



Ray Edwards Show, Episode 310

The Most Ripped-Off Copywriter Alive

Ray Edwards: *Ray Edwards Show*, Episode 310. The most ripped off copywriter alive.

Voice over 1: It's the *Ray Edwards Show*. This is the podcast for prosperity with purpose.

[song]

Let's change the world and watch your business grow, welcome to the *Ray Edwards Show*. The *Ray Edward Show*.

Ray: No, not what you're thinking, it's not me. I'm not the most ripped off copywriter alive. Although it's getting there because one of the templates that we give in our course, I see it now used by a lot of people.

Sean: Oh really?

Ray: Many of whom did not take the course.

Sean: Interesting.

Ray: I don't know how that happens.

Sean: Yes, seriously.

Ray: It's like in the hemisphere. There's a shift happening in the copywriting world. We're going to be delving into the interview archives for an interview I've never aired before on the podcast. It's with one of the guys who really got me started in the professional world of copywriting. This is a guy who I've had so much respect for his work that I went to a conference, traveled all the way across the country with the intention of spending \$5,000 to buy his copywriting swipe file package. Which I believe at the time he called the mother of all packages. Which if you think about it that could be misinterpreted by people. I don't know how, I have no idea, I don't know what you're thinking.

John Carlton is the guy I'm talking about. Now, some of you right now are recoiling because he's a very street savvy, hard charging, sales guy, and for some people that's not their style. But you've got to get past that because behind the rough and tumble copy that he writes. He writes for male oriented markets, like golfers and people who teach street fighting, stuff like that, so obviously, the copy is going to be a little rougher because it's for that audience. He's got a degree in psychology, and he understands how the human mind works and how people make buying decisions, and he uses his knowledge of behavioral psychology to sell stuff. Which I think is a pretty smart idea. We'll be talking to John coming up.

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Voice over 2: Does anyone want to live a life that is long and prosperous.

Voice over 3: Spiritual foundations.

Ray: This is one of my favorite scriptures to quote just because it sounds weird. Actually, there's a lot of those, but this one is the one I like to quote a lot. "Go to the ant, you sluggard. Consider her ways and be wise. Which having no captain, overseer or ruler provides her supplies in the summer and gathers her food in the harvest." It's from the book of Proverbs 6:6 through 8.

I was reading a little bit from the Maxwell Leadership Bible, which-- Now don't get me into the whole discussion about all the different versions of the Bible. Like the Fireman's Bible, the Fisherman's Bible, the Hubble collector's Bible. [chuckles] John Maxwell, I have a lot of respect for. He has some great insights much of the time. In his passage about this particular part of scripture, he says, "Pay attention to the metaphor of the ant." He has an acronym which is what sold me on quoting from his leadership Bible because he's an acronym guy.

His acronym is ANTS, A-N-T-S. The lessons the ant teaches us he says can be summarized this way. A, attitude of initiative. Ants don't need a boss to tell them how to get started. I like that. N, nature of integrity. Maxwell says ants work faithfully and need no outside accountability to keep them doing right. Well, because if they don't do right, they'll die. That probably keeps you pretty accountable. Well?

Sean: No.

Ray: Maybe not.

Sean: Maybe not.

Ray: T stands for thirst for industry. Ants work hard and will replace their anthill when it gets ruined. It means they don't give up and go look for ant welfare. "Somebody stepped on our anthill. You should build us a new one." S stands for a source of insight. Ants store provisions in the summer. When everything is good, everything is golden and there's lots of provisions, they store them up because they know there's a lean time coming.

It's like we keep a cash reserve in our company so that when cash flow-- It ebbs and flows. Sometimes it's high, sometimes it's lower. There's valleys and troughs. We have a cash reserve. In case we get into a trough, we can just say, "Let's just go grab that cash reserve and not worry about this." Ants, go to the ants-

Sean: Go to the ants.

Ray: -you sluggard. Okay, that part's a little insulting.

[laughter]



But it's the Bible. What am I supposed to do? It's just a metaphor.

Sean: It's only insulting because it's making you face the reality that you might be lazy.

Ray: Isn't that why most things are insulting?

Sean: Yes.

Ray: Because if you know it's not true-

Sean: Because it's forcing you to face reality.

Ray: If you know it's not true, it doesn't bother you.

Sean: Yes. Which is why most of society's rules about what's rude are dumb because they're basically like that's it's rude to point out reality to that person. It's rude to make that person recognize facts.

Ray: It's not nice-

Sean: It's not nice.

Ray: -to tell the truth.

Sean: I didn't know that niceness took priority over the truth.

Ray: I didn't plan to share this but I realized I wrote something on Facebook that hardly anybody responded to. I think you'll like it. It's short I'm going to read it to you. We spend an enormous amount of time and energy evading this reality. We often don't behave in accordance with actual self. Rather, we behave in accordance with the apparent self which we construct for the purpose of impressing other people. What if we cast off the false self and made the courageous decision to be who we are?

What if we made intentional choice about what we believe and value and then every day acted as if we really believed and valued it? What could your life be like if you stopped evading your true potential?

Sean: Nice.

Ray: I knew you'd like it.

Sean: It's good.

Ray: What do you supposed to say? Well, you say that's not so good dad, we should cut that out of the show."

Sean: That's true, that's how I felt. [chuckles]

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Ray: That's why sometimes it's hard to talk to you but I never am uncomfortable with thinking you might tell me a lie just to make me feel better.

Sean: That's true, I won't.

Ray: There are people I know that I know I can't count on for their honest opinion.

Sean: Right because they don't want to hurt your feelings.

Ray: They'd rather let me humiliate myself in front of--

Sean: They'd rather participate in your delusion with you than tell you the truth.

Ray: This is one of those rabbit trails that 2% of our audience doesn't like, and now we know why.

Voice over 4: Now, simple hacks that make life cheaper, easier and faster, Ray's *Tip of the Week*.

Ray: *Tip of the Week* this week comes from the book *Rest* by I hope I'm going to say this right, Alex Soojung Kim Pang. The subtitle of the book is, *Why You Get More Done When You Work Less*. This is a topic that a lot of people discuss but not very many people actually study the psychology and the science behind the idea and this guy does. He says in the front of his book, "For the most of us overwork is the new normal and rest is an afterthought.

In our busy lives rest is defined as the absence of work, late night TV binges, hours spent trolling the internet, something to do once we finished everything else on our to do list. Dismissing rest stifles our ability to think creatively and truly recharge." He works in Silicon Valley, he posits that, rest is not the opposite of work if they are part of the same cycle and that without one you can't really enjoy and get to benefit from the other.

I'll just give you one quote, I'm reading this as part of the LeaderBox program, Michael Hyatt's monthly reading program. It gets you reading two books a month, which is pretty awesome, you should sign up for it at leaderbox.com. I do not have an affiliate link, if I did I would give it to you and I would make millions of dollars and retire. Anyway, one of my favorite quotes from his books so far is this one, "If your work is yourself, when you cease to work, you cease to exist." Hello, who are you after the work? Something to think about.

Voice over 5: Now, our feature presentation.

Ray: Some people call John Carlton the most ripped off copywriter alive and that's because there was a period of time where everybody's ripping off his one legged golfer headline. He's the guy who wrote the headline *The Amazing Secrets of the One Legged Golfer*, and it was for a course on how to play better golf. The premise is so obvious, if a one legged golfer shoots a good game of golf, he must be doing



something right. Or she, could be a one legged lady. Well, that became the biggest swiped headline in history for a long time.

Other people now call him the most respected writing teacher alive. I don't know if it's true. I love you John, but I think there may be another guy who might arm wrestle you for that title. Maybe, I'm just saying. He's pretty respected. The list of well known marketers who freely reference John Carlton as their primary mentor for writing sales messages is staggering. People like Frank Kern. There is a long list of people who learned how to write copy from John Carlton.

As I told you in the first part of the episode, I went to a conference just with the sole intention of spending \$5 000 to buy his swiped files. That doesn't count the airline tickets, the hotel, the three days, the other stuff I bought while I was there because I couldn't resist the sales pitches. Listen, here's a tip for you. If you want to sell something to somebody, sell it to a salesman because salesmen love to be sold. They do. Let's get into it, my interview with John Carlton.

Ray: Welcome. John.

John: Hi Ray. How are you?

John Carlton

Ray: I am fabulous. I'm so excited to be talking with you. I tell the story when people ask me how I got started in copywriting -- one of the first things I did was -- I don't know if you remember this. I went to an [unintelligible 00:00:14] seminar with the expressed intention of giving you \$5000 and that's what I did.

John: Did you owe me your money? [laughter]

Ray: At that time you were offering some kind of \$5000. It was everything you have done up until then-

John: That's right.

Ray: -package. I was going to buy that. I did make the mistake of not telling my wife before I went that I was going to do that.

John: That's what credit cards are for right?



Ray: Yes but there's always an aftermath so we don't do that anymore. I went to that seminar with that intention to do that and I did it. It was one of the best investments I ever made. You've been called *The Most Ripped Off Copywriter on the Web* and I have often wanted to ask you this. Is that something that you -- is that a badge you wear with pride? Or is it one that you wear with pride and a certain amount of irritation?

John: Actually there's a lot of irritation that I've never called myself a great copywriter. I've certainly never called myself *The Greatest Living Copywriter Alive*. That was my old pal *Gary Halbert's* handle. When I became a guru it was a very slow process. I wanted to step from behind the scenes which I then most of my career well-known by the insiders but not very well-known by people outside of our very tight direct-response community. I want to step forward but I had no claims to be better than anyone else. I'm really a very shy self-deprecating guy.

I'm an introvert. *Gary Halbert* pushed me out on the stage. I started speaking more. I was always on stage I was really doing that but never the center of the stage. I was always the guy helping help it out or the guy the guest speaker something like that. Not really stepping out on my own. What I did I was very careful about the handle I created and the one I really like that I use the most is *The Most Respected and Ripped Off Copywriter Alive*. I use that because a lot of people early -- specially early in the web years of the Arts here people were taking my ads and copying them and using them for their own purposes. I decided to step in front of that parade and I encourage them to do that. I even gave a seminar called *License to Steal*. I told them, "If you're going to steal my ads and rip them here's how to do it right. Stop doing it wrong." [laughs] "You're - me off."

We got that going. Yes. That's my handle. I am respected in the industry and I will take that with glee because that has been -- among writers you never see writers sit down with other writers Ray. At the bar or something say, "I'm better than you." or "I'm the best." They just don't do it. We're very shy. We're very conscious of how karma can bite you in the behind if you start bragging about yourself. The piece bombs and suddenly you're not the glory boy anymore. Among writers we're very cognizant of our status among the other writers. We don't lord it over the others and we're all very friendly and I myself and a lot of other writers have bent over backwards to help bring rookie writers and other writers up.



It's been very lonely in the A-list over the decades and now it's crowded. I take responsibility for bringing a whole lot of those people up into it. I'm very proud of that. But I never thought I was one of the greatest copywriters. I have certain things that I do extremely well. My greatest joy has been the simple writing system which was just taking what is essentially a complex process of using salesmanship and knowledge about advertising and marketing and working it into sales messages. That rookie entrepreneurs or entrepreneurs that are struggling or business owners or writers who want to move up a level can very easily find some formulas about how to make their writing better. That's been my greatest joy over the years to be able to share everything I know and do the mentoring behind that.

Not just lay it out in a book but actually get hands on coaching and working with people. I've dragged a lot of people kicking and screaming into the copywriting world as freelancers and- or they started their own businesses. I'm very very proud of that. They've been very, very, respectful of that. That's where the respect part comes. I just do my job as a copywriter. Not to hog the Mic, Ray, but we belong to this really rare tribe of scribes. Our ancestors go back to the dawn of time. Literally the dawn of history. We're the guys that wrote history. Think of all those scribes back there. Through the majority of the history of humankind. They've been anonymous. They've been often slaves. They've been very much alone. They've been worked to death. They weren't able to write what they wanted. They had to write what other people wanted them to write.

It wasn't until just a couple of hundred years ago that novels were invented and people started being able to write what they wanted to again. It was done briefly back in the Greek classic era but for most of the modern Western world writers were not respected. They were not well-compensated. They were essentially slaves to whatever person own them. Like artists in a lot of ways. Artists weren't necessarily able to draw or sculpt or paint whatever they wanted until about the 1500s -- when was the reformation in the Renaissance. For any writer the best majority writers in the past if they looked in our lives today -- freelance writers or even just professional business owners who write. They'd be astonished. "You go write what you want without fear." You can think what you want. You can write and get all the proceeds that come in from that. You can control your destiny through writing. That is an astonishing thing. For writers, we should never lose track of how easily that can be taken away too.



Ray: That is well said. We also had a point in history where you can publish yourself. You've got this fantastic blog and you can write whatever you want whenever you want at the press of the button-

John: - and with Amazon -- God bless them -- I have two books on Amazon. One just digital one both digital and in printed. Sold a bunch and it's just great. There was a classic period back in the early 50s where guys like Hugh Hefner could take what was it -- \$300 or \$600. Buy a picture of Marilyn Monroe mostly undressed and start a publication like *Playboy*. There were a lot of magazines like that out there but that was the high time. He was able to get it printed, get it distributed and he never knew if he's going to have a second issue or not. The first issues was not number one. It was just an issue. Then it wasn't until a couple of years into it that he started getting ahead of the game and realized he had a little publishing juggernaut going.

Back then in the 50s was the time when you could self-publish magazines and there was a lot of opportunities open to writers that hadn't been opened before. Then it started to close up in the 60s again. The consolidation of the book publishers -- do you remember *Grove Press* by any chance? -- it wasn't a subsidiary of anybody but they took all the banished and banned and censored authors like Henry Miller some of the beat poets. They had a history in the 50s and 60s of publishing dangerous books essentially. We forget that there were times where there was a lot of censorship even in the United States.

That time of freedom where people were stepping out and it was important to get books out. Bookstores started thriving in the 50s and of course the used bookstores started thriving in the 60s and 70s. That's all kind of going by the wayside because of Amazon. But Amazon has restored that. You can publish yourself. You can publish your own book. You can get it done in a weekend. Once you get the hang of it it's so easy. I've beaten up people for years about getting that first book written. As a businessman or as a professional your first book is your calling card. It's the headline you want. The people only need to read the headline and a couple of the blurbs on the back by people. That's all they need.

"Oh. He's got a book." You're no longer Joe Blow, a guy, a struggling writer. You're Joe Blow author of *How to Get a Million Dollars in Six Days by Trimming Trees -- endorsed by the Agricultural Society of America* -- things like that. I used to tell people to do that back when it was tough to do. Now that it's easy to do it's just opened up a whole new world for writers. We own the world right now. We haven't

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realized it and we haven't done anything with it. Writers have never been more powerful than they are today.

Ray: I feel like I'm at a revival meeting for writing. [laughs] This is awesome. I don't know if you know Don Miller but he's the StoryBrand guy and he's a big Christian author in New York Times best selling author of all things. A couple of books of what some people call post-modern Christian essays. Now if there's anything least likely to be as bestseller it's got to be that. He's had some huge success and I was with him in Nashville not long ago and he says, "So you're a copywriter?" I said, "Yes." and he said, "I just read the greatest book." and I said "What is it?" he said "It's *The Entrepreneurs Guide to Getting Your -Together.*"

John: Oh really.

Ray: "Do you know this guy?" And I started laughing and I said, "Yes, I just never would have guessed he'd be the guy that you would be reading." He said, "Oh it's great." So he loved your book. It goes to show because of Amazon, just what you were saying, we can be distributed worldwide, you never know who's going to get a hold of your book. A lot of people decry this and they say, "Well, there's a lot of crap books." Well, guess what nobody will buy them, a few people will, they'll write some bad reviews and that will be the end of that. But books like yours and you've got that one and you've got the *Simple Success Secrets*, I think is the other one right?

John: Yes.

Ray: Yes so-

John: *Simple Success Secrets No One Told You About.*

Ray: Told you about, yes.

John: I think is the book title.

Ray: Anybody watching this or listening should get both of those by the way, just get them, don't ask questions, get them and read them. But you really were one of the first people to recommend that idea of writing a book as your calling card. Everybody says it now. I was just thinking about this yesterday because I was looking through a local newspaper and there was a real estate ad and there was a local real estate broker who, in the bottom of his useless full page ad with a bunch of pictures of listings like every realtor does, he did have a picture of himself holding his book,

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Cash Flow Forever or something like that. I'm like, "Man this message, this idea of direct response marketing has spread so far that even the local realtors are getting it." I don't know if they know where it came from or not but it's powerful and you and Halbert were at the forefront of that. What were those early days like with Halbert?

John: Man that was a different world. How far back do you go Ray? Do you go back to direct mail?

Ray: I did some direct mail. I think I'm a little bit younger than you so I missed out. I tell people I missed out on The Beatles and the Psychedelic Movement and a few things and I just came in just after that. But we did a lot of direct mail in the radio business for our clients or for the stations, so I remember what it was like. You spent a ton of money and prayed that it worked.

John: I was a direct mail direct response copywriter. A lot of people used to get confused about that but direct mail is a part of direct response. Direct response is the umbrella of writing to create an action to get some response. I got very, very good at writing, what we called, letters and I was working for the big publishers back east. Of course the story I tell is that I was on a track to be one of the initial writers to earn a million dollars writing for these guys back east. We weren't doing it yet but I was mentoring under guys like Jim Rutz who was one of the first to do it, he invented what's called the Magalog.

When I was writing with him we were still doing letters, close envelopes, teaser copies on the outside, 8 to 24 page letters plus brochures plus response devices and all those stuff. We could get these huge packages that we were doing. That was for the financial field, I was writing for a number of different markets. Jim Rutz invented the Magalog, which looks like a magazine but when you go through it it's really just a very, very long direct response letter.

He also pioneered getting paid as a writer for per piece mail or a royalty, that was not a very common thing. Back when I started out there they would give you some money you would write the piece, they'd call you later saying, "It sold millions, it was great." You go, "Okay that's great, can you give me another job?" You got nothing else from that.

Ray: Ouch.



John: The guys I was working with, including Jay Abraham, I was also mentoring under him, started working with the idea of getting a piece of the action, either \$0.5 per piece mailed or 5% of the gross, never the net by the way, never take a net deal, always take gross. That was very, very, exciting then Gary came along and I started reading his early newsletters. You probably had the joy of reading his newsletters after they had been published or yet one or two years or more. I got to them like after he published his third letter, somebody handed me one of his.

I had go get the others, I realized he was in the LA area where I was and I went and tried. I just started stalking him for a while and by the time he'd written about his first year, year and a half I met him at Jay Abraham's divorce party. He was one of the most arrogant and off-putting and fowl mouthed - I'd ever met. I liked him immediately, and we hit it off, and he asked me to start writing with him and then he asked, then he essentially bought up all my time.

I turn my back on that million dollar potential career with the largest mailers in the United States, who were all back east, that's why I'm putting it that way, it's back east, Philips, Rodale, Agora, names like that, I was the up and coming writer. I turned my back on that and went with Gary into the entrepreneurial world which is more fun. I was getting really bored writing for some financial products or the same health newsletters or whatever. That was, it was profitable but it was boring. Gary was anything but bored, every new client that walked in the door was a totally new market, a new paradigm, a new model, a new problem, a new personality in the client.

It was great, it was like getting off of the Madison Avenue treadmill and you just immersing yourself into the great vastness of America. That's where I started really learning about how to run a business besides just how to write for businesses. I was ushered into the back door of movers and shakers, excuse me, through the back door into the backrooms of movers and shakers where I would learn. I'd learn how boardrooms really operated, what people really said when they were going after a new project or how success was really measured and how things really started happening. Those years that I spent with Gary were the vast PhD in marketing and writing all squished together into about five years I was with them and then we remained friends of course up until his death, for over 20 years.

Ray: I learned so much from Gary, of course from his writing. Then I learned a super valuable lesson from him although maybe he knows it now but he didn't know it at

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the time. He was speaking at a Frank Kern, Ed Dale seminar and I wanted to meet him. But honestly I'm embarrassed to admit this, I was so intimidated by him, I couldn't even get myself to go up and say hello. Then shortly after that, it wasn't long after that, he passed away and I realized, "Wow that was stupid that I didn't have the courage to go up."

Because he was a good guy, it was clear, the people that he liked, that liked him, that loved him were good people and he struck me as very generous of spirit. I learned you never know when somebody's time is, their clock's going to run out. If you have a chance to spend time with somebody or get to know them or meet them you should step up and say hello and take advantage of the presence of that person.

John: Ray I lord that over everyone when people say, "Yes, I'm going to buy your stuff down the line, yes, your stuff's next on my list to buy," or "Yes I was going to try your mastermind." I'd say, "I ain't going to be doing this forever, I could drop dead tomorrow. You guys got to understand this." There is only a few of us old dogs left, me and Kennedy, Clayton who you said you're going to have on this, counts, jeez that's about it. Then there is the next stage, all A-list writers like David Deutsch, David Garfunkel, guys like that. But they were not back in that classic era with us, where we were -- I'd like to say Gary and I invented the marketing seminar as they are shown today.

Ray: I know you did.

John: It's a bold claim but I was there, we invented Hot Seat. We had a three day seminar where people had paid \$5000 in 1989, which back then was way beyond what anybody else was paid. The only other seminars that had even been closed to a big seminar were things that Joe Sugarman was giving up in Chicago at his home. He'd have five people into his home and he'd do a three day seminar, and he was doing that. But as far as the boardrooms and the stuff just for marketing and writing that had never been done and we did it.

Speaking list was what's his name, Michael Gerber opened up, we had Howard, me, we had Jay Abraham, we had a whole bunch of people come to this. I don't think Joe Sugarman made it but at the end of, in the middle of day two, at the end of the three day seminar, Gary turns to me in the elevator during the break and says, "Well, what should we do next?" I said, "What do you mean what should we do next?" He says, "I have no idea what we're going to do with this crowd."



Now so we got together with Jay and Jay said, “I’ve been doing this thing where I’ve been pulling people out of the audience and just saying what’s your problem and then I solve it,” and I thought that sounds kind of risky but let’s do it. We did it, we got up on stage, we just started pulling people out, what’s your marketing problem and then we look at each other -- solved it right there.

Then we realized two things; one was that because of our, it was 100 years of experience there on the stage, we could solve even the worst problems that businessmen maybe had for years who thought were unsolvable. We could solve them in five minutes. What we learned we had to do is drag it out a little bit for showmanship and we’d have people chime in and we let people know what the standard thinking and common sense thinking is. Then we’d tell what we do as grizzled, veterans of the marketing wars and give them, and not just ideas or theories but we give them specifics on what they should do to get out of the problem they are in now and move ahead and go forward, what the next step should be, what the next step after that should be. And that became the Hot Seats that now are used all over. I tell people that we were the ones who invented, I don’t take total credit but I was there on stage and we invented it, and people just laugh at me because there was no video proof of it because we didn’t record seminars back then.

Ray: I’d never heard of it until I heard it through you guys and through Jay Abraham. That’s where I found it. I you mentioned a term “grizzled pro” which reminds me people should go to your website and get the Grizzled Pro Report and that is at, it’s john-carlton.com. What is up with the guy who stole your domain name?

John: Well, what happened was this was back during the early days of the web. I was one of the first guys to jump in. it sounds like I’m bragging Ray but nobody has asked me this stuff in a long time so I’m seriously not bragging, it’s just coming to my forefront.

Ray: No, this is why I have you on here.

John: Yes I got, I don’t even think GoDaddy existed, it was 2002. Anyway somehow I got a URL, I got a teacher at my nephew’s school, he was in high school, who knew something about the web to help me design a web page. I designed this webpage of a headline, the copy going down the middle and all the testimonials on each side. Then we didn’t have a buy button, so it’s like we had to take them offline to be able to sell and I got merchant account from Bank of America.



I had one of the first online marketing, not the first but one of the first. People started copying that and for a long time, for several years people thought that was the model to use, the headline, the letter going down the middle and testimonials running down both sides. It was just something I pulled out of thin air. What were we talking about?

Ray: I was asking about how did this other guy get your domain name?

John: I got to get the domain, very early on johncarlton.com. Turns out it's already grabbed by a woodworker in Boston. I call him up and he says, "Yes I got drunk one night," and this was, I forget when it was, I think the first website I have marketingrubble.com. When I went to get John Carlton for the blog it had already been taken and that was so he had to GoDaddy drunk when I grabbed it. I said, "Look I'm a professional guy, you're a wood worker so can we work something out?" He says, "Yes for like 50 grand we can work something out." So I said, "You know what I'm getting John-Carlton.com and you keep your thing." He's always high in the search engines whenever people search for John he pops up but he's just a woodworker. I haven't checked on him in years.

Ray: I'm not sure that's helping him. I wonder how many people contacting him wanting him to write a sales letter.

John: Yes well that's pretty funny. I don't know if you've ever met, I have somebody on my Facebook feed named Ray Edwards and I had never met another John Carlton before. I knew they were out there but once the web got gone I realized they're all over the place, there are a lot of them and I never realized that. I thought talking to this guy it's like, "We got the same name shouldn't we be like buddies?" He was like, "No, no, if you want this you're going to have to pay through the nose for it."

Ray: There's two other Ray Edwards, both of them are African American, and people ask me, "I thought -- are you this Ray Edwards?" I usually will show them a picture and say, "What do you think, this is me and this is the other guy." But one is a copywriter actually, strangely enough.

John: That's right, that's the guy.

Ray: From Florida, he's a super nice guy and the other is or was an NFL football player. When he was really hot he played for -- I think the Baltimore Ravens. I used to get on my Twitter account and my Facebook account all of these African American women would send me the most obscene messages and I would just forward them

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all to the other Ray Edwards, the NFL guy, and we would exchange private messages for a while. He thought it was a hoot -- he thought it was really funny.

John: That's great.

Ray: He was asking me questions about copywriting and that didn't go anywhere but it was fun while it lasted.

John: Yes it's funny when people connect, just really quick. One of the last real jobs I had was in Long Beach, California and I went in there and there was another guy there. He was short thick Italian guy from Long Island with an attitude about being in California. We didn't like each other at all, and we went out to lunch with our common boss. We were in the sales department, obviously the guy writing the ads and doing stuff. We sat down and he mentioned his birthday and I said, "That's my birthday," and we figured out we were born on the same day and the same year.

That made us great friends. We were great friends for about three years. I've lost track of him since, it was hilarious, it was just -- we hated each other, we realized we had the same birthday and suddenly were the best of friends for years. That always cranked me up.

Ray: It's funny how people connect with things like that. I want to ask you some questions that you probably, maybe you are tired of answering, but I think for a lot of folks these are new ideas, they are news stories and I think they need to be told, because people just, I reference them to folks sometimes and they are like, they'll give me this blank stare and I'm like, "Okay here's a list of books you need to go read so you can get caught up." But one thing I wanted to ask you about was something that you and Gary came up with which you called Operation Money Suck.

John: Yes.

Ray: What is that?

John: Operation Money Suck was very early on when I was working with Gary. I went up to his office. His office was in the 9000 building of Sunset Boulevard right across from the Roxy where Montley Crue was making a name for themselves, and down the street from the Playboy building. It was a very famous park and it we were on the -- I'm going to say eighth floor or something. It was a great view but it was



smack in the middle of Hollywood, excuse me, Proper. I started going up and I had a little office within his office, he was trying to set me up. I'd go in there every day even though I did most of my writing back at home because I'm more comfortable with my own set up.

I'm in the office and we were going to have a meeting about what to do with some clients and where to get new clients and all this stuff and it was a meeting that was very necessary. We sat down in his office and the door burst open and he had three secretaries at the time. All three of them came in and they all had problems. It was something like the printer was broken and they needed to print something, the landlord was in the elevator on the way up to talk about something urgent on the lease and there was something else. I could hear the phones just going off the wall, and they said, "This is, we got to address all this stuff right now, especially the printer thing." I closed my notebook and I thought that's it for this meeting today.

Gary stands up, gently ushers the three secretaries outside, very gently closes the door and locks it and comes back sits and down and says, "Let's get down to Operation Money Suck."

We spent the next hour talking about business doing all this stuff. When it was over we opened the door and all the problems had been solved; the landlord had been set away and it wasn't really an issue, they somehow figured out how to get printer done, whatever the other problems are they either took notes or they handled it and they just did it.

That I realized right then when you are the person responsible for bringing in the money then that is your number one job, it's your number two job, your number three job, your number four job, right on down the line. Almost all the problems in business can be solved with money, even a thriving business will fail if the money stops coming in. The idea of Operation Money Suck is just sit down and your first job is how are we bringing in, what's the cash flow, how are we bringing in, how are we going to bring in more in the future, how are we going to smooth this out, what's -- plan ahead?

For guys like Gary and I we were not big planners. We weren't like five, neither of us had a five year plan or even a five month plan or even a five minute plan. We operated off of deadlines but those deadlines came from getting clients. We did plan to find clients and we'd have these bursts of activities where we'd go find clients and



bring them in and then we started getting clients through word of mouths and stuff, and that changed the paradigm a bit. But Operation Money Suck is really powerful.

I have changed a number of entrepreneurs ideas about business, just by getting them off of fixing the printer when it's broke, of taking, if you are really busy and you're taking your dry cleaning to the dry cleaner's and picking it up and you're going shopping and you're doing that.

Now in my career now I am going to go shopping after this interview because I take care of the food and I do most of the cooking here in the household for me and Michelle. I, after 16 or 17 years that's how it settled out. I enjoy it but I'm not working anywhere near as hard as I was. I'm not retired but I'm not on any mission right now. I'm just cruising along with what I'm doing, everything's fine. But back when I was a young freelancer trying to make my name, trying to do stuff I made a vow of business before pleasure and that changed my life because up to then I'd been a slacker and it was pleasure before business. It was like, "Well, I got deadlines but Jeez that's a good party going on down at the local watering hole or maybe I'll just go and have one drink." That was all gone, that flew out the window. Suddenly I was like, "If I'm going to go down there I've done everything I can do to further my business."

I was doing Operation Money Suck at that point without even realizing, without realizing that we could name it. I run into so many entrepreneurs and writers especially who say, "Yes I know." It's like one of the first questions I ask a writer who wants consultation and is asking what they can do to get their - moving essentially is I say, "How many books and stuff have you got on the shelf you haven't torn the wrapper off yet?" And they usually had five or six courses and stuff that they haven't even begin to get into.

It's like, "Okay you got your homework right now, you bought that for a reason, get into it and get into it and give yourself permission to throw it in the trash at the moment it starts to bore you or you realize it's not for you. Slam that book shut just because you opened it doesn't mean you got to finish it. Slam and shut, bounce it off two walls into the trash. If it's a course and you're watching videos at their boring speed ahead, if you can't speed ahead or it still doesn't make sense take it, trash it." Sell it to somebody, give it to somebody, do something with it, get it out of your possession. Find those things that really hit home, they really resonate with you and then go deep on that. If you read a Ray Edwards book and you like what he's saying,

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go find him, email him, talk to him, chase him down in the hallway if you see him at an event. It's good to have heroes and people, and gurus, and people you want to go after, but not too many. A lot of people choose me because they like -- not the trashcan -- Kennedy's a very good friend of mine, I'm going to be onstage with him next summer at one of the events, we're just going to talk about old war stories.

But it's like Duncan is a certain personality, a certain way of doing things and it's very effective. Very, very effective, he's a primo dude. But I have a different way of doing things, I'm a lot lazier than Dan, so if you resonate with that lazy success idea as opposed to the get out there and just murder everybody in front of you and get to the prize, it's probably the wrong way to put it for Dan, but he is definitely a hard-charge and he works really hard. He works harder in one day than I work in a month, but I get a lot done because I keep my targets narrow and small, and I'm content with a lot less than he is. That resonates with a lot of people, they want a really good lifestyle, but they want a lot of free time.

My reward for working as a freelancer was free time, the money was a sides issue. I've always said that money solves problems that not having money creates, and once you have enough money coming in that solves those problems, the rent, the car, making the girlfriend happy, just have enough money to buy the food you want and stay clothed, once you get beyond that money becomes kind of meaningless. My first realization, I was three months ahead in my rent, I had enough money to pay the rent for three months and take care of all my incidentals and everything, I was stunned.

That to me was the biggest success I'd ever had in my life, because I'd never had that kind of cushion before. Then suddenly I realized not much later I was a year ahead, and then I started getting the screw you money thing which is putting enough money aside so that you can tell any client you don't like, "No, I'm not going to work with you, you've offended me, or you're unethical I'm not going to-." It's really bad to be a writer and have to be in that situation where you got to take a job you don't like or you think is wrong because you need the money. There's no crime in that, and a lot of writers live check to check. I tell writers to keep putting aside money until you got enough there for three months to a year, to three years, whatever you need take care of all your needs, and that's your screw you money. If you run across a client you can with total confidence say, "I don't need your money, I don't need you. I'm



going to go do something else and we're done." That kind of freedom is stunning, plus you can relax and enjoy your time off a lot more.

Ray: You just mentioned about four things that I credit you with teaching me. The first one was Operation Money Suck, when I got that concept, that's when I stopped mowing my own lawn much to the chagrin of my wife. That's when I stopped trying to do repairs around the house which I suck at, I'm just not good at that. Somebody else should be paid to do those things. It still, to this day goes through my head, I find myself trying to fix my printer, and I stop and I ask myself, "What am I doing? This is not what makes me money so I should not be doing this somebody else should be doing it."

The second thing that you taught me, was the idea that I could stop reading a book if it wasn't doing something for me. It didn't mean it's not a good book, it wasn't a good book for me or good course for me. When I first heard you say that, it sounds ridiculous to say it now, but I was a completionist freak. I was like, if I start reading a book I have to finish it.

John: Most people are Ray. If they crack a book they have to finish it, and it can take them a year to get through it because they hate the process.

Ray: Exactly, and I heard you say that from stage, I don't even remember where, and I just realized, "Oh my gosh, my life is just changed forever." Because now I get five or six pages into a book and if it's not singing for me, I'm done with it, I move on to something else. Then something else that you did for me, was to reading your newsletter, *The Marketing Rebel Rants*, that I realized, I love to write but I realize I can write and not only make a living, but make a damn good living. I don't have to be Stephen King, I don't have to do the starving artist thing. This is a dependable, reliable way I can be ascribed and be well paid for it, and that literally changed my life. I left the radio business, I started writing freelance copy and built my own business, and I've never looked back.

John: That makes me very happy to hear that Ray.

Ray: There's a story-- now most people may not know this story. But Frank Kern, who's often credited with being the-- I think he calls himself the most expensive direct response marketing copy writer on the internet or something like that. There was a time when he had a sales letter or promotion that was not working, in fact in



his own words it was-- I think he said tanking is what I heard him say, and he turns to one guy to help him turn that around, and who was that? That was you. You remember that story?

John: Yes, I remember that. It might have been at that same seminar where you met Gary. It was a Frank Kern- Ed Dale Seminar, and it was a one of the early launches and the sales order for the launch wasn't working, and we sat down and they asked me if I wanted to write it. At that point there was no amount of money that could get me to go into a project like that at that stage and do it. I just turned them down, I said, "No, but I'll give you an hour and I'll talk to you about it, I'll talk you through it." We sat down and talked through it, and I gave him-- one of the notes he took was something I rattle off which was to write a good letter.

It's like you say, "Tell me who you are, what you've got for me, what it will do for me, and what to do next." That was the basic mantra, was just, if I am a prospect and I'm looking at your ad, I need to know who you are in terms of credibility, realness. You could be a business, or a group of people, or a corporation, but the you that people really identify with usually has to be in good direct response as one person. Even if you're talking about Apple, the letter should come from Steve Jobs back then, Steve being gone now you wouldn't do that. So who you are, what you have for me, which is basically getting into-- and you can use these as starting points, you can actually have the letter say, "Here's who I am," and then say, "For the last 40 years I've been doing blah, blah, blah, and I'm kind of an expert in this.

I have a lot of resources and access to the insiders in the business, blah, blah, blah. Here's what I've got for you, If you have this particular problem, we've got something that will solve it, or fix it or help you, or blah, blah, blah, " and you don't explain the product, you don't say it's a five-part video course or anything, you just say, "We have a way of helping people, this is what we've been doing. Here's what I've got for you, the main benefit, the big idea. Then, here's what it will do for you." Then you get into this-- "Look at these testimonials, look at all these bullets of features and benefits of what this will do for you."

You build up that with what we used to use with AIDA, Attention, Interest, Desire in Action. This is the desire part, you start building that, "Here's what it will do for you." Not, here's what it will do for me, not here's why I'm so happy about it. Not here's why we're so proud to be able to reuse it, it's, "Here's what it's going to do for you." Then finally the kicker, which is the direct response thing is, "Here's what to do next."

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Those can all be subheads, or they can be leadings to those parts of the letter. So you get that four part out, and his eyes lit up and he went back and he wrote the letter -- I forget what they sold, 19 million or something ?

Ray: Something crazy like that. It was the biggest launch that had never been done up to that point. Frank did give you total credit for that, I remember him telling that story more than once.

John: We were actually fairly close for a while. We moved in different directions -- it's a long story, but he started working things. He would still pick up the phone if I called and I would do the same for him but we're not hanging out now -- our lives changed. That happens in careers, I have people that I haven't talked with in literally a decade, that sometimes it'll just pop up in my head that I should call them or get them involved in something. I'll call them up . I have a mastermind by the way, where one of the features of masterminds, I always bring in an expert, a guest expert, we call it.

I've had like Joe Sugarman, Jay Abraham, Dean Jackson a couple of times, Joe Polish, a lot of writers, and they come in for just the two day event. They'll come in for an afternoon or possibly two days and offer their insights into the mastermind as we go through the process. This gives me a chance to call people I haven't called in a long time, and it's the great thing about this kind of tribe we're in as scribes, is 10 years can go by, and a lot of times you just pick up the conversation after 10 years that ended 10 years ago.

It's like if you have good friends from high school you haven't met, and then you go to reunion, you meet them, you realize, "Wow, how do we lost touch?" You just pick it right up. Most of my colleagues in business are like that, most of the ones that I've gotten close, to and we don't need to be in constant contact. When we do, we just pick up the conversation and run with it because people don't change that much no matter how much the circumstances of their life will change.

Ray: That is --

John: It's just when you get older -- I avoid mirrors now.

Ray: [laughs]



John: I'm at the stage where I'm walking down a hallway and I pass through and I'll say, "Who is that old bugger?" and I'll say, "Oh it's me." This has all happened in the last few years.

Ray: Even worse is when you catch a glimpse in the street shop window and you think, "Oh. There's my dad." No.

John: [laughs] No.

Ray: No offense dad, I love you.

John: Yes some of my best friends are from college and I get together with them very regularly. When we do -- when we've been getting together since college so we're talking 40 years or so and when we do we immediately regressed to being 22 years old in the college town and we pick up a lot of the habits and the language and we're just-- the same jokes and we just love it. We get to regress for a couple of days then we move back to our real lives, shake off the thing but we just all look different now. In our minds we're all still 22 years old-

Ray: Exactly. Inside we're all still 21.

John: Yes.

Ray: What was it like to be interviewed, to sit down and have a chat with Tony Robbins?

John: That was interesting. That was through Mike Keonigs, who was a colleague of mine. Another guy who I haven't talked to in a couple of years. He's been really busy. He spoke at several of my events that I put on. Last time I saw him, he was at an event and we just keep missing each other. He was doing something with Tony Robbins. I guess Tony Robbins wanted to do this thing called the Money Masters series? He was reaching out to our crowds so I think Frank Kern is on that? I think Dean Jackson is on there-

Ray: Yes.

John: I know that Mike is on it.

Ray: Jeff Walker. Evan Pagan.



John: Evan's on it?

Ray: Yes.

John: Jeff? Jeff Walker? It's kind of natural for me to be involved in that and so he asked me to come on. I flew down to San Diego and spent an afternoon. He's got a strange operation. He's got a lot of people around him. He's got a bad back so he's often hanging upside down in the next room until the last minute where he comes in-

Ray: What?

John: He's a very tall guy. It's-

Ray: I've met him in person for 10 seconds one time and he's enormous. He's a giant.

John: Yes he is. He's literally a giant. I don't know if he has gigantism or whatever the thing is but he's very overgrown. He's got to be seven feet plus or something. He's a very large man. Really nice guy. Really knowledgeable. Has a lot of insight. I actually knew about him when he first hit the scene because he came from that NLP world, Neural Linguistic Program. I have a degree in Psychology in college, I've a BA in Psychology. It's not worth much. Almost everything I learned back then is now obsolete or ignored or was proven wrong over the years. I've been a fan of Psychology through the years so when NLP came around, I understood what it was about. A combination of a Jungian thought and Irrational Motives Therapy and a lot of different therapies. Also a little bit of hypnosis. He, Tony Robbins came out with his first cassette series. They were in little cassettes. You bought one?

Ray: I did.

John: I actually got my hands on that, listened to it and said, "Yes. Okay. Kind of smart." Then he had awakened the giant within, he started hanging out with the president and doing all that stuff. That was great but I followed his career off and on and certainly met with a lot of people who knew him. It was interesting. We didn't become immediate friends. I'm not sure that our politics aligned but I've heard him speak and I agree with him in a lot of things. I know he runs a really tight operation. He's astonishingly frank and open with details. I was there when he told an entire

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room of marketers, probably 500 guys in Vegas, and he told us the story of Fiji of his -- buying that island out near Fiji and having that and the troubles he was having and what a cost to keep that going every month and what he might do if it goes south. He was just sharing a lot of stuff. There's great insight into a guy. He made it work, he's done very well. Although there were just some people who recently got their feet burn in a fire walk that he did but that's not Tony's fault. They were taking selfies. You didn't see that story?

Ray: I did. I have friends who were actually there and they were -- I contacted them and I said, "Are you guys okay?" and they were like, "Yes." It was way overblown. It was a couple of people taking selfies and-

John: Yes.

Ray: Stopping on the coals-

John: Yes. That's how it works.

Ray: I've done that thing. I've done that seminar, 'Walk On The Coals'. They tell you don't stop.

John: Yes.

Ray: If you stop to take a selfie, you're learning a valuable lesson. That's what I think.

John: Yes. That's right and I think the people there are done a lot sooner I think. They were fine. I think.

Ray: Yes they were fine. Somebody freaked out and called 911 which is what set the whole thing off and made it a much bigger deal.

John: I was at a shooting range once. It was a seminar that a client of mine was giving for people. It was three days of shooting in a SWAT team practice range so we got the clear houses and we shot at night and we did combat reloads. It was just this big tank full of '45 bullets.

Ray: Come on. That's what I'm talking about.



John: It was a Delta Colonel that taught it along with a Navy Seal who's teaching some hand to hand combat. That was just great but during the course, one guy shot himself in the rear. He was doing a-

Ray: [laughs]

John: A fast draw and before he could get it out, he shot himself right through the butt cheeks. Went off to the ER, came back and apologized profusely. He said, "I hope this doesn't hurt the faces of great event. We should keep going." They stopped it after that because their insurance got all squirrely but he said, "My fault. Totally." It was very interesting.

Ray: I admire-

John: He came back all patched up -- he was ready to go back there and fire stuff.

Ray: I admire people who run businesses like that. Adventure travel and like-

John: Yes.

Ray: Tony's been doing that fire walk thing for 30 years.

John: That's right.

Ray: I was talking to my wife about this and I said, "Can you imagine the liability insurance that you've got to have to do that?" But that's neither here nor there.

John: I bet he's self funded.

Ray: I bet you're right.

John: Yes.

Ray: I bet you're right about that. You mentioned earlier that you've kind of been responsible for putting a lot of people in the copy writing business. There's lots more freelancers now, you've got a freelance copy writing course. What do you think about the market being overcrowded or how can a person in that business stand out and get clients these days? How does that all work? Do you see that working now?

John: I'll get to that part. I experience both. When I started being a freelancer, I've never met one and there was no course or anything. The word would pop up once in



a while in advertising but usually they were talking about freelance designers. As far as freelance writers, that was an underground thing. I happened to be working as a paste up artist up in Silicon Valley for an art department that included the writers. The writers are sitting there and I was in the, literally the art side doing paste up for this catalog we were creating. I got to meet some writers and I heard about John Caples's book, 'Tested Advertising Methods'. The main writer there -- I said, "I think could do this writing thing. Could I borrow that book?" and she says, "Don't even try John. You'll never get it. It's too hard." That - me off, I stole her book and I got through enough before she stole it back but I realized I think I can do this.

It took me another two years but I finally got to the part where I just quit my last job, I did either fired or was laid off from the job. I did even fired, laid off, or fired from every job I'd have. I was a poor fit in the corporate world in every job. I've been a fisherman up in Oregon. A deep sea fisherman. I've been a gardener, I've been all kind of things. It just wasn't working so I had my little epiphany that if anything was going to happen, I was going to have to take care of it. I thought, "I'd just be a freelance writer because I've actually heard about them through these guys."

I just went out and start figuring out on my own. All I had was John Caples's book and an idea that there were a lot of agencies down in Los Angeles where I was at the time. I just go knock on the doors and say, "I could do the writing." and it worked out. It worked out for me. I vowed at that point and it was -- for me it was the universe. I just said, "Look universe. If you can help me out here at all and make this work, I promise that I will help everyone else that have ever asked me for help from here on out."

I tear up when I say that because it was a major change in my life. I've kept to that promise. That has been very important to me. I won't drop everything and take your call if you're a writer and you're struggling but I offer as much as I can. I have talked to writers and I used to fly out and physically not beat them up but manually beat writers up when I knew they could do better and they were letting fear and cowardice get in the way of their career.

When I finally became a guru and just offered myself to the world as a teacher back in 2001 with the book -- what was the first book -- 'Kick - Copywriting And Secrets of Marketing Rebels'. It was actually a course. Then I start making myself available for consultations and I was getting the newsletter and I was just pour everything I could do into that and I really wanted to not hold anything back. Everything I knew about

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the biz, I was going to put into these materials and that was going to be a mentor thing that will help people and if they want to get a hold of me, it might cost money to be able to do it but I would make myself available at any level. That's what the *Simple Writing System* is. It's a coaching program. I'm actually teaching their class right now in the *Simple Writing System* it's an eight-week class. The world change, I didn't do it. Gary Halbert was doing it before me with his newsletter and then again with those seminars that he was hosting especially the hot seat seminars down in Key West. We just got into it and we realized we don't actually need to take clients anymore for a while. Because there is enough money in here even keeping the cost down that there so many people out there and they came into it from -- My concern was always with writers looking for a way to make money as a writer. For me, it was like the first you're a writer and then you look around and say, "How can I make money as a writer?" And then, "Oh advertising is very good."

But then I realized that "Well, there's a lot of salesmen out there who would like advertising who don't know how to write." I started angling stuff towards them then I realized there are a lot of businessmen who are hiring freelancers and getting scammed because the writers weren't doing the best work. Because the big businessmen didn't know if the stuff was any good or not so I started aiming toward this. I just realized it's the full gamut -- it's anybody that wants to get into this.

A lot of people learn my stuff, don't go often write advertising they write blogs or they write email chains or they'll write -- some of them written fiction. I'm not sure that my stuff translates well to fiction though I have been a fiction writer in the past and I understand fiction writing. All writing comes back to that scribe thing. It's the written conversation of you and one other person in a heated discussion where if you saw them in a court of a room they'll be sitting chairs facing each other leaning forward urgently speaking in a hushed tone. That is what you want to do you want to create that as your ad. If you the close you can get to that one-on-one, hushed, urgent conversation the more powerful your sales letters will be.

Once I realized it was really that simple then it was like the gates open. I don't care why you want to learn about copywriting as long as you're ethical. If the forward to my first course kick- copywriting you can see some marketing rubble in the forward the first thing there as I say, "This is very powerful secrets that I'm about to teach you. If you use them for ill I hope you rot in - ," and then "Welcome." Then we're off to the thing.



That's been my attitude. The only people I won't work with are unethical people. I don't like working in the diet industries that tends to skew unethical. It's very hard to be in the advertising business and try to maintain high ethics as you well know. But it can be done. I feel like I've armed or I've equipped a small army of people to go out there and do the right thing in advertising. Write good stuff makes sure that the products are good. Make sure that the marketing is good. Save the corner business that just needed to know a little about marketing. Help the corporation who are worthwhile and doing the right stuff and just bring advertising to the masses I guess.

Ray: One of the things I like about *Simple Writing System* is the fact that you demystified it by taking the word copywriting out of the title.

John: Right, I did that on purpose.

Ray: Explain a little bit. Let's just take a minute because I think people should really take a look at this. Explain about the *Simple Writing System* and how it works and what it's all about?

John: I was at a big meeting down in Texas all the gang was there Kern, Abraham. I forgot why we were there. I sat down with John Reese. I don't know if people are familiar with John or not he's a very interesting guy. We are talking about things and he says, "John you should invent some software that writes copy." I said, "That's never going to happen," I said, "But you're on to something. There should be a system." Then we start inventing stuff around. Right, then I was thinking about doing another copywriting course even making a more simple, more straight forward, more targeted on the how to do it rather than what to do but how to do it.

Right, then I came over the idea the *Simple Writing System* and that tied-in with my business partner Stan who had for years been observing me as I wrote, and did hot seats, and consultations. Stan is a brilliant guy. He comes from a -- he was a consultant for software for many years worked with places like NATO and Starbucks and Wells Fargo -- things like that. I said, "Come on. Come on over to the entrepreneur side -- what Gary did for me." We've been business partners for a very long time." He said, "You know you're doing a process man," he says, "It's unconscious but you're doing it." I realized, "Yes he's right." I guess at one point way back when I don't have them but I actually had a format right down. Kind of like

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started with AIDA, A-I-D-A gets attention, and get build interest, build desire, ask for action.

From that, I started to branch out and I started doing it. But it quickly became not written and just center to my head because I was doing it all the time. One of the great things -- I don't know if you saw my recent Facebook post where I said, "Stop if you haven't use anything from the last business book you're reading then don't pick up another one until you do. If you had a business book and you finished it then there something you had to take away one to three things in that and you had to implement them right away. If you don't you're not ready for the next business book yet, you're hurting yourself."

I was in the position as a working writer everything I was learning from Garry, from everything I was reading, from all the other guys I was hanging out with. I got to use it right away sometimes that same day, sometimes the next day or the next week I'm writing pieces. I kept building all the stuff up. So, I had developed --I didn't call it system I think I called it a formula back then. But within the first year of being a professional writer, it just all went into the brain archives and I started doing the stuff automatically kind of like a musician memorizing a song. It doesn't need the cheat sheet or the music anymore you got it down you pick up a guitar. You can pick up guitar year later and play and you probably remember the song and maybe a couple of mistakes but then you figured it out.

It was inside and Stan suggested, "We go through a period of time." And we did we kind of mined it out and we got another came back to be 17 or 18 steps. It was 17 now it's 18 because we split one step up. It was just very basic, do this then do this then do this. You're building up and you're not even getting into writing anything until like the fourth to the fifth step. There's a lot of research, understanding your target market, and your prospect, and the gathering all the materials you need to be able to write stuff. Then you get into...and it so has broken down.

That's what the system became. The *Simple Writing System* literally is the simplest way to approach a writing job whether you're writing a two paragraph, email, or 24-page letters that can be mail, there are a website, or a series of websites, or series of emails whatever you're doing. It's how to break it down, deconstruct it, figure it out, what needs to be done, get all the steps together, and then be absolutely armed. So that when you sit down to write you're going to have everything around



you that you need, and everything in your head straight, and the attitude going and everything and you just follow simple steps.

The one thing I wanted to do is crash writer's block. A lot of time when I speak at seminars especially the writers I ask people raise it, "Who has writer's block in here?" Half the room- a third to half a room raised their hand I say, "It's bull. You're lying to yourselves. You just not ready to write yet. Back away from the keyboard and go do the things you need to do. That when you sit down you're frothing, and it's coming out." There's no such thing as writer's block it's simply an excuse for somebody who's not prepared to start writing yet.

Ray: Agreed. You have this thing you talked about stalking the desk.

John: Yes that goes way back. That was something right I get in the mood. Mike Morgan reminds me that I actually told him and I've told other people- I think it was in the newsletters too that, "You need to wake up in the morning realize if you're writing the piece so you have a business thing going a project going. That there are people wandering around out there with money in their pocket who haven't spent it on your business who should. They can benefit from which you're offering. They should have it. Their lives will be better if they have it. All the understanding between this is them not giving you the money it takes to be able to get that product in your hands. Until that is corrected the universe is off-kilter and will remain until you fixed it. It's your job to walk in there and fix that. Get that money out of that guy's wallet because it rightly belongs to you. Then of course you know I'm being half- it's half tongue in cheek, but that's the attitude you got to have because otherwise, you will fail at persuasion. You have to be able to start making that connection."

The stock in the desk thing was me. Earlier on I would literally- I used to dress to write because I had to take away all the temptation to go to something else. I would dress in filthy sweats and actually I had a hat I would wear. I wouldn't even answer the door for UPS. I was too embarrassed for him ready to see me. That meant I was there. I wasn't going anywhere. I hadn't showered. I was going to write and that was my set up. But I'd stand up when I needed to and I walk around. I walk around the desk and I just get myself into a froth.

I'd start treating the ad that I was writing as a living being with a name and it was me and him. It was me in that blank page and we're going to get after it. It's just like getting ready for a fight stocking the desk is kind of like a fighter back in the room



pounding his gloves together and getting all hyped up. His trainers rubbing his shoulders and hitting him and get him all wild. Absolutely you walk into that ring and you're ready to go.

Ray: That has helped me on more than one occasion, especially with projects that are big, that seem overwhelming. There's the whole preparation thing and then there's the getting up the fire inside to sit down and bang out their first draft. That's super powerful. There's another saying of yours, that's famous, that involves the longest word for sleep I've ever heard. I had to look it up the first -- I am embarrassed to admit this, I had to look it up the first time I read it. Something about-

Ray: Yes.

John: What's the phrase. Give it to me again.

Ray: Okay. I'm paraphrasing now, because-

John: Somnabulant-sloth-welded-to-the-couch?

Ray: Yes, that's it.

John: That's the way to look at your prospect. Your prospect -- I started visualizing him as a somnabulant-blob, so lazy, he was welded to the couch and wouldn't leave just, if the building was on fire.

Ray: Yes.

John: You have to get them to move, and take his wallet out and type in the numbers, turn on the computer back and get on the phone and recite his credit card to somebody on the phone. Just to put it in perspective, what you're up against, you're up against these -- most people are half asleep even in the world. I don't know, a lot of people disagree, but I think I am right on this. Half the world, may be more, walks around half asleep. They're not aware. They're in a kind of white haze, a white noise daze. It's your job to shake them and wake them up, as far as your ad.



Your ad should be the most exciting thing he reads today or your video should be the most exciting thing he sees today.

It should be the thing that he remembers his life was this way, up until he saw your staff, and then it was less after that. He will remember, you remember chasing Halbert down the hallway, you remember seeing me for the first time on stage. You know those moments were seminal moments, that's what you've got to have, your ad should be. Whereas he sees it in a magazine, he picks out a letter from his mailbox. He gets an email in his inbox. He goes to a website, somebody sends him something. When he gets that, it's got to have that moment where he's going to remember for the rest of his life. That's how exciting that is.

Ray: Some people feel like when they hear that phrase, I know they feel like you're being kind of insulting to the customer and I think that's not where you're coming from at all. What you're saying is, "It's my job to wake this guy up." that his life can be better, and that's in service to that person.

John: It is and so is tough love and that's the kind of teacher I am. I had teachers, Halbert threw one of the first pieces I wrote from, threw it back, literally threw the pages back in my face across the desk. They said, "Get out here and don't come back until you learn how to fill empathy into that." So I wrote back and I thought, "Empathy, is it?" It was great, I remember that. I've coached people- a guy named Jimmy Curley, who was an A-List writer, who actually runs a company now. He tells a story all the time to anybody that will listen.

He met me. I was the main writer for a business. He was also working for that business. He was doing some writing. He thought he was high-shoot at the time. He said, "I'll take on call. I'll write a piece and I'll knock him off and I'll have the control." Everybody said, "Fine." They're always trying to knock me off. They pitted me against ad agencies, PR agencies, other freelancers, I never got beat. I was really proud of that. Jimmy comes in and writes this piece and then they say, "Jimmy, we want John to go over the piece with you, because we want you to be the best you can and we want you to work with us for a very, very long time." He says, "yes, yes sure."

He gets on the phone and I get on the phone. I say, "Jimmy, have you got the piece in front of you?" He says, "Well, I've got it on the computer screen here." He says, "No, print it out. Go print it out." I can see and I say, "Jimmy, print it out." I hear the

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printer go. He comes back, he's really annoyed and says, "Okay, I got the piece." "Okay, you got it free?" "yes." "Okay. Now, rip that sucker up and throw it in the trash." He says, "No." I say, "yes. I'm not going to talk to you more until I hear the rips."

He's ripping this with closed eyes. I said, "Now, let's sit down and write yourself a piece that's going to work." Then we worked and from that moment on, he started becoming a really dynamite writer and started moving. But he needed somebody to knock him off that idea that he already knew everything. It was gone. I don't know know where I came up with that. I did it. I thought he was going to hate me for the rest of his life. It turns out we're really good friends. He loves me for doing that.

When I teach in the simple writings, I say this is myself. This is my style. It doesn't have to be everybody else's style. The course by the way is topped by A-List writers, big name writers, because they love it so much. I use top level line. That will be up in my current class, a couple of people have complained that I haven't beaten them up and they say, "I want you to make me cry, you know." I came into this a while, I'll say, "Okay, you also." No, I don't grotesquely try to make people cry, but I've told major writers when they came to me as young struggling freelancers, I said, "My job is to make you cry and make you lose your ego and move on from the shriveled smoldering carcass of your old self into something bright, shiny and new. It's going to work and that doesn't happen without a little violence."

Ray: Listen to the copy tripping off your lips right now. That's well said. Steven King in his book on writing tells the story of about the first editor. I've read it like five times. He talks about the editor that he had, I think it's of a sports newspaper. He's writing an article, and the guy went and marked up his work and crossed out phrases and words. King sets that up and says, "This was the most I learned about writing ever. I learned more from him in that one critique." People need that. I think people crave it.

John: They do if they're smart. If you were writing in my seminars, not now, when I just spoke on stage, but my seminars, where I'm the host and I'm there for three days. It's just me and the audience. First thing I have everybody do is take out a piece of paper and write, "My Ego" on the paper and then crumple it up and then we make a big show of having somebody stand in front of the room with a trash can and they all throw the papers and try to get it in the trash can.



It's a visual, it's kind of funny, people laugh about it and stuff, but it's like, I take this serious guys. Your ego is no longer in the room. If I hear any ego, we've got a problem. We usually like to get through it, but they've already essentially agreed to throw their ego away, so they have no excuse, if they let their ego get involved. Especially writers who've had some kind of success but need to learn more, they're going to resist. They're going to resist like crazy. That's part of the human predicament, even for the things we want, even when we know that it'll make us better, we will resist. I used to try to tell people at these seminars, "The essence of salesmanship is persuasion. Now go home and try to convince your best friend to go and see a movie you know he'd like, or she would like." And people say, "Yes that should be easy." I say, "Try it."

What they often run into and they come back and they say, "Wow, he was going to go see the movie, as soon as I told him to go to see it." There's no way he's going to go see that. The resistance verbals up. They say, "Yes, yes. yes, yes, yes", and they'll put it off. May be the last day he'll go see it and say, "That's a great movie", now forgetting that you told him to see it. But they can't do it, if you tell him to go see it. People don't understand that. That's a fine nuance of the salesmanship of where people think, "Caught you. It's just common sense." I got a great product, you got the money, you needed, buy it. It doesn't work.

Ray: No.

John: Yes.

Ray: No, it doesn't work at all. I highly recommend people look at Simple Writing System in, what's the website for that?

John: simplewritingsystem.com, all squished together.

Ray: How about that? You got that one? No word worker stole that one from you.

John: Stan got that one actually.

Ray: Stan is brilliant. He's going to be on. We're going to have him on some Saturday in October. I'm excited about talking about it.

John: Yes?



Ray: Yes. Yes, he wrote me back from vacation to say he would do it.

John: He's over in Europe right now on a month long music vacation. He's going to the North Sea Jazz Festival. Stan and I've been friends for 35 years, I think and I was just overjoyed about 10 or 15 years ago, I got to find a way to -- could be in the same business. We work with it. He's the right brain and I'm the left brain. He thinks I'm an idiot and I think he's a moron and we get along great. We both know that each other is brilliant and it just works really well.

I worked by myself and I've worked with other people including Gary and Jay and all kinds of stuff. I work best when I'm working with somebody who lets me be alone. I have my independence, but I'm connected with the other persons, so I get somebody watching my back. It's kind of the old buddy movies really. Somebody watching your back, it just changes my life and makes it much easier.

Ray: We were made I think to operate with other people.

John: I believe that's true. We've been on for over an hour. That was a great interview, Ray. That's one of the best I've had.

Ray: It's one of the best I've ever conducted and it's because of the war stories you've got to offer are incredibly valuable. I'm wondering if I get you to share like do you have one piece of like salty grizzled veteran advice for the struggling writer, businessman or entrepreneur out there?

John: Gosh, I have so much that -- It's mostly, stop whining. I think I hear a lot of that from people they're whining about this and that and it's -- just stop. Just stop. Figure what you need to do, write it down. This is the best piece of advice. You recall the two list thing. Write down what you want out of life and make a list, all the things you want. Then write down on the same piece of paper, another column, write down what you don't want. And then for the rest of your life, as much as you can, don't do that- . Do the stuff you do want and there's a middle little column you have in there which is the step you don't want to do but you have to do until you get to the point you don't have to do it anymore. You do have to buy your own groceries when you're starting out, you do have to take you own clothes to the cleaners and take care of -- But your goal is to get that to where that goes into the list of -- you get to cross that off. Just have goals, have goals, and make a plan. That was the biggest thing in my

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life. You take me just one minute, Ray. Biggest realization in my life was, "Wait a minute. I can actually want something? And then make a plan to go get it, and then-" then this is when my head exploded, "Put that plan into action?" This is a real thing.

I was 30 years old when that finally dawned on me, and that's what changed my life. It's the idea of goal setting and attainment. It's just like, you want a big boat and you want to be on how people get -- how people get boats, is

they want a boat and they go out there and find out how you get a boat and what it takes and all that stuff, and then you go get that boat. It's like, "Really? I can have a boat?" I didn't want a boat, but that's how -- I wanted a career, I wanted a career that gave me a lot of free time and all that stuff. I'll just define what I want, and I'll stop doing the things I don't want.

Which by the way, when you get a career, it sometimes includes having jobs or not having jobs. And the first things that happens when you become a successful freelancer is, somebody will offer you a job. At that point, if your goal is just to make money, then maybe the job makes sense. But if your goal is independence in being a freelancer, or writer and making your own way, then it's easy to say no to the job. Even if it's more money than you can imagine and all of the benefits you ever wanted in insurance and everything, it's just an easy call. No, I don't want that job. I would never leave my freelance career. But you got to be prepared for that, and it will happen to every single freelancer. Has to move up in ranks.

Ray: Yes. It has happened to me an number of times, and I was ready for it. Then it was tempting a couple of times, it was really tempting. Because the funny thing is, when you say no to people, they will want you even more.

John: That's true.

Ray: They start offering you more money and stuff, and then it's like the real test. For some reason, what you said reminded me of -- did you ever see a movie called, *The Edge* with Anthony Hopkins?

John: No. I don't think I had.



Ray: Okay. I won't spoil it for you, but it's a great movie. Anthony Hopkins and Alec Baldwin. The set up is, they get stranded on the Alaskan wilderness, and they're not going to be-

John: Oh, the businessman and they get stranded. I haven't seen it but I know about the movie.

Ray: Yes. But there's a phrase, so I won't tell you the ending. But there's a phrase that Anthony Hopkins says that has stuck with me, and it's just this. He's giving a pep talk to the other guys and he says, "What one man can do, another man can do." He has them repeated over and over again, and it's a simple line for a movie but it just stuck with me, and it's true. What one person can do, another person can do it, it's possible. There's something I've been wanting to say to you for a long time and I finally get to say it.

John: Okay.

Ray: John Carlton, stay frosty.

[music]

Ray: There you go, that's John Carlton and you've got to take everything that you heard him say and run it through your filter and ask, is that right for my audience? He's a great copywriter. He's well worth your study and attention, and he's also a great human being as I'm sure you heard in the interview. That was a lot of fun. That is it. It's your turn now.

Sean: All right. If you found the show helpful, please leave a review in iTunes and subscribe to the podcast in the Apple podcast directory, in whatever podcast are available. If you like the show notes and transcript, please going to rayedwards.com/310. Any closing notes, or--?

Ray: For what is worth quotes?

Sean: Yes. Notes worth quotes.

Ray: I'm going to go back to Alex Soojung Kim Pangs quote, "If your work is yourself, when you cease to work, you cease to exist." Really? You should think about that. It has much deeper implications than you might at first suspect. Until next time, may you have long life and may you prosper.

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[00:11:45] [END OF AUDIO]