one to the bank and see what its worth.

One of the things we've been doing throughout this tour of duty has been to constantly reiterate the basics of advertising, stressing a lot of the things that everyone knows - but somehow always seem to forget. One of the best ways to figure out what your advertising needs to say and look like is to take a competitive inventory: i.e., clip ads from newspapers and magazines; videotape tv and record radio ads. Look at them.

Listen to them. Now separate them according to those you really like, those you think do a decent job, and those you wouldn't want your name associated with - like ninety-nine percent of auto dealer ads and commercials (it's amazing how horse-tradin' hasn't ever changed). Imagine how much more fun it would be if cars had teeth!

I have tried to follow the order of battle and come up with some really great examples of good, solid, advertising - but it's been a little like lookin' for a lemon tree in Virginia so Stonewall can think straight before a battle (Ed. note: General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson was known to suck on lemons before, and during, battles during "The War"). Anyway, here are a few examples:

### Blue Cross & Blue Shield

They have several things on their side: everybody is concerned with healthcare so they are going to get attention, whatever they say; they use a lot of "white space"; eye-catching visuals; readable type; short paragraphs; and they sign-off with their logo in the right place. They have been able to stop me, get me to read the headline and look at the visual and, sometimes, read a little of the copy. I will admit that



sometimes the stuff is too cute and the copy is a stretch for what the headline and visual seem to convey but overall the ads follow the basics very well.

### The Grocery Store

Who could miss these ads? Their newspaper ads have the stopping power of a 12-pound Napoleon. You may not be interested, but you will remember who they are. The tv, again, has no relation to the newspaper but it is consistent. A problem with doing this type of strategy week-after-week is that it gets tougher and tougher to be effective without be sophomoric.

### Dick Strauss Ford

Good radio and tv (newspaper is typically terrible). It is good because it is refreshing to have a car dealer who isn't screaming about being "Number 1" or having the lowest prices (when everyone knows they aren't and don't, and couldn't care less if they did).

### Marc Jeffries

Great small space newspaper ads. Clean, simple, consistent. Good layout, headline, copy. Any more? Oh, a couple here and there but none worth mentioning considering that the bugle sounds once again and there's the distinctive smell of cordite in the air. It's been fun, as usual, just remember to measure your powder and make your bullets with the right mold. Aim straight and squeeze the trigger. And for heaven's sake keep your head down. 'Til next time.

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*”Obsequious Tactics Mingled With Obfuscation” or*

*“How To Beat Them When They’re Not Looking”*

Y’all have been pounded in your positions by heavy artillery for a long time. When you’re out-everything (out-manned, out-gunned, out-supplied), how do you beat the adversary that has it all? Well, you do it like those who have nothing but “grey matter” to work with - sorry, I couldn’t resist that.

You see, we’ve spent a lot of time talking about advertising and haven’t spent an iota on the most valuable resource that a small advertiser has in his armory - Public Relations. So this communique will deal with some of the basics and we’ll get into more as time goes by.

Some of the best military strategists that the Almighty ever created have used “PR” as a major asset: “Stonewall”; “Marse” Robert; “Ol’ Baldy”; and Forrest... not to mention John Singleton Mosby and “Stormin’ Norman”.

Let me explain. When your resources are limited you have to make the enemy think that you have more than you do. Or, you have to make your available resources work harder than the other guy. “Public Relations” goes a long way to doing that. It’s either in disseminating factual data and information ... or information and data you WANT them to think is factual (sorta like Ken Burns’ idea of history; or some politician’s idea of deficits and surpluses).

Besides, it’s a whole lot less expensive to write a press release and mail it than it is to produce an ad and place it. Understand too, a press release or story in the media about your company carries “news value” in the eyes of the discerning public. That obviously is not the case with an ad.

Most major companies haven’t figured out how to make “PR” accountable (much less advertising). But I’m here to tell you that good “PR” can do more than all the money you spend in advertising. Why do you think that politicians put more emphasis on PR than advertising? And the people who are in PR require the people in their business to be accredited. Check the accreditation from your agency account exec the next time you talk to them.

Anyway, “PR” is, pure and simple, “communications”. Sometimes it can be plain, simple, honest truths; sometimes you can stretch the truth a tad and make something sound like news when it really isn’t. If it gets printed or aired it then becomes gospel. Hallelujah!

The first thing you need to do is establish a constant and consistent information/disinformation program of press releases. What do you write about? ANYTHING. New Location (even if you’ve been there for three years); New Employees (even if they are temps); Promotions (Promote yourself, and everyone in



your organization, at least once every 6 - 9 months); New products (take old products and give them a new name). The second thing you do is make yourself known to the local business editor of the newspaper. It's amazing what a long lunch short on solid food will do. Nowadays they call it "schmoozin".

That's how you get all your press releases printed and, maybe, a story to boot.

But "PR" can do a lot more. All your press releases should be sent to all your clients, customers, and prospects. People you don't know, but want to, should get releases. Before Sharpsburg, a blue-suit found a battle plan wrapped around two cigars, forever known as the "Lost Orders". Do you really think they were left by accident?

However, PR isn't limited to media, it includes working with schools and civic groups; charities; political parties (though I think I'd rather face Berdan's Sharpshooters all by myself); retirement homes; any and all associations and groups that you can identify as having people who represent potential customers.

The next thing you do is plan a strategy just like you would for advertising, figuring out what makes the most sense, is the most cost-effective and can provide a reasonable "return on investment".

Depending on your business, it makes sense to become recognized as an "expert" in your field so that newspapers and magazines will call you for your opinion, and clubs and associations will ask you to speak. Incidentally, an "Expert" is usually someone who's more than fifty miles from his hometown. A "Consultant" is usually someone who's looking for a job.

Next time we'll get into the thick of it and start to cover some of the mechanics of Public Relations.

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*” PR AND PEDANTIC PEDAGOGY PERFECTED”*

Someone once told me that you shouldn't carry a gun unless you're willing to use it and, if you do, be prepared to get shot at. That sorta works for Ol' Mosby too. Seems our last little bit of fun hit some people like salt on saddle sores ... if you know what I mean. Well, y'all (please note the correct PV spelling for future reference) better make sure your cinch is tight, pull your hat down, grab hold of the reins 'cause we're going for another wild ride around the dastardly deceivers and defamers of decency. And if you think some of our past raids were rough, why they were walks in the park compared to what I have in mind this time around.

All kidding aside, public relations is so important for a small business with a limited budget that I probably deserve some of the scars I've gotten lately.

The hardest thing most people have is sitting down and writing a press release, even the most simple ones (releases and people). Well, it isn't all that hard and it doesn't take a degree in Journalism or English to do it right.

Most editors look at press releases as a necessary nuisance, they have to use some of them, but they look for every opportunity to circular file as many as they can. Most of the releases that get into print follow certain fundamental rules:

- Identify a person that can be contacted for more information and include a phone number where they can be reached (it doesn't hurt to include a FAX number or a home number);
- Let them know when it can be printed (that's why they call it a "release") in capital letters in the upper right hand corner;
- Write a headline that is no more than two lines long, in capital letters, that arouses the curiosity of the editor;
- Your first paragraph is the most important, use it wisely. It should contain all of the pertinent information to be found in the release in capsule form - "who", "what", "when", "where", "why", and "how";
- Don't beat around the bush or use more words than you need to get the point across;
- Make sure there are no typographical errors;
- If you are going to send a photograph make sure it's an 8"x10" or 5"x7" glossy;
- A good press release has a structure like a pyramid, it forces the reader to each subsequent paragraph so that more of it will get read and printed - a great press release will generate a call from the editor for a feature story;



- Attach a personal handwritten note to the person you are sending it to - it makes the editor stop and at least look at your release;
- Keep it simple. One page should be all you need unless what you are relating is extremely complicated or involved;

Unlike advertising, where you are paying for the space or time for your message, a press release is “free”. Remember, you are fighting every other release that an editor receives for space in the paper or magazine before it even gets an opportunity to reach the marketplace. A good editor will look at a stack of mail and sort it into stacks before opening any envelope: one stack will never get opened; one may get opened but never read beyond the letterhead or headline; one more will be read and some might be selected for “possible” use if nothing better is available (it’s called “fill”); one stack - next to the smallest - will be read, red-lined, and marked for use; and the last, the smallest of all and one you want to be in, will have the editor on the phone to you to ask more questions.

Well, that’s about all this old, battle weary, bumbler can handle this time around. Unless we get bushwhacked or a horse steps on my head we’ll be back next time and harass the harbingers of hedonism with a hearty and heavy hand.

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*"What You See Ain't Necessarily What You Asked For"*

Life has a funny way of dealing from the bottom of the deck. There you sit with a pat hand and, out of the blue (or grey) somebody lays down four aces. Happens everyday, usually when you least expect it or can afford it. So it should come as no surprise when you decide it's time to produce a brochure or catalog that you are embarking on a dark and dangerous journey, full of potential pitfalls. Kind of like doing a reconnaissance behind Yankee lines while wearing a sign that says "shoot me".

As with everything else we've had the pleasure of taking a pot shot at, planning what you're going to do is the quintessential element. And as we've pointed out before, most of the people you are going to do battle with are little better than carpetbaggers and scalawags. But that shouldn't come as a big surprise.

A brochure and a catalog serve different purposes: one sells you and your company; the latter sells product. One can be virtually timeless; the other, by necessity, must be timed and timely. Now that might sound pretty simple, sort of like knowing that "cush" is not a gourmet meal. [Editor's Note: "Cush" was a Southern war-time delicacy of bacon, cornbread and water. The concoction was cooked until all the water was boiled out. Try it some time.]

Let's say that you know what type of material you need; that you have followed all the rules for creative strategy and development; that you are ready to go to the printer. Here's where it starts to get fun.

I'm going to run through a list of things that you might want to be prepared to answer before you walk out the door:

- Is your piece camera-ready, or is a layout needed?
- Does type have to be set and mechanicals made?
- If you have photographs you want used, do they have to be separated?
- If you have to set type, what font do you want and in what point size?"Printers think in terms of "point" size - with the standard usually 12 - and there are about as many font types as there are troopers in Sheridan's cavalry. And, fonts come in two forms: Serif and Sans Serif. One has little hangy-down
- things and the other doesn't. (For example, the headline for this article is sans serif and the text is serif type.)
- Do you need halftones, duotones, reverses, screens, bleeds, solids - or a combination of all of these?





- How many pieces do you need printed? What size is it supposed to be when you get it back?
- What kind of paper stock, with what kind of finish, color and weight would you like? Paper weight is figured on the weight of a ream (500 sheets) of a certain size - i.e., 500 sheets of a certain finish, sized 25” by 38” (to fit a press size), weighing 60 pounds is called 60# paper. What it boils down to is do you want heavy or light paper? “Finish” refers to whether the paper is coated or not; whether it has a dull look or a glossy look. ‘Course you realize that a coated stock can also be dull looking if you get it in a matte finish. If all this seems about as clear as the James after a flood, join the crowd.
- Then we need to ask about how many colors of ink we are dealing with: one, two, three, four, etc. and what PMS (Pantone Matching System) colors. Are you going to varnish the piece? If so, that counts as a color - even if you can’t see it.
- Now that you’ve answered all of these simple little questions, how do you want it to go together? Folded, perforated, stitched, perfect-bound?
- And then there are some of the more mundane questions like whether the pages are to be numbered, drilled, and if you want die-cuts.
- Last, you want to figure your time frame. When do you need it versus when you REALLY need it. Printers generally operate on their own calendar and clock which is something similar to Quantum mechanics. The usual response is “you want it WHEN...?” followed by reverberating and raucous laughter.

Now you probably want me to explain all of this, don’t you?

Well, this Ol’ Hoss hasn’t got the time and space to do all of that in one sitting. And don’t forget, the overriding contaminating variable is “HOW MUCH ARE YOU WILLING TO PAY!”.

The better you want it to look, the more it’s going to cost. But the question you have to ask is more important than cost:

If you had your druthers, would you prefer a piece that did what it was supposed to do; or one that “looked” good?

Sure, you can have both. But don’t get bushwhacked getting it, either. We’re trying real hard to give you an idea of what it’s like to “see the elephant” without getting stepped on.

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*“What You See...” CONT’D*

Practically all of us take a certain amount of things for GRANTed. And, when we do, it usually results in some kind of major problem. Printing is one of those “things”, as we discussed last time. Everybody comes in contact with it; everybody uses it; very few understand it. It’s the lack of understanding that generally causes all of the chigger itches. And, if Johannes Gutenberg hadn’t updated the development of moveable type in the 1400’s you wouldn’t be in the quandary you’re in now and none of us would be where we are today - and you certainly wouldn’t be reading this column (somehow I’m not so sure y’all would put that in the major achievements of man but here we are anyway).

The mechanics of printing are driven by quantity: Offset is used for small to medium quantities; Gravure is used mostly for large to huge quantities - the kind needed to print all of those Free Standing Inserts (FSIs) you wade through by the ton in the Sunday paper. To be more specific, Offset is usually used to print sheets of paper while Gravure is used to print on rolls (also known as webs) of paper. Then, of course, there is the Perfecting Press - the kind that prints both sides of a sheet/roll of paper at the same time. And don’t forget that there are presses in one-, two-, four-, and six-color inking at one time. That means that the more complicated your job is, the more sophisticated the press needed to do the job. Complication and sophistication add up to M-O-N-E-Y.

Printing is a manufacturing process, albeit one that is generally considered custom manufacturing. Sorta like whether you like your hard cider from the suttler or from your own jug out of your own spring house. And to print a piece, let’s say a brochure, the steps are about as complicated as making a good batch of cider.

First you have to have a concept with an idea of what you want to say and what you want to show - that’s the easy part. Now you need to write the copy and pick the visuals you’re going to use. Let’s say you want your brochure to end up being 8 ½” X 11”. Well, the amount of copy and the number of visuals will determine how many pages you will have to print. Now if you go the other way and say how many pages you want, you might wind up trying to fit an elephant through the eye of a needle - just won’t do. So let’s say that your copy and visuals work out to four pages plus the cover: that works out to a total of eight pages to be printed, counting front and back of each page as one.

The next step is to set type and produce a mechanical or paste-up. The mechanical is the step that indicates what each page is supposed to look like and where the visuals are supposed to go. Before you set type and start work on the mechanical be sure that the copy has been “proofed” at each step - if an error occurs, and you let it get by, you may not be able to correct it later. Okay, you get one last shot to save your hide and that’s when the mechanical is completed and before the printing



plates are made. Remember to proof each mechanical to be sure that there are no typographical errors and that everything is where it is supposed to be. A one-digit change in an address or phone number can mean the difference in whether you get any sales or not. It goes without saying (that's why I'm saying it) that most errors occur in the elements that you take for granted. It amazes me how most typographical errors can happen with the most mundane elements of copy.

Once you have approved the mechanical it goes to film assembly, or stripping, where the pieces are put together to produce the plate. The film is put together in forms - the way the pages will be printed on a piece of paper. The size of the print surface of the press will determine the number of pages per form. If the form isn't utilized well you'll have a lot of excess paper trim, the more trim - the more paper you have to use to print. The more paper you use, the higher the cost. Oops. Miss Lucy has gotten her crinolines in a ruffle because we're running to hard, too long. Until next time, Don't chop anything but high cotton.

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*"It Ain't Over 'Til It's Over"*

*This article was written in the wake of several major downtown businesses announcing their closing within a short period of time of each other. Fueled by gossip and newspaper headlines, something akin to mass hysteria was beginning to rear its ugly head as everyone proclaimed the central city "dead". While intended for the Richmond, VA, business community, the article is applicable to any city where the inner core is appearing to "die".]*

Alas! ... Woe is me! ... The heavens are falling! ... Cannons to the right, cannons to the left! ... Somebody grab the colors! ... That last shot damn near took my ear off!

Hold on just one darn minute. Rein in, holster your Colt, put your wristbreaker back in it's scabbard and take a deep breath. Now, an awful lot has happened lately and a lot of people are running around like Chicken Little.

Well, hell! Stop, look up, and tell me what you see? IS the sky falling? No. It didn't fall when Henricus failed or when Cornwallis, Tarleton or Benedict Arnold came through. Not even when Little Mac was within five miles of Richmond. It didn't fall when Dalghren's men made their foolish ride down Brooke Road or when the warehouses were fired in '65 (though it sure looked like all Hell had broken loose).

Having heard of all this talk about abandoning the city I wonder what root stock (that's pronounced "ruut" stock) has taken over in our fair city. Richmonders are Virginians. And Virginians are a breed apart. Let me give y'all a little remembering:

When Mother England wanted to get rid of excess stock that was more trouble than it was worth, she sent it to Virginia, South Carolina and Georgia. Now we Virginians were among the first to arrive, so it comes as no surprise that we downplay the fact that ours was a penal colony - or at least an "indentured" colony. Probably because of our nascent genetic makeup, Virginians were involved in a handful of wars and rebellions before 1776, more because of our nature rather than "the cause". In other words, a Virginian never really needed anything more than a good excuse to get his dander up and start raising the devil. We are contrary and stubborn, we are fighters and survivors.

Now is the time to show a little gumption. Plant your feet, roll up your sleeves, and get just a little angry about all this mess and do something constructive about it instead of complaining. Miller & Rhodes and Thalhimer's downtown stores had sales in the millions each year. They're gone.



Now who's going to get all the business that they used to have? Who's going to pickup the slack and accommodate all those tens of thousands of people who work downtown for the things they don't have time to shop for after work or in the evenings?

A good retailer wouldn't cry about losing a little competition, especially from some carpetbaggers who came here looking for a fast buck - we've seen it all before and we've always come back stronger. No, a good retailer would look at the opportunity and figure out how to capitalize on it. We'll start on how you can do that the next time.

You see, I'm going to be here... even if you're not.

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*"I Never Met A Reconstructed Rebel I Liked" or*

*"You CAN Beat Them At Their Own Game"*

Fighting, any kind of fighting, is traumatic. But only if you don't know who you are fighting, and if you don't know how to fight. The one thing you have in your arsenal is a little bit of both. And, better yet, you know the lay of the land and the enemy doesn't.

That, my friend, is the essence of guerilla warfare.

Now you're asking yourself, "Just what the blue-blazin' dickins is he talkin' about this time?". Well it's really quite simple. Ever since '62 we've been fighting a guerilla war - overwhelming odds; inflation; usurious interest rates (when the banks are willing to lend money - remember, you have to pay for their mistakes); carpetbaggers and scallywags; mergers and acquisitions; roller coaster economic cycles; and, as small businessmen, fighting the "guvmint" as much as we fight the E-N-E-M-Y. On top of all this everybody and his brother is talking about how downtown retailing is a thing of the past and anybody with any sense would head for the coalfields west of Dogtown or out past Short Pump where the Springfield Spur runs. Bull feathers!

Fighting a guerilla war takes several things to make it work: a sense of small unit tactics; a decentralized command structure; knowledge of the people and the area you're fighting in (language, customs, culture, short-cuts, back roads, etc.); strong communications and logistical support; the need to travel light with superior weaponry and substantial ammunition. In other words, a high degree of efficiency and effectiveness coupled with intelligence, economy of force and the element of surprise. It also requires constant vigilance and attention to detail. Under virtually any circumstance a small force can defeat a larger one using these methods.

During any or evacuation there are people who stay on and wait out the tide. These are the ones who ultimately win out (even if it takes a generation or two). Why? Some would say because of sheer stupidity; others because they recognize character. In reality it's a combination of both. The key ingredient to anybody having "stick-to-it-iveness" is simple: a product or service that is needed; competitive pricing; a high orientation towards service along with a good source of capital and a high degree of cussedness (but not directed at your customer!).

Now let's combine the elements of fighting a guerilla war with a merchant who stays during an evacuation.

That's sort of where you are. On the one hand you have a potential vacuum because other merchants are following the thundering hordes; on the other, there is the prospect (read: latent threat) of a major player realizing the potential of the vacuum and cutting a deal for low-cost space and a ready-made market. A major player can



weather the storm easier because they can force (blackmail) the “powers that be” into concessions to locate downtown and, assuming they aren’t in the throes of paying-off the effects of greenmail, can amortize the additional cost of a new location over all their stores.

You, on the other hand, can’t get concessions from rental rates, utilities, taxes or even the prospect of seed money to spur you on; You can’t amortize any cost over other stores because you don’t have any - or not enough to make a difference. No matter how you look at it, your options are limited and your resources are slim. So, now we look long and hard at where we are and start to think about how we make the best of what is potentially a great opportunity - but a disaster if we fail.

First, take a deep breath and look around. Do you really know where you are, what resources you have, who’s buying your product(s) and why?

Do you know who your competitors are, how they approach the market, what their strengths and weaknesses are?

Do you know your staying power and how to adjust your inventory and product mix to maximize potential?

Do you understand that a plan of action is required and that it must be flexible and include contingencies?

Second, what changes can you make in physical layout, product display, decor, signage, point-of-sale, etc. that separates you from the masses but appeals to your target market?

Third, have you put a marketing plan in place that will maximize your message reach against your market with a far degree of frequency?

Does your marketing effort appeal to your target’s needs and wants - instead of yours? Does all this sound familiar? Of course, but that’s how you get a mule to pull a straight line. Keep geein’ and hawin’ over and over until he can plow a straight furrow.

Besides, I’m just a simple ol’ Virginia country boy and I learned a long time ago that if you remember the basics you’ll always beat the guy who tries to complicate matters. Start rolling your blanket, tie-on your tin cup and put an edge on your sword, we’re going to begin a ride that’s long and hard and, if you keep up, we’ll beat’em yet.

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*"You Never Hear The Shot That Hits You" or*

*"Never Let Down Your Guard"*

Getting shot at is hard to take. Being shot at and hit can be downright deadly.

The first thing you feel is the wind getting knocked out of you or a significant loss of control in your limbs; then you might hear the sound of the round; then you think "my God! I'm gonna die!"; then before you pass out or fall out of the saddle, you feel the pain and KNOW whether you are going to live or die. You just know.

Sometimes running a small business is like being in battle: sometimes you get shot at and sometimes you get hit. If you get hit, it just might be deadly. The obvious question centers on why you get shot at in the first place and, then when you do and get hit, HOW you got hit.

In any combat situation the odds of someone getting shot are directly proportionate to their level of exposure and random selection (being in the wrong place at the wrong time). Getting hit is a function of either carelessness or random selection, or both. In retailing it's usually the former rather than the later - after all, no one is really out to get you ... or are they? Survival depends on paying attention to details on the one hand, and maintaining a competitive advantage on the other. Details. Customers shop at a store on the basic economic principle of supply and demand. They look for providers of products and services that will fill their need or desire and, once that criteria is met, they look for selection coupled with quality and value - real or perceived. The buying decision is formed from the minute they walk into a store: is the atmosphere non-threatening; is the store clean and the merchandise displayed well; are the sales people cordial, helpful but not aggressive.

Whether they return for another purchase will depend on their overall level of satisfaction covering all of these variables. How well you have paid attention to these details on a daily basis will determine whether you will survive - one more day.

Now, saying that it is lot easier than doing it. Kind of like when the Yanks strolled out of Washington in '61 for Manassas with shouts of "On to Richmond". It proved to be one hell of a long stroll. The competitive edge comes a little harder because it's a more difficult to control. The primary consideration is good logistics. The smaller you are the more important it is to have a wide and varied selection of product, the key is making sure that you don't go overboard on depth. What you get out of this is the appearance of a lot more than you really have and your customers have more to choose from. Old Jeb (Jeb Stuart) and Forrest (Nathan Bedford Forrest - probably the greatest cavalry officer God ever made) were notorious for dragging brush behind





their horses to make the Yanks think they had more men they actually had. It worked too.

The next step is to rotate stock to keep it looking fresh and moving. That doesn't mean move it from one place in the store to another, just move it around on the shelf or one table to another in the same section. The idea is for your customer to sense activity and freshness. After logistics you need good lines of communication. Find out who your customer is and what they want. The simplest way to do that is to ask in a friendly way, conversationally.

Once you've got the information transfer it to your computer or an index card. The next time the customer comes in, try and reference them by name and their interests and direct them to new products that they might appreciate. Better yet, build your customer file so that you can drop your customers a postcard the next time you get a shipment of products that you know they are interested in. Prime the pump, so to speak. And, you can use their product interest to refine your inventory and plan future buys. Not all that complicated, is it?

Well, I can see that the sun is starting to get a little low on the horizon so I guess we'll have to continue this conversation the next time.

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## *“You Never Hear the Shot... Cont’d*

Details... logistics... lines of communications.

If you followed the first part of this trail the rest of this sortie is going to go a lot easier (if you want to figure out where we’re going, get out your last issue, read it, and then you’ll be able to pick up the traces and join the column). After you’ve accomplished the above, you need to concentrate on pulling it all together into a plan of attack. Tactics. O! Stonewall Jackson was probably one the most underrated military geniuses of all time, if he’d been wearin’ blue instead of grey there’s no tellin’ how Bobby Lee could’ve held on as long as he did. At any rate, Stonewall had two simple dictums on tactics that permeated his plan of battle throughout “The War”:

“Always mystify, mislead, and surprise the enemy, if possible; and when you strike and overcome him, never let up in the pursuit so long as your men have strength to follow; for an army routed, if hotly pursued, becomes panic-stricken, and can be destroyed by half their number.” And, “Never fight against heavy odds, if by maneuvering you can hurl your own force on only a part, and that the weakest part, of your enemy and crush it. Such tactics will win every time, and a small army may destroy a larger one in detail, and repeated victory will make it invincible.”

Pretty simple, uncomplicated and logical when you get right down to it. But isn’t that the essence of brilliance? Taking a complex problem and reducing it something that everyone can understand? Of course it is. The tactics you need to develop have to conform to the dictates of the situation. And, whether you’re big or small, the tactics don’t change - only the size and scope. The *“Ultimate Tactics”* as outlined by Jackson haven’t changed an iota since 1862, only today “They” (shiny-shoed, silk-suited, silver-tongued, slicked-down haired advertising and “marketing” types) call it *“Niche Marketing”*. Only problem is that most of these quiche-eating niche marketers are great at preaching but poor on practicing. Kind of like the armies that Stonewall always beat: well-dressed, well-fed, well-drilled, over-paid, but couldn’t fight their way out of a clapboard shanty with a twelve-pound Napoleon (that’s a cannon, in case you didn’t know).

**Let’s take a typical situation and see what tactics we can develop:**

Suppose you are a small retailer who specializes in selling widgets and right down the street is a big company that sells widgets along with a lot of other things, not necessarily related.

You send out a reconnaissance to determine how your situation relates to theirs. You find that, while they offer widgets and they buy in larger volume, their sales people don’t really know - or care - about widgets, why anyone would want one, and aren’t



really interested in selling widgets because their commission is too small on these little things.

The next thing you notice is that they've wedged their widgets in with a lot of other things and they are really a little hard to see, much less find. No case displays, no aisle markers, no Point-Of-Sale. Last, you notice that, even with the bigger company's volume buying, they have priced their widgets at just about the "Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price".

Well Hot Damn!

You squint your beady little eyes and a cold sweat breaks out as you RUN to your store, wringing your hands together in glee as you anticipate the coup you are about to count on "The Sleeping Giant". Quickly you have a sign made - a BIG sign - to go in your front window that says something like "Have We Got A Widget For You ... Big Selection ... Priced Right ... All Colors!" And you put a whole bunch of them in the window under the sign.

Next you rearrange your shelves so that your widgets are easy to spot - NEAR THE BACK OF THE STORE - so your new customers get a chance to see ALL of your stock and you lower your price to 5% BELOW "The Sleeping Giant" (but you MARK-UP some other items - just a little - to compensate for the difference).

Now you call your sales staff together (both of them) and you go over all the uses of your widgets, why they are better than anybody else's and how you just can't live without a widget in every room. Now you're almost ready, yes sir!

You now prepare an ad that tells people what you've got, that they've been wanting, and you are going to stay open special hours just so everybody has a chance to buy some of your extra special widgets. I gotta tell you, by golly, it'll be like Manassas (Bull Run for you Carpetbaggers) all over again.

Now you got to remember that if "The Sleeping Giant" wakes up too soon you could be in for a little bit of a saddle breaker. On the otherhand, it could well mean that, if you hurt their widget sales bad enough, they might decide (in their infinite bottom-line driven, instant profit, LBO-consciousness) that they don't sell enough widgets in your market to continue carrying them anymore.

Well, here we go again. Grabbin' the pommel and runnin' hard before we get bushwhacked. Hopefully, we'll see you next time.

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*”Enfilading Fire to Fulminate the Feeble Foe” or*

*“Getting in Two Licks for the Price of One”*

“**Bushwhacking**” doesn’t follow the Marquis of Queensbury rules of fair play, but it works darn near every time when a small unit has to fight a large force. To succeed you have to be organized; your weapons have to be in fine fettle; your fields of fire have to be set so you don’t shoot your own people; you best have a contingency plan for getting the heck out of there; and, you better hit them hard, fast, and move out like the devil was chasing you (‘cause you can bet who ever you’re nailing will be on you like ... ). Now for y’all who have never seen the elephant, “enfilading fire” means catching somebody in a cross-fire, a double-whammy.

What you want most of all is the element of surprise, ‘cause the element of surprise is worth more than a battery of howitzers - though they wouldn’t hurt to have on hand either. As a small retailer you have got to “bushwhack” every chance you get and the easiest way to do that is use other people’s money and resources as often as you can.

Nowadays that falls into two categories: “Co-Op” and “cross-selling”. Applying either, or both, of these tactics requires some thought and a lot of imagination and in some cases it even takes a little skill at poker playing. “Co-Op” refers to “co-operative advertising” the things that the people you buy from are willing to

provide or pay for based on the amount of product you buy from them; “Cross-selling” is not just selling a customer a tie to go with a suit, it’s also working with other merchants to arrive at higher sales.

On the one hand you use other people’s money, on the other you use each others money to create a bigger bang. You know that every company you buy from has monies available to support your advertising their products. They probably tell you that it is based on a percentage of the dollars you spend with them and that they have great - GREAT - ad slicks, collateral material, posters, Point-Of-Sale, broadcast doughnuts, etc. ad nauseam ... that they’ll be glad to provide for free (but they always tell you what the value would be if you had to buy it). Real kind hearted, aren’t they? Sometimes trying to find your name in one of those things is like trying to find a flea on a mare’s rump. Now they also tell you that the “deal” is the same for everyone. It has to

be the same for everyone because of Robinson-Pattman. R-I-G-H-T! You can slip the collar on that one by going to them with your own program. It’s amazing how much money is out there if you just know how to get it.



The other tactical approach, using pooled resources, is sometimes better if you can ever work out the details without fighting over who's going to lead the charge. Why is it better? Well, for one thing, you give the potential customer a lot more reasons to shop in your area. You are also spreading around the inventory, sales force, excitement, and interest without having to bear all of the dedicated and associated costs. The more event-oriented it is, the better off everybody is going to be: people spend more money when they are having fun than when their sucking persimmons; and, for once you can compete with the malls and big spenders for attention because they do exactly the same thing. Put them both in one pot and you've got yourself a dandy combination for success. And all that goes back to setting up a good "bushwhack". Whether you use other people's money or lump a lot together, the key is hitting hard, swift and with imagination. The more imagination and cooperation you have, the greater the results. Sorta like Second Manassas.

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*“How to Figure it Out When You Didn’t Know it was a Problem”*

Virginia in the spring is one of the most beautiful places on God’s earth.

Riding through the countryside listening to the rhythmic squeak of saddle leather worn smooth and shiny from years of use; feeling a fresh warm breeze against your face and smelling the winter wheat, honeysuckle and new clover busting out from a winter’s sleep; puffy white clouds playing across the light blue sky; it all makes an old battle-weary reprobate like me wax poetic. And, you can smell the freshening and see the dark clouds of a coming spring storm, replete with Thor’s own spears of charged energy, as the lightning bounces off the shield of Mother Virginia.

You know, it wasn’t too many years ago that Richmonders greeted the sound of thunder-boomers with cries of, “here comes Grant, trying to take Richmond again”. (Course y’all know he never did.) I guess the point of all this is that there are times when you have to stop and take a look at the world around you and smile at just how nice it can be from time to time. Marketing and advertising is sorta like that, especially at the retail level.

Because everything has to be done so quickly and so often, taking a little cease-fire can do wonders for the soul - and for the business. No, not a vacation but a time to assess what you are doing, why you are doing it, and who you are doing it to. It is a time to analyze, scrutinize, question and recapitulate.

You see, most retailers, marketers, advertisers and anyone else connected with moving any kind of product or service are in a huge rut - a rut so big it would make the trenches of Richmond’s outer defenses look like a single furrow in a fallow field. Everybody scurries around and does what has to be done and never really gives a second thought to why in the hell they’re doing it. That’s why God gave us spring. So we could play hookey, go sit on a rock in the middle of the James and figure out what we’re doing that’s right, and what we’re doing that’s wrong, and what we need to do to do it all better and, most important, what to do to WIN!

While you’re sitting on that rock, look for a leaf floating on the current and follow its path. Pretty soon that leaf, carried along by a current that it has no control over, will be sluffed off to an eddy and then a backwater where it will sit idle until it sinks under the water. Where it stays until it’s covered by sand and other leaves. Other leaves will be carried a little further but, in time, they too will sink under the water like the Monitor stove through at the waterline.

A lot of businesses, and people, are like leaves floating on the current. They are carried along by forces they can’t control until they sink out of sight. But it doesn’t have to be that way. You have the ability to take control over the way you go with the flow ... all it takes is planning, an understanding of the current you’re riding, and what it takes to break out. In other words, clear thinking.



Clarity of thought does not come during the middle of a battle, what you THINK is clarity is really instinct, intuition and training. Clarity of thought comes when you are calm, relaxed and not under any pressure to perform. Sorta like a preacher on a Monday morning.

And it's not just a review of your financials that need to be considered, but every facet of the business: marketing, advertising, customers, vendors, product lines, location(s), services, policies, and personnel. While you're sitting on that rock let your mind wander as you listen to the sound of the water rushing by, close your eyes, lean back and let the sun soak into those winter-logged bones. Shuck off your shoes and let your toes tap dance on the water. Now start thinking about your business, one point at a time.

*That, my friend, is when you'll get clarity of thought.*