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INTERVIEW SERIES

**How To Double, Or Even
Triple Your Marketplace And
Get Your Direct Mail Right**

An Interview With List Broker, Michael Fishman

Dear Student,

I'm Michael Senoff, founder and CEO of HardToFindSeminars.com.

For the last five years, I've interviewed the world's best business and marketing minds.

And along the way, I've created a successful home-based publishing business all from my two-car garage.

When my first child was born, he was very sick, and it was then that I knew I had to have a business that I could operate from home.

Now, my challenge is to build the world's largest free resource for online, downloadable audio business interviews.

I knew that I needed a site that contained strategies, solutions, and inside information to help you operate more efficiently

I've learned a lot in the last five years, and today I'm going to show you the skills that you need to survive.

It is my mission, to assist those that are very busy with their careers

And to really make my site different from every other audio content site on the web, I have decided to give you access to this information in a downloadable format.

Now, let's get going.

Michael Senoff

Michael Senoff

Founder & CEO: www.hardtofindseminars.com

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Published by:

Michael Senoff
JS&M Sales & Marketing Inc.
4735 Claremont Sq. #361
San Diego, CA 92117
858-274-7851 Office
858-274-2579 Fax
Michael@michaelsenoff.com
<http://www.hardtfindseminars.com>

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How To Double, Or Even Triple, Your Marketplace And Get Your Direct Mailing Right

An Interview With Legendary List Broker Michael Fishman

If you think companies simply “luck into” their successful direct-mail campaigns, then this audio will amaze you. In it, you’ll hear from one of the world’s best list brokers, Michael Fishman, about how to expand your list universe and take the guesswork out of your direct mail promotions.

And Michael knows what he’s talking about. He’s worked with some of the biggest names in the business including legendary copywriter Gary Bencivenga, who calls Michael the “List Wizard” because of the way he works like magic behind the scenes in some of the biggest campaigns.

And in this interview, you’ll hear from the wizard himself about how he does his magic by expanding marketplaces and finding similarities where other list brokers don’t.

But according to Michael, before you even think about expanding your list universe, you need to fully understand what your market is and how your product fits into it. And in this audio, you’ll hear how to do that.

You’ll Also Hear...

- How to think outside your immediate “category” and find customers in places you’d never thought to look
- All about the different elements of a direct mail campaign and how they work together to create success
- How to run the kind of tests that validate demand for your product while giving you the kind of concrete results you can trust
- 3 things Michael looks for in a list to know for sure it will work
- All about word-branding and ways to build trust – even if nobody knows your name right now
- Crossing over from Internet success to direct mail success – and vice versa
- All about the 3 types of direct mail – what works, what doesn’t, and what you’ll definitely want to avoid

Finding target customers may be more strategic than you think. It usually involves tracking them down and getting them to migrate to your product. And this interview will tell you how to do that along with all the other things you need to know to take the guesswork out of your direct mail.

Hi, I'm Michael Senoff, founder and CEO of [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://www.HardToFindSeminars.com). For the last five years, I've interviewed the world's best business and marketing minds. Along the way, I've created a successful publishing business all from home from my two car garage. When my first child was born, he was very sick, and it was then that I knew I had to have a business that I could operate from home. Now, my challenge is to build the world's largest free resource for online, downloadable mp3 audio business interviews. I knew I needed a site that contains strategies, solutions and inside angles to help you live better, to save and make more money, to stay healthier and to get more out of life. I've learned a lot in the last five years, and today, I'm going to show you the skills you need to survive.

Hi, it's Michael Senoff with Michael Senoff's [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://www.HardToFindSeminars.com). The title of this interview is called How to Double or Even Triple Your Marketplace and Get Your Direct Mailing Right. It's an interview with a legendary list broker, Michael Fishman. If you think companies simply luck into their successful direct mail campaigns, then this audio will amaze you. In it, you'll hear from one of the world's best list brokers. His name is Michael Fishman, and you'll learn about how to expand your list universe, and take the guess work out of your direct mail promotions.

Michael knows what he's talking about. He's worked with some of the biggest names in the business including legendary copywriter Gary Bensiviga who calls Michael the List Lizard because of the way he works like magic behind the scenes in some of the largest campaigns ever.

In this interview, you'll hear from the wizard himself about how he does his magic by expanding marketplaces and finding similarities where other list brokers don't, but according to Michael before you even think about expanding your list universe, you need to fully understand what your market is and how your product fits into it, and in this audio, you'll hear how to do that. You'll also learn how to think outside your immediate category, and find customers in places you'd never thought to look. You'll learn all about the different elements of a direct mail campaign, and how they work together to create success. You'll learn how to run the kind of tests that validates demand for your product while giving you the kind of concrete results you can trust.

You'll learn three things Michael looks for in a list to know for sure if it will work. You'll learn all about word branding and ways to build trust even if nobody knows your name right now. You'll learn about crossing over from internet success to direct mail success and vice versa. You'll also learn all about the three types of direct mail, what works, what doesn't and what you'll definitely want to avoid.

Finding target customers maybe strategic than you think. It usually involves tracking them down and getting them to migrate to your product. In this interview, we'll tell you how to do that including all the other things you need to know to take the guesswork out of your direct mail. Now, let's get going.

SENOFF: I remember when we talked last, you had mentioned that you knew Eugene Schwartz, and I've listened to Eugene Schwartz speak, and one thing that really impacted when he spoke he talked about how you can't really create demand with copywriting or with marketing. You have to channel demand, and it kind of reminded me of what you have. What should a marketer do before you try and sell anything?

MICHAELF: That's a great question, Michael. I appreciate that, and I'm glad that we kind of have Gene's spirit with us on the call, too. Well, before selling anything, there's a couple of things, and the way I see it, number one, is really to understand your market.

What Gene said is very true is you can't create demand, and I think as he put it, it's too big and too enormous for anybody or any company or organization to create. You can either channel it, if it exists, or you can trigger it if there's demand for something, but it's always there to be channeled not created.

The thing you need to do is understand your market, understand not so much from a product perspective, but from a needs perspective – either needs or experiences or knowledge – what does the market want? What does the market segment that you're thinking of addressing or doing business with want? What are their deeply held aspirations and desires? What are they trying to achieve? Where are they trying to get to?

So, understanding your market at that level helps you get to a product that has a chance to make it in what is certainly a very tough and competitive marketplace.

The other thing is to validate the demand for the product. There are products that we call product driven which is an editor or product designer or product developer falls in love with a product and feels certain that the market wants it, and then marketing goes out and tries to sell that product with disappointing results, if not outright failure.

The best way to approach it from a research perspective, and the research can be some very simple questions to an email list. It doesn't have to be sophisticated, but to validate demand, you talk about your product with your market in a survey format either online or offline. You let them know what it will be. You maybe talk about some of the options about what you might want to name the product, and you even might go so far as some of the early marketing headlines or some of the descriptive language for selling the product and see how your list or the marketplace responds to that.

So, validating demand is important, understanding your market is important. Put yourself in the shoes of your prospects and customers. Someone said it as think as your market, not think of your market. It's a fine little nuance there, but I think it's very, very helpful.

SENOFF: Can you give me an example of maybe a campaign or someone who you knew had fallen in love with their product, and maybe a story of how that created a pretty big failure?

MICHAELF: I think in the health market where I've spent a tremendous amount of time in the last 25 years, it's most of my business practices in health and self-help topics information and products. We'll get into plenty of specifics as we talk here, but without getting into specifics in this case, there are as an example newsletters that have been positioned with particular doctors that companies have struggled to market year after year ultimately to either alter their expectations and realize that they've got a much smaller business than they originally had hoped for, or just to discontinue their efforts to build that brand or to build that business position with that doctor.

I think any concept in any business can be tested even with some very simple research, some very simple questionnaires with customers, with prospects. I know Tim Ferris who wrote the Four Hour Workweek, talks in his book about he named the four hour workweek by doing some testing with Google Adwords, or people in the offline world can do questionnaires to their customers and even to some outside prospects.

So, those things are possible, but that can do for virtually any product in any marketplace. I'm sure there are thousands of examples of products that have failed which had there been some even simple research activities would never have been launched.

SENOFF: Can you give a realistic idea if someone launches with a product, and let's say they approach you on a large level because you're dealing with large numbers and preestablished products and companies? How many homeruns are there? What are the numbers? Out of a hundred campaigns, what do you see statistically can end up being a real homerun and a big winner for a company?

MICHAELF: It's a good question, Michael, and the definition of a homerun just like the definition of a simple word like success is different for every organization. One company can get a two percent response in direct mail let's say, and throw a party to celebrate such a great result, and that same two percent at another company could be some pretty bad problems.

So, it really depends on product and price points and marketplaces and the economics of the organization that's doing the marketing, but I guess from a mailing list perspective where a homerun is a company that's mailing in say the tens of millions of names each year, those are a small percentage of the marketplace. That's maybe five or ten percent of the organizations that are – well, in the bigger scheme, it's probably less than five percent of the companies that touch the direct mail media are mailing tens of millions of names a year, and is enjoying that level of sales, that size of database and everything that goes along with that.

SENOFF: What would under that level be? Still some success, maybe a couple million of pieces a year. Can there still be some success at that level?

MICHAELF: Absolutely, and once again, it's easier characterizing a homerun I think is anybody who finds that they're not inside the criteria, feels insufficient or says, "Gee, I'm not as successful as I thought." So, I really encourage everybody listening don't go there.

There are lots of companies, again, depending on price points, depending on the size of the marketplace, depending on well they create a relationship with a new customer, and continue to do business with them beyond the first transaction which of course is critical in all of direct marketing. Companies that mail in just a few million names a year or even in the hundreds of thousands, some of them are very, very successful and very, very profitable.

SENOFF: I want to talk a little bit about brand assessments, but first I want to ask you, you have a lot of background over the years in list management. You're a list broker, and I wanted to ask you, what would you weigh the importance of a direct mail campaign in relationship to the copywriter and the list and the offer?

I know there are some great educators who say the list is forty percent, the offer is forty percent and the copy is twenty percent. What would your estimation be on something like that?

MICHAELF: The only thing I can say is that I wouldn't really subscribe to any number assignments for those three pieces. I would not want to be without any of them. It's just that simple.

I have a high regard for wonderful, thoughtful, imaginative and powerful direct response copy, and I do a fair amount of coaching of the major copywriters, and I do a fair amount of polishing of their work, rewriting headlines and landing pages and direct mail pieces and so forth.

So, I know the world they live in, and there's only a relative handful easily under a hundred and probably under fifty, fantastic direct response copywriters in the entire country. There's more great professional shortstops than there are great copywriters. So, it's sort of amazing when you think of it on those terms.

Copy and the language that presents these products to the marketplace and the way in which copy taps into human behavior and human aspiration and getting people engaged with companies and with products is indispensable, a list that is well understood, that is well maintained technologically, that's clean and deliverable and so forth, and represents a strong transaction that each of the people on that list have in common, that's a critical piece of the possible.

So, I wouldn't assign a number, but these things are interdependent and you just would not want to be without any one of them.

SENOFF: About a year and a half ago, I interviewed Mike Pavlish. Have you heard of Mike Pavlish?

MICHAELF: I've heard his name.

SENOFF: I asked him, I'd love to get some information about some list brokers, and he laughed. He goes, "They're a sneaky bunch," not sneaky in the way of anything negative, but it's hard to get information from list brokers. So, I would ask if there's fifty great world class copywriters out there, how would that look for great list brokers who really know their game out there? Are there a large amount, or is it finite as great copywriters?

MICHAELF: I think it's actually a similar number. There are very few list brokerage firms in the marketplace, the one that I work for is certainly one of the preeminent ones, but if you look at list brokers in terms of individual practitioners, it's a similar number to copywriters, well under a hundred and probably less than fifty that really are passionate that have availed themselves of every resource, book, connection, learning opportunity and have gone so far as to put their own signature and their own stamp on the marketing process. There's very precious few of those.

SENOFF: How hard is it for a relatively unknown company to generate leads and generate sales in the direct marketing world, and how would you compare it I guess to brand awareness, someone who has a larger, well known brand? Is that an advantage for someone with a direct mail campaign?

MICHAELF: Good question, Michael. There really is a role for the word brand in direct marketing, and it's a little bit distinct from the brand equity or how we talk about brands in the general advertising world. For me, the value and the power of the idea of brand and direct marketing is whether or not a prospect has heard of your company and has a favorable impression of your company, whether or not they've done business with you before.

So, if you have a significant brand and some of the ones I've worked on and do work on right now include Prevention, Readers Digest and Better Homes and Gardens. These are really, really beloved, warm, fuzzy American brands that people have a sense of. They've seen them in the supermarket checkouts for years. These brands as publishing brands are very, very visible and even as for-profits companies have a lot of trust associated with them.

So, those things are what I call door openers. Those companies all market books in addition to the magazines that they sell, and other products and services, and so when an advertisement or a mail piece or even online, a landing page or a website, when those

things come to the attention of a prospect, there's immediately a good sense of trust that's in place already because they're familiar with the name of the company and there's a fair amount of trust that already pre-exists just because of the reputation of that company in the marketplace.

The real foundation piece of a transaction or making promises to anybody about the value or the benefit of your content is a foundation of trust, and trust is very easily generated in relationships where people are familiar with your company and feel good about it.

So, those kinds of names and big brands are door openers. They show up in a household either in mail or online, and there's some immediate trust associated with that company, and it just smoothes out the path towards completing a transaction.

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SENOFF: What do you mean by door openers?

MICHAELF: To what I've said, a door opener would be that familiar friend, the trusted company, the trusted name where people are willing to read their ad or consider their sales proposition where in a non-branded case, even though same set of benefits or promises, even if they're desired by that person, they'd be far less likely to read an ad if it didn't come from a friendly familiar face, if you will.

So, when a piece of mail from Reader's Digest shows up, that's what I call a door opener because it's an entrée, it's a path, it's a ticket to get that person's attention.

SENOFF: It gets the letter opened?

MICHAELF: Yes, yeah.

SENOFF: Okay, so what are some great ways that you seem to get maybe a non-branded company to get that letter open?

MICHAELF: It's important – I mean, even for well known brands or well known doctors or financial advisors or information marketers or – there's a range of people and a range of businesses that are listening to us, but even for known names and known companies, if you really look

at a range of advertising, once again in all different channels, you'll see companies make the effort in the beginning of a sales letter or in the beginning of a marketing message to reaffirm who they are, to reaffirm their leadership position in their marketplace, to remind you that they've been trusted by Americans for 97 years or whatever they're saying.

So, it's never not a good thing to do. It's always a good thing to reaffirm that no matter how well known you are. If you're not well known or for many companies and many – by the way, this is not a judgment, lots of huge successful marketing companies that have literally no recognition in the marketplace or at the household levels, and for those companies the important things are number one to look good, that the advertising messages in direct mail or in any other channel look and really give people a sense that this company is trustworthy.

So, if you're mailing, it's a simple one or two color format and the kind of thing you get from just sort of a local company down the block trying to generate lawn cutting business, that's not the look for a major national company.

So, you want to look as good as some of those bigger companies look, and these days with production methodology being what it is, it's not always as costly as you think to look that good. But, you also want to make promises. You want to have a real airtight, solid guarantee that people can trust. You want to have client testimonials or customer testimonials, if it's appropriate to you or a product.

You want to have a customer experience and customer service capabilities that's just seamless, and that takes great, great care of people. I think no matter how many customers you have, whether it's a few dozen or a thousand, you want to give every single person a fantastic experience such that next time you walk out of your house, you'd be willing to meet those people and have them know it's you that they did business with, and feel great about it.

So, I think looking good and customer care, customer experience, guarantees, testimonials, and when you think of it, these are the kinds of things that make it easier for prospects to consider doing business with you, are the same things that put trust and credibility into the relationship.

SENOFF: These are good things once the letter gets opened. How about some tips on your mailing millions and millions of pieces, and obviously is we can get that letter opened more often than not and not thrown away, what are some good things you've learned that would help our listeners make sure when they're doing direct mail to get that thing opened? For example, mail first class versus third class. Is there an advantage to mailing first class?

MICHAELF: Well, mailing first class with either I guess what we call a meter printed postage for first class, or if it's a smaller number of mail piece just a physical stamp, that will usually increase open rates. I think that's a good one.

SENOFF: By how much? Any idea?

MICHAELF: Michael, I don't know what the percentages are, and of course, I mean in many cases, once you're into thousands, a physical stamp is probably impractical for most because if you test that and you're successful with that, it's not a scalable application to have people sitting in a room putting stamps on tens of thousands of pieces of mail.

You always want to test and validate success with things that are scalable. That's for sure, and the other thing is the first class postage probably only makes sense for fairly costly products or services in relatively small markets.

If you're a business to business marketer and you are a marketing to a business segment that just has a few hundred or a few thousand people nationwide, then first class postage might be significant because in a business it gets priority and it's associated with a high value, high margin product or service. So, in that case, it probably makes the most sense. At the consumer level, it's probably not something that I'd suggest.

SENOFF: How about mail delivery? Is the United States Post Office doing better job of getting our mail delivered now than they were twenty years ago, or have you seen variances over the years?

MICHAELF: I'm not a postage or deliverability expert, but having been in the direct mail channel for now 25 years, I think their efficiencies are probably higher. I think their speed is probably greater. I don't know that actually delivery rates have improved. Even with lists that have been recently updated, and by recent I would say within weeks or a

month or two of the dropping of the mail, there will always be four or five percent of the mail pieces that are just not deliverable for one reason or another. That could be a data error, having nothing to do with the post office, and then there's just people that no matter how fresh the list is, have moved or passed away, things like that.

But, there's not been much of a conversation about deliverability so much as the post office gaining efficiency through technology.

SENOFF: Okay, I was just curious. Let's talk about how a marketer could establish credibility, and you talk about own your position or take a position I guess in your marketing message. What does that mean?

MICHAELF: Well, as an example, a friend of mine that I know you know Jay Abraham talks about something called the strategy of preeminence which really encourages good companies and good professionals to takes a position.

So, an example of a position could be America's Foremost Tax Advisor, or America's most trusted doctor, these kinds of things. So, owning your position is if you're a well known doctor, financial advisor, web marketer who has written books, who's well known both from the Barnes and Nobles Stacks or retail stores, or Amazon, etc, you've been on television. If you legitimately are well known, once again this is not a judgment, it's just something to acknowledge – if you as a brand or a personality or as an advisor are well known, then you want to use that obviously as that door opener we were talking about, or really as that way to help people trust you and to establish credibility and to have trust and credibility in the foundation of the marketing message, discussed and established early in the copy, but you're promises and the things that you claim and promise to customers are heard or read on the foundation of trust and credibility and so they have weight. They hold water.

Take the position means once again if you're not a household name, if you're not well known even in your industry, but you do have extraordinary value to offer in your product or service, talk about how many years you've done it. Talk about how you are the best known in this state or the region or however way you can categorize your positive notoriety or your reputation or your years of service, or your integrity or whatever that is, come up with a tag line

or some language to help people understand the commitment that you've had and how long you've been doing what you've been doing.

So, when you look at a product or service from that perspective, there's almost always a way to take a position in the marketplace by describing yourself or your business in those terms.

SENOFF: Great. I've got to ask you. You mentioned you knew Eugene Schwartz. You probably know Marty Edelson. Who put Boardroom on the map? Was it Eugene Schwartz's copy or was it Mel Martin's copy? Maybe both of them, but one went first, do you know the story about that? I think Mel Martin was a copywriter, and Schwartz did copy for him. What's the true story? Do you know?

MICHAELF: I wasn't there to observe it, but the founding of Boardroom and the story you're referring to are actually even before my time, but I've heard the story recounted and told many times, and I can only really say what Marty has said which is that he was sitting with Gene Schwartz, and Gene heard some of the things that was Marty was saying, and sometimes the best copy comes out of the passionate entrepreneur that has the vision for the business.

Gene heard some of the things that Marty was saying and took notes, and then went and wrote a sales letter for what at that time was the flagship publication of Boardroom which was a small business advisory newsletter called Boardroom Reports, and Boardroom Reports do the Boardroom newsletters today, all of which have the Bottom Line brand. They're all consumer titles now.

But, Boardroom Reports would digest and distill great nuggets and great articles from a range of other business literature, magazines and newsletters and put it all together in this nice digest format so that people could get the best of forty or fifty publications without reading them all.

Gene was the one who I think wrote the first sales letter for Boardroom Reports, and that's the way that Marty tells. Now, Martin wrote for them for years, but I don't know when he came on the scene with them, but as I understand, it was after Gene did.

SENOFF: Over your years, you've seen the popularity of newsletters being sold via direct mail. Has that gone down over the years with the

cost of postage? Can you make physical newsletter a success in direct mail today?

MICHAELF: There are still a pretty good number of newsletters in the marketplace, and the ones I'm talking about are for consumers. They're virtually all about one of two things, either health or personal finance. Newsletters for consumers started in the investment and personal finance area where a newsletter really was about news. It was timely information about the market picks and stock recommendations and things that actually were time sensitive.

Then, some of those same publishers brought health editorial into a newsletter format, and of course health editorial and content had been offered in magazines virtually for the entire history of magazines back into the forties and fifties, but health newsletters really did very, very well and continue to do well to this day.

Most of the ones that have been around in the last twenty years are still around today. It's a very short list to health newsletters that have discontinued publishing, and I think the same could be said on the investment side of the business as well.

Most of the investment newsletters are published by specific advisors or personalities or gurus as we call them with market picks, stock recommendations and so forth.

On the health side of business, there are few ways in which these publications are positioned. Number one, as people have seen with individual doctors, most of whom are fairly progressive in philosophy and sure their health and healing methods. So, those are individual doctors.

Then, there are health newsletters positioned with institutions like Harvard Medical School, Mayo Clinic, the Cleveland Clinic and so forth, and these are not positioned with doctors. They're faceless as I call them, but people trust them because they come from these trusted, very highly respected hospitals and colleges, and then there are consumer advocates like Consumer Reports, and then there are some ailment specific, condition specific newsletters and some other assorted newsletters that are positioned in different ways.

But, the print newsletter business is still quite robust. In fairness, a lot of the circulation numbers, a lot of the subscriber counts are down from what they were years ago, as much as twenty, thirty, forty percent in some cases, but the print newsletter business is still a very important business.

SENOFF: Why are those numbers down? Is it because of internet, or combination of expense in mailing and promoting? Why are these numbers down?

MICHAELF: Well, in many cases, it's because similar information, comparable information is available on the internet for free. In other cases, it's not really a matter of channel migration of subscribers, but just other kinds of pressures that happen to specific companies that play in the space.

But, from a consumer perspective, the biggest trend has been just the proliferation of information about health from very good reputable credible sources, that is available for free.

SENOFF: Okay, I want to name three types of mailings, and just if you can comment on anything about each one of these. One, lumpy mail or dimensional mail. Two, a tear sheet mailing, I know they've been pretty popular in the past. I don't know if you see anyone successful using tear sheet mailers, and three the magalogue. Explain what each one of them is to the listener and what advantage maybe each one has.

MICHAELF: Why don't we go in reverse order?

SENOFF: Okay, the magalogue, is that still hot today?

MICHAELF: The magalogue is a very, very hot powerful format that's been around in this point in time fifteen to twenty years.

SENOFF: Explain what it is.

MICHAELF: A magalogue is a full color format which when you go to your mailbox and take the mail out of your box, it would look just like a catalogue or a magazine, thus the term magalogue. It's generally used to sell either books, newsletters or products like products like health supplements or things like that.

It's a very powerful format of mail in that it can be mailed to lists of people that have come from catalogues, because people that buy from catalogues find it to be a friendly familiar format because it looks and feels just like a catalogue does.

It can also be very effective to mail to lists of people who have bought from television infomercials because it's colorful and vibrant and has a lot of energy, and has calls to action on every page, and in the sense it's like putting an infomercial on 24 pages of full color paper.

So, magalogues are a very, very effective format for mailing to a wide range of list sources and as we talked about, non branded companies earlier in our talk, a four color full color magalogue enables a company to look trustworthy and being significant and really to look like other competitors that might be far bigger, but it sort of equalizes the playing field because it lets you look really good.

SENOFF: Who started that whole concept? Do you know the history of it?

MICHAELF: Well, the investment newsletter business was the category in which magalogues were born. As we talked about a few minutes ago, some of those same investment publishers that started up health newsletter and health book business brought the magalogue into very effective use in their health businesses as well.

Then, ultimately, tremendous companies like Rodale which published Prevention and Men's Health, and Boardroom and what was then Phillips Publishing became the major, major users of the magalogue format and who over many years developed an improved upon its performance with specific devices and sort of techniques inside the magalogue.

SENOFF: The second format was a tear sheet mailing.

MICHAELF: That's the one where you open a white envelope and there's what looks like a little newspaper article in there, and somebody has hand written on there, "Hey Michael, have a look at this."

SENOFF: That's correct.

MICHAELF: I don't have a lot of experience with those myself. I haven't worked with any clients that have used them. My concern with that is that

it's really represented to be something that it's not. It's not truly your buddy sending you an article from a newspaper. It's a company wanting to look that way.

So, for me, there's some inauthenticity there that is not how I'd want to begin my relationship with a new customer, and I don't think it represents a company very well because there's a little bit of a trick there that the users of that format really aren't sort of owning up to.

SENOFF: I agree.

MICHAELF: That's a format that while not illegal, is just one of those things that is just a little bit of trickery there that I just don't think is the way to go.

SENOFF: How about using dimensional mail or lumpy mail that has something in that supposedly increases the open rate because of the dimension?

MICHAELF: In the consumer business, I'm sure there are a few examples, but in past years, different fund raising organizations or even marketers have put a sample pen in the envelope or some address labels that might be either visible through a window or actually have some physical dimension to them.

I haven't seen very much of that. I think going back to our talk about first class mail, this is the kind of thing depending how big it is, and if it's a box, obviously that's really going to get attention when it shows up and probably best suited in terms of its scalability into relatively small numbers, best suited for business to business selling either products or advisory services there fairly substantially priced.

But, the mail regulations from the post office for circulated those kinds of things, I think have just become more and more challenging. You don't see companies in the consumer space really doing that much anymore.

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SENOFF: Okay, when you mentioned about the magalogues how it appeals to television infomercial buyers and catalogue buyers, it allowed

you to increase your market space because that appeal was there. It gave you more of a universe for the mailing, and that kind of comes into play with this next topic. How do you find customers way beyond your immediate category, for anyone marketing something?

MICHAELF: It's possible some of the time. It's not always possible. So, as an example, if somebody is selling a special report about strategies for fly-fishing or how to make a great country quilt, those are special interest hobbies, and special interest activities. For the most part, that advertising will not get anybody to start doing those things that wasn't previously doing that.

We can't be too creative in terms of sending mail to woodworkers or pilots. People either work with wood or they don't, or they fly a plane or they don't. The area where you can get creative and do a little bit of interesting thing is in some areas that people many times think are special interest subjects that really are much more universal than sometimes people think. People impose limits on themselves and their own businesses.

SENOFF: Give me an example.

MICHAELF: Well, two good examples would be cooking and gardening, two fantastic examples would be health and personal finance. I call health and personal finance really the universal subject matters that sometimes people think are special interest subjects that really have universal appeal because everybody is dealing with health or money in one way or another.

If you're in your thirties or forties, you're mostly in a prevention mode with respect to your health, hopefully living a lifestyle that will help you avoid serious disease later in life, and from a financial perspective, hopefully you're saving the best you can.

There are obviously very large markets of people in their sixties and seventies who are facing illness or who are facing their savings is not as strong or they don't have as much money saved as they'd like to, and so there are products out there for those people.

So, when we're talking about what I'm calling a great example like health or money as universal subjects, that where you can look at the kind of product you're selling, its price point, the style and tone of the copy that you're using to sell it and your mail piece format,

and say, “Okay, if issues around health are of greatest interest to people in their fifties, let’s say, and health is really a universal concern for people in their sixties either on the prevention side or on the revenue side, where can we find people in their sixties who are congregating, who are making purchases such that there’s a good solid list of those people, and that they’re spending some money and that we see they have reverence for our brand and they’re responsive to direct marketing copy and can we actually get those people to migrate or to cross categories from the place that we have found them over to buying our health book, let’s say.”

So, it turns out that when you look at the marketplace from that perspective, just the one variable you’re removing is that as a pre-existing interest in health, you don’t know that. You know their age. You know their socioeconomics. You know they like to buy through direct marketing, and so as it turns out, there are people that fit that bill quite perfectly in other categories like gardening, like veterans appeals fund raising, like buying clothing through catalogues, buying financial information or money saving information from other publications.

There’s quite a range of categories of people that migrate to health information even if the place where we found them had nothing to do with health.

SENOFF: Okay, so you’re looking at different lists, and this is a way to expand your market by going after those names.

MICHAELF: Right, your finding people in categories, and you’re sort of assessing what these people are about, how old they are, what their sensibilities are, what their buying habits are, and you know enough about them that you can make a pretty good bet that they’ll be willing to buy your product. Of course, the beauty of the direct marketing method is that you can test at a relatively small expenditure and financial risk, and then roll out even more substantial numbers once that particular list performance is validated, and you can take that same kind of creative approach with entry level money-making information, and that could be as entry level as coupon, just at the household level budgeting and money saving and those kinds of things are also what I call the universal topics – household hints would be another one, and companies like Boardroom and Reader’s Digest and Rodale and Better Homes and Gardens have had book after book after book

that have presented this kind of material and have done very, very well in have expanded their market with this kind of thinking.

Now, when we say expand their market, a question comes up, well, how much does the market expand? Well, for say health information in either a book or a newsletter or a magazine format, going to some peripheral markets outside of the immediate health market could double or triple the size of your campaign. So, these are not small gains we're talking about. These are very, very significant increases in building your prospect market like by a factor of two or three.

Even finding a twenty or thirty percent gain of prospects that otherwise would have been left on the table, would be significant, but to double or triple your market place is obviously quite a dramatic achievement.

SENOFF: That's great. Let's say we've got a neophyte listening, and maybe a lot of what they're hearing is really way over their head, and there are people who really don't even have a clue about what information is available out there on mailing lists. You've been in the industry so long, you know how much data is compiled on people through their buying habits.

Could you explain to the neophyte basically simply what you do and how you can find a name or a market just a vast amount of data out there for say maybe someone who is in business who never had a clue or never even thought about using direct mail to increase their business?

MICHAELF: Well, in the list brokerage function and the media brokerage function, what I do is work directly with clients having some of the very same kinds of conversations that you and I have been having, touching on these same kinds of topics, understanding the marketplace, understanding the needs of the marketplace, understanding how the product fits into that picture, coaching and directing their copywriters and creative teams, coming up with the right accurate and powerful messaging to talk to these markets, and then in the list brokerage function selecting the right lists for a launch or a test campaign, segmenting those lists properly whether it's for transactions in the last three months, or whether we need men or women for a gender focused product, whatever the specific segment of the list might be.

Then, executing all the list transactions for the campaign, there are campaigns that might have three or four lists and there are campaigns that might have a hundred lists. So, there's a one stop shopping sort of benefit to working with me or the kind of firm that I work for, but much more importantly than the efficiency of it is to work with a list broker who understands your marketplace and who can guide you without any self orientation, without any aspirations for volume that might sway his or her decisions in ways that are not in your best interests.

What we call the list universe or the available lists number in the tens of thousands. So, the first thing that the list broker will do besides helping you select and segment the ultimate list for your campaign is to understand the thousands that you need to stay away from.

I often tell people that are new to direct mail channel that the purpose of the direct mail launch or the first mailing that you do is really a referendum on the viability of your product in the mail channel and the sale copy that's been written and prepared to sell the product.

The list should really not be in question. There will be a question of whether they ultimately will work or not, but after the launch, I don't sit with clients, and we don't say, "Gee, maybe we picked the wrong lists," because we're working with lists in the launch situation that really will give us an accurate sort of litmus test, or an accurate green light or red light as to the viability of the product as a direct mail sold product."

We use lists that we've known to work for years and years and years from which the results will be really trustworthy, accurate results just like a litmus test.

SENOFF: So, that sounds like one of the real key value points in working with you is throughout your history you know the lists and the ones that work where other brokers or other so called experts in the field may not have that experience and know.

MICHAELF: I appreciate that, and I think that's a fair point. The interesting thing about when we talk about these homerun products or these massive homeruns, there have been books that I've been involved with that I've mailed as many as ten or fifteen or in a few cases in excess of twenty million names in a single campaign, but those

campaigns were billed out from very small – and by small I mean under a hundred thousand – test campaigns where we methodically and surgically sort of built our foundation of results so that when we got into the millions, we knew with really good confidence that that mailing would turn out exactly how we envisioned that it would.

When we talk about these books that can be promoted to fifteen or twenty million people, like Reader's Digest have a few years ago, extraordinary uses for ordinary things. It's just how to get a stain out with mustard or whatever. When you think about these books or similar products that are all things to all people, the very interesting question becomes, "Well, who do you mail that to?"

If something is that universal and has that broad an appeal, you really do need somebody to help you navigate the waters of direct mail lists to figure out who to mail to because even the all things to all people products, these homerun monster products, there's a limit to the list that can be mailed. The thousands that are available, even though that book might be able to mail ten or fifteen or twenty million pieces, it still is critical to know where those names coming from.

So, sometimes the biggest opportunities hold the biggest challenges. You're not a niche market. You're in a broad based, very broad sort of value proposition. That's when it's probably hardest to nail down your target. It's not the easiest.

SENOFF: I bought that book actually. Was that a big monster?

MICHAELF: Yeah, it was.

SENOFF: A monster like that how long does a campaign like that last? Do they keep mailing and mailing until it's not profitable anymore? Does it go a number of years or what?

MICHAELF: In what we call the one shot business meaning offers a book that's not a continuity series, it's not a club. There's no ongoing publication to do anything. It's just a single purchase of the book. That's the one shot book business. Those types of offers, even the most successful ones in the last twenty plus years have had an effective marketing lifespan of maybe two to two and a half years at the upside.

SENOFF: That's it?

MICHAELF: That's really it. The Wall Street Journal of course has been around forever, and they're using a direct mail piece that was written literally like thirty years ago. So, there are publications and marketing pieces associated with those products that have incredible longevity, but the dynamics of the marketplace for one shot books are such that anywhere from six months to two years even the massive homeruns sort of flame out after just a few years.

SENOFF: Have you ever seen maybe one shot homeruns from ten or fifteen years ago been revised and been successful? Have you ever seen people try and do that?

MICHAELF: Occasionally, it's tried, and it's a very, very interesting exercise. I've seen it tried a couple of times and it really seems like there's sort of this magical window opportunity that when a book has its time, it has its time because you try to bring back a homerun book four or five years later when all those people in the list marketplace have no memory for the fact that they have may have seen that mail and there's all new people on the list doing business in the marketplace, and you try to recreate that homerun several years later, I've never seen it work.

They have their moment in the sun, and once it's done, it's usually done. It's just how it works.

SENOFF: You've got a lot of people building successful internet businesses, and there's a lot of people that have successful direct mail businesses, do you have anything to say about crossing over from internet to direct mail? I've heard that if you're successful online, you could be three, four, five times as successful in the mail because the mail is maybe more responsive, and then vice versa.

If you're successful in direct mail, what have you seen crossing over to internet? Can that success be matched? What do you have to say? From internet to direct mail, from direct mail to internet, any feedback?

MICHAELF: Well, I'm really channel agnostic meaning I don't have a preference or an agenda for what media, what channels people are in because I'm consulting with some pure web companies and certainly helping other companies in direct mail and working with other companies to make both channels work.

A lot of the behavioral components of positioning of how people read and react to copy, how they deal with price points and offers, these things are not channel specific. Human nature and consumer behavior generate and reveal themselves in very, very predictable ways in all channels of marketing.

So, that's number one. These things are not channel specific which I think is very, very good news. The thing about moving from online to offline particularly for entrepreneurs in their thirties and forties who really virtually grew up dyed in the wool online marketers, there's really a different culture and a different mindset and even a different accounting for the offline space in terms of time frames.

People that have kind of come up in their business careers online are accustomed to that sort of speed and getting test results in minutes or hours and those kinds of things. Sometimes, the expense of physical mail the logistics involved in production and printing and mailing, and just the time frame involved in getting results become a little bit of a shock as compared to the speed of online testing and rolling out and validating all kinds of variables.

But, just in terms of pure ability to succeed, I don't think everything that could be sold online can be sold in direct mail as a product meaning that the only product being sold in that ad or in that mail piece, but a great many can be. I'm certainly an advocate for companies that have enough people inside their organization to execute these programs that the business not be left on the table.

I think going from offline to online there is probably some similar considerations and maybe some different ones. It's really the converse. It's going from these long expensive protracted time frames and production processes to relatively quick learnings and quick turnaround on the internet.

There are things that are priced and positioned offline where offers and payment methods online need to be changed. There's very little happening online that would be what we would call soft offer billing or what enables a consumer to say Bill Me Later.

So, companies that do that in direct mail, which there's a lot of ezines, books, newsletters and magazines in a bill me later environment. Those kinds of transactions, when those companies go to the web need to be converted to credit cards, pay with order transactions and so a lot of times, the creative has to be rewritten,

certainly the sales and order language, and offers need to be articulated differently.

So, when you go from one channel to the other, there are definitely considerations, but ultimately I think the answer is it depends, but there's no question that there are people listening to this now that are leaving business on the table because they're not doing one channel or the other.

SENOFF: I think I did ask, I don't know if you touched on it, is to explain to the newbie the sheer volume of information. To me, it's amazing that you can get a name and a targeted list for just about anything that you can think of that's out there. Was that something that you were going to hit on?

MICHAELF: No, but I think that's a nice benefit of the direct mail channel is that there are targeted lists in virtually every category imaginable not only in the consumer markets, but in the business to business markets, even where there may not be very large transaction lists, for example, maybe of people who are coin collectors. There's not a lot of magazines and product buyer lists out there associated with coin collecting, just as a kind off the top of my head example.

But, there are survey lists of people who are what we call self-reported who have filled out surveys and sat, "I'm interested in coin collecting, or foreign travel or wine or gardening or whatever." Those kinds of responder and questionnaire lists gather in many cases, hundreds of thousands and names in what would otherwise be very limited niche markets.

So, there's a nice targeting opportunity offline that in many cases is not available online, or the competition for keywords or the kinds of things that happens for advantageous search positions cuts a lot of companies out sort of a favorable position to come to people's attention. In the offline world, that competition just isn't there. That's a real benefit of working in direct mail is there isn't that sort of clamoring for those positions.

SENOFF: As a list broker in your career, I know your job is to help companies market their product, and a list broker works on a commission, but is part of a list broker's job to go out to companies who may be never even considered putting their list out on the list rental market like with SRDS. As you say, there's tens of thousands of direct

mail lists out there that I'm sure there's at least that many out there that are not on the market or never considered being on the market.

Whose job is it to get these lists onto the market? Is that a broker's job or more like a SRDS?

MICHAELF: SRDS isn't chasing those people down. SRDS is just a venue. It's just a reference directory to the lists that are available. Sometimes, marketers in a niche market will have somebody on staff just to call some of the smaller companies that the phrase is they'll have their list like on cards in a shoebox. I'm sure there's still some of that around, but hopefully not as much as there used to be, but most list brokerage companies and certainly this one was sort of way past the point where we can chase down some of those smaller early stage companies with their relatively small lists.

Obviously, is there's a big player out there, a couple of examples would be like Netflix or AARP, and those are two good examples. One of them is a relatively new company, and one of a fairly old line organization whose membership's lists are not on the market.

Any list brokerage firm would be happy to be associated with either of those brands in representing those lists, but going after some of the smaller early stage niche companies who just have not put their lists out, there's really nobody chasing them other than maybe some specific grass roots efforts on the part of their competitors or people who would like to exchange with them.

SENOFF: Are there some large companies like a Netflix who just choose not to go onto the list market?

MICHAELF: Without a doubt. It's a good example on a good question. Most of the pure webplays that out there, whether that's eBay or Amazon or just about anybody you can name, the pure webplays, as a pretty good rule, I mean I can't really think of one that have either their email lists or their postal lists on the list rental market. They're categorically absent from the list rental market.

There are some more traditional cataloguers, catalogue brands that have been known in direct mail for decades that do have available on their lists the ability to segment people who bought on the web, but pure web companies categorically are absent from the list rental marketplace.

SENOFF: What should early stage companies and start-ups learn from big mature companies?

MICHAELF: This probably becomes a little bit of a repeat or certainly a connection to what we talked about earlier in terms of trusting credibility. Early stage companies should know how to really kind of button themselves up for the market, if you will, and I don't mean to deceive the market but just to look trustworthy to use four color production printing offline or online to use good resources to present a great website or a great landing pages, to have testimonials, to have guarantees, to commit to phenomenal customer experience.

Once again, these days it's easier than ever before to come out into the marketplace and not have the size of your organization be transparent to the marketplace just because you look like you're a small two person shop. It's just not necessary anymore.

So, committing to customer service and great customer experience and have satisfaction guarantees, money back guarantees and so forth will really help an early stage company get some nice philosophy in the marketplace.

SENOFF: What would you tell someone, let's say they have an online product, and they have a sales letter that's working online, and they've got a digital product that has some huge margins, and they'd like to do a test in direct mail, but they've never done it before, and let's say they have a budget of \$5,000 to test something like that. Is that enough to get a good statistical answer whether the product and the letter and the promotion could work, five grand, or do you think you need more?

MICHAELF: I don't think \$5,000 is enough, and let's really speak to doing a test that is worthwhile that does have you sort of looking the look to get people's trust and to get people to buy and participate with you.

Number one, to get a decent test, you want to test at least five lists so, 25,000 names in total. So, your list cost is going to be roughly half the \$5,000 already and that's before you've accounted for a good strong copywriter and then just a production and printing and postage.

SENOFF: What does it take for someone who wants to test a product, that they believe is viable online? How much could one expect to

invest? How long would it take supposing they already have the letter written?

MICHAELF: If you've got the copy and the creative in place, let's assume the lists are about \$3,000 for a good solid comparative test of 25,000 names, which would get you five separate segments from five separate lists. So, 25,000 and figuring three to four hundred dollars per thousand in the mail with list production and postage. So, that's the math.

SENOFF: Okay, three hundred to four hundred per thousand?

MICHAELF: Right, it's about \$10,000. It's about the double of the number you proposed.

SENOFF: Okay, so ten grand, we can probably do a test and see if the thing has legs.

MICHAELF: Yes.

SENOFF: Okay, so, let's say you're going to be the list broker, and you're going to look for these five lists. What are you going to take into consideration other than the market of the lists? How big are what size universe are these lists going to have meaning if we see something that's working in one of the lists, we have lots and lots of names to step it up a little bit?

MICHAELF: Exactly, three things, we want clients and marketers to invest in things because really the test is an investment. We want them to invest in things that can have an upside. So, really the three critical pieces of the suitability of a list for this important strategic role in a launch is that we know that it's been used in the past repeatedly, and that if the offer's good, the list will work. That it's large enough to roll out into so that it's worth the investment is an upside to it, and an upside could mean if we test 5,000 that there's at least twenty or thirty or forty thousand left in the segment that we've tested.

In some cases, there may be hundreds of thousands remaining in the segment that we tested, but we wouldn't get to mail those several hundred thousands until maybe two or three mailings later really sort of building up to that volume.

The other consideration is that a list in a launch should be a nice reliable predictor of the productivity or the performance of other similar lists within its category. So, we want to pick the fundraising, that's the best litmus test and predictive tool for the fundraising category, same with catalogues, same with books, newsletter, magazines, infomercial transactions, catalogue transaction.

So, it really becomes this process that many people just sort of guess has a high degree of uncertainty involved with it, and it actually is a very sort of surgically tight process that has a high rate of predictability and a high rate of success. Once we come out of the launch and learn if we have the ability to move forward with that creative, it's almost like putting the market on puppet strings, not in a manipulative way, but just in terms of a way that brings certainty to what you're doing.

SENOFF: I'm sure you've had clients who want to test something at the very beginning, and let's say they invest ten grand, and you're testing to five different lists, and you see some real success in that initial test. You could look at that test, and pretty much with not total certainty, but you have a gut feeling that this is going to be a winner based on those results.

MICHAELF: Exactly, and being in the marketplace for 25 years, it's kind of like a radiologist reading an X-ray. To some people, it looks like a bunch of fuzzy foggy nothing, and the radiologist can give you an hour long talk about it. Reading launch results in the direct mail channel, and I'm sure there are the analogous sort of assessments online and for television and for so forth. In the direct mail channel, reading launch results should be a very clear, green light or red light, either proceed or stop, but you want those first time direct mail launch results to really give you a great believable read on whether to proceed or whether not to proceed.

If the answer is that the direct mail channel is not appropriate, then it was a worthwhile investment because it helps you rule out that channel and it prevented you from throwing more money at it. So, you really need a partner who is willing to make that call and tell you to either shamelessly proceed, take no prisoners and go for it, or stop right here because these results for the following reasons are saying to stop.

SENOFF: Right, how long does it take from the time one would say, “I want to do this,” to getting everything in the mail, and getting the results back. What’s a realistic expectation that you would tell a client?

MICHAELF: Probably from green light to where someone says, “Hey, I’d like to try this,” the list side is just a matter of a few weeks, but to get the printing and production aspects lined up properly is probably what takes the longest in terms of the logistics of the project. That can take sixty days or so to line up the right suppliers and to get it done dotting the Is and crossing the Ts. So, sixty to ninety days from a go decision to being in the mail.

SENOFF: Okay, and what part will you play if you choose to take one on as a client. What can one expect from you as you being in their corner on this whole promotion?

MICHAELF: Apart from obviously evaluating the available lists and giving guidance on that segmentation and setting up the plan and the actually participating lists, I work with clients on some of these finer points of positioning and copy. Many times, I’m coaching or directing either their in house creative team or their outsource freelancers depending on which is the case.

So, I have a more strategic, broader advisory role in most cases in my client work than just the list plan itself. So, that’s how that usually goes.

SENOFF: Let’s say one needed help with their copy. You could refer over to someone who could handle that, and what about printing? Do you take any part in that? Let’s say a client comes to you. He doesn’t know anything about the printing or the envelopes, any of that stuff. Are you involved in any of that with your client?

MICHAELF: The printing and production is not an area that I have focused on. As a firm, we don’t contract those services at all. Through working with the great marketers and the admired companies that I work with, I can always get good references for people, but off the top of my head, printing and production is not a world that I know on the production side.

Offering guidance around copy and graphics and the presentation of the selling message is where I do a tremendous amount of work, some of it on paid retainer just to offer that kind of opinion and then guidance. Most of the major copywriters are acquaintances and in

many case friends of mine. So, for marketers that want to sort of get on the waiting list for some of the top writers in the country, most of them are good colleagues of mine.

SENOFF: There's some listeners listening to this interview, and they like what they hear, and they've got products that maybe have some legs and they want to think about expanding into direct mail. What's an ideal client for you? Who should call? Who shouldn't call?

MICHAELF: I think people may have a sense of it already from what we've discussed. Once again, these themes and these kinds of conversations play a pretty big role in client work, and it's important that clients be serious about what they're doing.

This is not just to work with me. This is hopefully with everybody we take on just to be a great company, but it's important the people have great products and be passionate about what they're doing and be committed to great customer experience. If they're either in direct mail and wanting to talk about improving the success rates and just making their current work in direct mail smarter, or if you're one of the people I spoke about before dyed in the wool, born online, and thinking that possibly you're leaving something on the table in growing your business and direct mail offline could be one place to begin get some of the sort of foregone revenue across the table into action.

We can talk about direct mail. We can talk about the size of the list universe for you, and potentially I can advise you on getting that up and running and how best to position and language of the sales letter and so forth.

So, either list planning or general business growth consulting, and in fact as I said some of my clients don't do direct mail at all, and they never should. I tell them not to. I work with some pure webplays on all these same themes as well.

SENOFF: What's the best way for anyone who wants to contact you?

MICHAELF: The firm that I'm at is Specialists Marketing Services, in Hasbrouck Heights, NJ, and the phone here is 201-865-5800.

SENOFF: Okay, and so they can call you, and then you'll set up a time and you'll talk about I guess their needs and just go from there.

MICHAELF: Sure, I've been very fortunate to have done a good amount of speaking, and I'm fairly visible on Twitter and places like that. There's certainly more folks calling. I wish I could help everybody. I know people in this business tend to be so purpose driven, and we want to help, help, help. I wish I could everybody, but I can't, but I certainly invite anybody to call and if I can't personally help you, I promise you a referral that you can trust to help you.

SENOFF: Why don't you give out your website because I've seen those special reports on your website, and those are an incredible education just on their own on direct mail and lists and all that? There's some great free reports on your website. How can someone get those?

MICHAELF: It's SpecialistsMS.com.

SENOFF: Great. What can you tell me about the market of this stuff I do, my interviews on direct marketing, money making, copywriting, that type of market? I guess the buyer of maybe Nightingale Conant, motivational type stuff. What's that market like? Is it a rabid market, or is it a tough market to sell to?

MICHAELF: I've worked with Nightingale Conant for over 15 years in my work with learning strategies. I work with lots of individual advisors and coaches and just building their businesses, and I work with some of the major publishers in the space, helping guys like Jay Abraham try to build their business. Of course, he's massively successful. So, it's an interesting space that I'm very familiar with, and in fact, the direct mail universe for it is relatively limited.

A lot of the information marketing and web marketing and those kinds of activities happen in the marketplace at this sort of crossroads of entrepreneurialism that's legitimate and where people are really putting together business plans and building good solid businesses. So, it's the crossroads of that entrepreneurialism and sort of an opportunism where people want to get rich quick, and are just looking for a way to make quick money and not really bringing kind of a well measured plan and longer term vision to what they're doing. So, it's a difficult list marketplace to navigate. It's not very big.

SENOFF: When you say big, are there 50 million people in the universe?

MICHAELF: Well, there's always more in the actual universe meaning in the country than there are on the radar screen where they've actually done a transaction and they appear on a direct mail list.

By small in this marketplace, I would say it's an annualized number for that universe might be a few hundred thousand totally prospects that are on legitimate lists that are a good match for what you're doing, but even that's a fairly sort of rosy, optimistic number.

Direct mail is the tough space to make that kind of thing work. The best direct mail for those kind of subjects is done in the same way you would do affiliate marketing. You'd get somebody to endorse you to their list, and instead of doing an email, do direct mail letter with other consultants or other advisors in the marketplace.

SENOFF: How effective are postcards, postcard marketing? I want to know if there's a price benefit for postcards. Generally, have you seen postcards work? I'm sure they work for something. What's your comment on postcards mailing, direct mail?

MICHAELF: Postcards are a very, very difficult format to make work. The most successful examples of where postcards have worked in the marketplace years ago, they were used by magazines that were well known household names where there wasn't a lot of copy required to help people understand what the magazine was about, or the reasons they should trust it or could expect value from it.

Then, those same magazines moved into envelope formats and other what we call vouchers and so forth, but the trouble with postcards is they don't offer a lot of space to do the important things that the selling copy needs to do which is once again establish credibility, help people understand what the product is, how it works, and how it's relevant to what they want. There's very, very precious little space to make that happen even in sort of an enlarged postcard format.

Once again, in local communities for traffic building for services around the home or a new dental office, those kinds of things where there's an affinity for someone who's just opened a business in your home town, it's easier to make that work, but for a national campaign of any consequence, a postcard is very, very difficult to work with.

SENOFF: How about using a postcard to take offline to online, get them from offline to an online space? Have you seen that work?

MICHAELF: At least for the moment, I'm an advocate for that, and I say for the moment because I have some tests out with clients right now that are either going to turn me into a fan of that approach or not because in that case, the postcard doesn't need to do the entire job. The job of the postcard is just to get you to the landing page, and so I think a postcard is sufficient space to get somebody to a landing page.

When we looked at creative all the way down to individual word, and this is something that Gene Schwartz really talked about. The job of a word really is to move you to the next word, and if every single word in a promotion successfully moved you to the next word, you'd get to the end and have an option to order, and hopefully you would.

So, at the microscopic level, that's the role of language is marketing. Each word gets you to the next word. Well, the job of the postcard as a whole bunch of words is to get you to the landing page, and I think that's quite possible.

SENOFF: I think we're out of time. This has been great, Michael.

This is the end of this part one. Please continue to part two.

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Hi, it's Michael Senoff with Michael Senoff's [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://www.HardToFindSeminars.com). The title of this interview is called Campaigns, Case Studies and Cold Hard Cash. This is part two interview with legendary list broker Michael Fishman. For more than 25 years, Michael Fishman has played an instrumental part in hundreds of direct mail campaigns and product launches, and in this audio, he looks back at some of the best all time launches and shares the lessons he's learned along the way. According to Michael, the marketplace has been trained over the years to accept certain kinds of mailing formats by certain companies and at specific price points. That's why the campaigns of yesterday may not work today. So, in this audio, you'll hear Michael analyze the timing, market place, format, writing, price and list of his campaigns to show exactly what makes for a homerun then and now.

In addition to analyzing larger products like Rodale's launching of the Doctor's Book of Home Remedies, Michael also shows how smaller, Mom and Pop

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businesses can run research on as little as 150 names to make sure they have successful product launches as well. You'll also learn how to know your marketplace well enough to trust the results of your tests and pinpoint where your problems are.

You'll also learn all about the different formats in direct mail pieces, magalogues, component pieces, business reply cards, lift pieces, etc, and how to know when to use what. You'll learn the dangers and benefits of Bill Me Later, soft offers. You'll learn the difference between a product driven approach and a market driven approach in how to make sure you're not just falling in love with a product that your market won't care about.

You'll learn how to find new lists and customers based on similarities and copywriting styles, voice and headlines. You'll learn all about headlines, how to make sure you're not being too narrow or specific. The three Cs to a perfect headline – credibility, community and current events in testing to know what works.

You'll also learn why you'll want to segment your lists when you run tests and launches, and ways to do that. According to Michael if you validate your product before you bring it to market, you'll always be able to trust your research and your results, no matter how big or small your campaign is. In this audio interview, you'll hear all about that along with some tips and tricks on making every mailing campaign a homerun. Now, let's get going.

MICHAELS: You've come to me with some good case studies from your career. Tell me how you came up with these case studies. Did you kind of just think back in your career different stories that really just stuck out in your mind? How did you come up with these?

MICHAELF: I thought back, and now with about 25 years of results and case studies, hundreds of campaigns, hundreds of product launches, and I looked back for some of the highlights, some of which are the biggest campaigns and success stories I've been involved with, and a few of those are actually historic in nature in any area of direct marketing, and some were successful not in any historic way, but just really serve really, really well to illustrate a particular point.

MICHAELS: Okay, great, well let's roll into the one. What's the first one you came up with?

MICHAELF: Well, the first one is from the time of the Gulf War which is I guess is about 1990, and then is Rodale best known for their flagship

brand, Prevention Magazine. They're also well known right now for Men's Health Magazine.

Rodale like many of the larger magazine companies, currently has and has had for a very long time a very, very robust ancillary product business, which for them is principally books.

SENOFF: When you say ancillary, you mean other than their main core which is magazines?

MICHAELF: Exactly, above and beyond the flagship or the core product that they're best known for. For some magazines and publishing companies, the books actually become bigger revenue and profit contributors than the magazines that they're best known for.

So, Rodale has had a very strong book business for at this point over 25 years, and so at that time, they had a book called The Doctor's Book of Home Remedies, which is a reference book of natural cures and remedies for consumer. It was a really homerun. Jay Leno early in his tenure on the Tonight Show mentioned it on the program.

It was just one of these things that become bigger than life, and sort of became a phenomenon.

SENOFF: Were they one of the first into the marketplace with the home remedies?

MICHAELF: Been around for quite some time, Prevention Magazine itself I think they're back into the forties or fifties. So, the concept of home remedies and country remedies, and even back to like old wives' tales and things like that. Natural remedies have been really present in probably every culture in the world for a very long time, and then in mid-twentieth century, in the United States, it became a very popular publishing subject or content subject really spurred on and led by Rodale's Prevention Magazine.

So, it made sense to put the Prevention brand on reference books because Prevention has a for-profit brand, has a high degree of trust associated with it, high degree of benevolence, the kind of things you'd associate with non-profits or very caring specific doctors. Those are the kinds of attributes that the consumer associates with the Prevention brand.

So, it's a great door opener even in some markets of people that have not previously bought health products. Prevention just has that much trust that they're able to engage people with that brand quite readily.

So, the Doctor's Book of Home Remedies was in many respects their first huge direct mail hit launched in the late eighties and then rolled out with, in some campaigns, as many as 25 million pieces of mail in one campaign.

SENOFF: So, when you say some campaigns, and we're talking one book here by Rodale, how do you determine what a campaign is? Is that per mailing or what?

MICHAELF: Good question. A campaign sounds like it could be plural mailings, but I'm saying a campaign is a mailing. In that case, it was something like 55 or 60 eighteen wheeler trucks filled with mail. It was really an amazing achievement not only in the book business, in the publishing business and really in all of direct marketing.

SENOFF: Do you know who wrote the copy for the direct mail piece?

MICHAELF: The copy was written by Jim Punkrey who still is with us, an acting writer today, and universally acknowledged as a member of what we call the A-list of direct response copywriters. So, that was probably one of Jim's earlier efforts he started. He lived in the Lehigh Valley near Rodale, and I think started as a staff writer there, but certainly has gone on to a very long list of very big achievements, not only for Rodale, but for other direct response marketers as well.

The interesting thing was that Rodale had the ability to hold that mailing back when the Gulf War broke out, but Pat Kopera who was the president of Rodale books at the time made the decision to allow the mail to go out.

SENOFF: The full launch?

MICHAELF: The full rollout of 24-25 million names.

SENOFF: It has already been tested.

MICHAELF: It had already been tested. That was probably three or four mailings in. The initial test, and that mailing in I think January of '90, if I'm

not mistaken, surpassed forecasts. It did extremely well, and certainly stands as one of the most successful campaigns every Rodale and certainly ever at any publishing company.

SENOFF: Now, were you involved in all the lists with that campaign?

MICHAELF: Right, I was accountable for the list that went into the original test some month before this rollout, and then certainly supporting the product manager at Rodale in planning the rollout campaign and the many lists that were involved, maybe as many as seventy or a hundred lists, and there's obviously substantial quantities that came from each one. There were individual list contributors that brought in 700,000 or even in some cases in excess of a million names from individual lists that had previously been validated to work, and that were now in the rollout.

SENOFF: Wow, do you remember what kind of offer it was? Was it a hard offer where they have to send money or send no money now and they're billed?

MICHAELF: It is what we call a component piece which we do as an envelope with a letter and a list note and order card and a business reply envelope, or at that time, it may have been what we call a BRC, just a business reply card with the name and address of the recipient ink-jetted so not even a pencil or a pen would be required to respond. You would just drop the card in the mail because your name and address were ink-jetted on it.

So, that was a component piece, a jumbo envelope. The offer at the time was probably in the low \$20 range plus shipping and handling billed in three installments.

The installment offer in the book business really was modeled after the Bill Me Later offer that had already been well established in the magazine business, and remains to this day, and in fact, there were two aspects to it. One was bill me, so it's, "Hi, I'd like the book, bill me later."

The second dimension of it was that it was an installment meaning you could pay in three different payments instead of just everything up front. In fact, what we've seen in a lot of book businesses over the years is that when the first bill comes, first of three, most people and by most I mean 75-80 percent actually pay the full invoice on the first bill because the total amount isn't prohibitive for most

people to write the check, high twenties or low thirty dollar range at that time.

But, in terms of response, tell someone the book is \$32 or versus to say it's three shots of nine dollars or ten dollars, made a big difference in response performance.

SENOFF: What's the lesson with this mailing that you could relay to the listeners?

MICHAELF: There are probably quite a few. I think the biggest one is to test space in your past results when rolling out. I mean in this case, Rodale was faced with a really big decision when the Gulf War broke out, the implications of which the consumers are distracted and results will decline because people weren't focused on marketing and buying products. They were focused on security in the country and so forth.

In this case, the campaign and the book were powerful enough combination, and the copy was strong and all the ducks were lined up in a row that the dynamics of this campaign were stronger than whatever the offsetting effect was from distraction in the marketplace, and the campaign really soared and did well.

So, I think lesson number one is have faith in your prior results, but also, have a sense of the nuance of the marketplace and whether or not your offer will be kind of bumped off its past performance by a market distraction. In this case, the market distraction really didn't touch the results for this campaign.

SENOFF: At that time, the early nineties, were magalogues being tested at that time, and today do you think that campaign – how do you think it would compete against a magalogue with the same offer and everything, just difference in the format?

MICHAELF: That format really could not live very well today. That took place at a time where magalogues were either in their immediate infancy or maybe not even in any principles rollouts anywhere with the companies that ultimately embraced and pushed them out in big numbers like what was then Phillips Publishing, now called Healthy Directions, Boardroom of course, and even Rodale ultimately did wonderful work for scores of products, very high volumes and direct mail acquisition with the magalogue format.

So, at the time of Doctor's Book of Home Remedies, magalogues were either like a glimmer in someone's eye or maybe just getting started, but today, a component piece – a big sealed envelope like that would have very, very limited mileage going for it.

SENOFF: Why do you think that is?

MICHAELF: Well, once again, we have the marketplace now trained over the course of easily fifteen or more years on what kinds of formats are mailed by what kinds of companies selling what kinds of offers at what kinds of price points. So, the marketplace has become very comfortable with selling formats that make it easier to understand the product, magalogue, do not have any physical obstacle of engagement, meaning there's not sealed flap. There's no behavioral obstacle. There's no sort of moment of truth where in the envelope world if the consumer opens the envelope, it's actually a moment of surrender.

If they throw it away unopened, they get to feel victorious like they won, the marketer lost. I didn't open your envelope, ha-ha. So, with an envelope there's always that moment of truth. Will they open it or will they not?

The other thing is that envelope contents don't last very long in the home. There's no shelf life in the home. You don't put envelope contents on your coffee table for three days, whereas with a magalogue, that can be with your catalogues and magazines. You hold onto it for a couple of days, and it gets more chances to be read and opened.

So, envelopes are still used for lots of offers, particularly prestige brands that are well recognized by the market place, but in consumer health, the only brands or companies that really use envelopes anymore are what I call the institutionally positioned health newsletters from organizations like Harvard or Cleveland Clinic or Tufts or Mayo, well respected, philosophically conservative sort of health institutions.

For commercial brands, envelopes have become quite tough to work with.

SENOFF: When they do 25 million pieces, does it go out all at the same time on this?

MICHAELF: Well, those went out theoretically all at the same time. Now, did that happen inside of 24 hour period? I don't remember the logistics or what the physical process was at that time, but that mail was for all intents and purposes, put into the postal service mail stream on one day. It might have been 36 hours. I guess that's possible, but in essence, it was one event, one mailing event.

That is not the end of that product or any product that hits its sort of zenith or its maximum mail. It's kind of like the bell curve where it may not mail at that level again, but all those lists that worked will generate new transactions in the subsequent months, and then there were other mailings for Doctor's Book of Home Remedies that took advantage of the list that continued to work.

Obviously, some of those decline overtime, in what we call the one shot book business, which is a transaction where someone buys a book, but it's not a series or a club. It's just you bought that book, and that's the end of your obligation.

Even the best books of all time among which Doctor's Book of Home Remedies would certainly be included, there's this precious window of opportunity in the marketplace where maybe that book can mail for two to three years at the very most, and just market dynamics being what they are and direct mail fatigue for a particular offer being what it is, at some point, the book is sure to complete in terms of its direct mail lifecycle.

SENOFF: Very interesting, okay, case study number two.

MICHAELF: Well, just staying with Rodale for a minute, maybe seven to eight years later, they had a book called New Choices in Natural Healing which was very similar to Doctor's Book of Home Remedies in that it was an A to Z reference book. It was about natural cures, and it was branded with Prevention, and it was also one of the largest buy in products in sales volume and prospect mail volume that they had ever done.

The interesting thing here was that when the book launched first time out in direct mail, there were two creative packages from two different copywriters, two different creative teams completely different, and both failed pretty spectacularly.

SENOFF: Do you remember who the two creative teams were?

MICHAELF: I'll tell you who one in the next one.

SENOFF: Now, how big was this mailing compared to the first one?

MICHAELF: The first launch where you kind of stick your toe in the water and check out what's happening in the marketplace or if you can validate performance for your book, that might be seventy-five to a hundred thousand, and that's just the first toe in the water, check it out, just little launch test.

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SENOFF: So, both creative teams did not succeed on their first attempt.

MICHAELF: Right, so both creative teams failed. Here's a case where the research that generated this product was so strong, the customer research, the metrics around the acceptance of the title, the descriptive aspects of the book, all of that was so strong and there were some good internal champions at Rodale for this title based on the great research they had. They commissioned one more writer named Gary Bensivega to do another creative version, and Gary of course, one of the best known copy writers in direct response and widely acknowledged possibly as one of the best ever if not the best ever.

Gary discussed it at length in his sort of career farewell seminar that he did three or four years ago of which there may still be DVDs around that he sold of the program, but he and I discussed it on stage at his seminar at some pretty good length.

So, he wrote a bookalogue, which is kind of a direct mail jargon for what looks like a little digest sized mail piece.

SENOFF: How big?

MICHAELF: Oh goodness, I don't know the dimensions, but I'll say six by nine.

SENOFF: Okay, it looks like a mini-book.

MICHAELF: Exactly. The size of Readers Digest or what TV Guide used to look like.

SENOFF: Totally different look than the magalogue, right, like the inside, the design layout.

MICHAELF: Yeah, it's a little more like a booklet, even though magalogues give you some specific value and checklists and some actual content that's valuable. Like Gary Bensivega said, make the advertising valuable in itself, very well known for that statement.

The bookalogue as compared to the magalogue gives even more value because in and of itself, it looks to be like a book or a booklet or a pamphlet, the way in which the design is executed really implies value. There was probably a little on the cover maybe \$1.95 or \$2.95 little dollar as if people were paying for it, just which also implies and reinforces value, but once again, like a magalogue, it didn't have a sealed slab or tab closing it that would represent an obstacle for the recipient to get into it.

SENOFF: You could just open it.

MICHAELF: You could just open it, and no matter where you opened it, you could kind of start on any page, just like an infomercial or soap opera. You could come in at any time and be engaged, and there'd be calls to action on every single spread like that. There might be as many as 48 or 64 pages.

SENOFF: Had bookalogues had some success in direct mail, and how mature were the bookalogues at that time? Was it still in the early nineties?

MICHAELF: This is now mid to late nineties, bookalogues are out there, established and acknowledged and validated as a format. Magalogues are now firmly established by Rodale and all the original pioneer in the magalogue format, and now bookalogues are coming to the attention of some of the major publishers like Rodale and this one for New Choices in Natural Healing may have been their first one.

So, the key here I guess to wrap this segment up is that believe in your research, believe in your product development process, if you have one, and hopefully everybody listening to us now has some way to validate product concepts before they spend money on prototypes and product development and bringing things to market.

That's the difference between a product driven approach or a market driven approach. Product driven means we fall in love with a

product and decide the market really needs it, and that approach while it can work, is a lot riskier than asking the market what it wants and giving them what they say they want, which is a market driven approach.

So, in this case, they had a strong market driven product development process. They believed in it. They understand that even the best copywriters can fail. The first two efforts happen to have both failed, but they weren't swayed or discouraged. They went on to a third creative effort, and once again, hit one of the top two or three homeruns of all time, not only at Rodale, but in the entire direct response book business.

SENOFF: Wow, so just to recap, when you're talking about strong research, you're talking about the research that there was a market for this product.

MICHAELF: Right, not just around books or health books, but this book, this title, descriptive language helping people understand the table of contents and the outline of the book, a research process that really portrayed the book as clearly and as completely as possible, and with specific quantitative survey results that really demonstrated and validated and pointed to a success for this book to be developed and launched.

SENOFF: What key research could someone do to determine the strength of the viability of a product to marketplace other than actual creative and mailing out?

MICHAELF: Any marketer of any size or scale that has a customer list, and even if your customer list is a hundred people, there really isn't any reason to ever sidestep or overlook this process. Anyone with a customer list can send their customers a note and let them know they're a valued customer, they're opinions are very, very important. We want to grow our business to continue to bring you more great products, great experiences and great solutions, and we'd be very, very grateful if you'd support is in looking at some of these product ideas we have and maybe check off which ones would have promise or value to you.

I just generated this now. I didn't read that I don't recommend anyone copy it, but that's the spirit of the communication. That can be done with a small list or even an anecdotal process like a phone survey if you have that kind of relationship with your customers

where they're accustomed to hearing from you and they wouldn't mind a phone call, on up to some very large marketers who can do very deep fairly substantial quantitative analysis around this stuff.

But, if you can get anecdotal or survey results even from a small list of just a few hundred customers, that will give you some clues and signals to how to go about to what might be next in your product development process.

SENOFF: The previous creative teams, what format did they test compared to Bensivega's bookalogue.

MICHAELF: I think one was a magalogue, and one was a closed component envelopes with the guts inside the envelope – the letter, the order card, and the reply envelope.

SENOFF: Do you know on the bookalogue offer, did it have that component of the three payments like the previous Rodale book?

MICHAELF: Absolutely, Bill me later which we call in publishing a soft offer, and an installment set up. The other thing to remember around all of this is that when you give prospects a choice in direct mail, the danger is that they don't make a choice and that you lose the order. So, you see very few companies anymore ever giving someone a choice of pay now or bill me later. It's usually one or the other.

The more choices you give and the more effort you embed in the process, the more likely you are to lose an order. This idea of effort is so excruciatingly sensitive, more sensitive than most people can imagine. If your business reply card is perforated on the vertical side and on the top horizontal edge, so that would be two perfs, the same card, same price, same everything will have a lower response if the perforation is to be torn on two sides than on one.

So, this idea of effort and making it easy is actually a very, very highly sensitive process right down to the number of directions somebody has to tear that card to sort of pry it free of whatever is surrounding it.

SENOFF: In that bookalogue, how is that card attached in that mailing? Is it one perforated?

MICHAELF: I'm sure it had to be one.

SENOFF: Quantify – you said this is one of the biggest ones in direct mail ever. How do you quantify that? How do you describe this campaign?

MICHAELF: This book had individual campaigns that were probably close to twenty million names, and its lifetime of let's say maybe two years or a little more mailed over a hundred million prospect names.

SENOFF: What's the next case study?

MICHAELF: The next is sort of an interesting language device, and to illustrate this on the thinking of a Boardroom title, and of course, Boardroom is a misnomer there. At this point, completely a consumer publishing company that a lot of your listeners will be familiar with. Their newsletters are the bottom line personal in a series of newsletters with a Bottom Line brand. They have infomercials on TV with Hugh Downs selling their health books.

Years ago, they had a book for consumers called the Big Black book which is a book of inside information, and secrets about ways of doing things more effectively, and what we have here in the title of Big Black Book of course is the alliteration, the triple repeat of the B consonant, and consumers just tend to resonate with alliterative titles and also alliterative language.

If you really look and study copy as I'm sure you do and many of your clients and listeners do, you'll see alliterations all over the place. It's just an engaging way to speak or to write for marketing purpose.

So, one of the lists that I asked them to consider at that time was an infomercial list for a product called Passion Power and Profit, and they said, "Well, what's the connection?" I said, "Well, I think people that have bought a product with an alliteration in the title would be a good bet to buy another product with an alliteration in the title, all of the things being satisfactory.

SENOFF: Was that that Marshall Silver infomercial?

MICHAELF: I think so. I think so. You have an awesome memory, Michael.

SENOFF: I've heard that.

MICHAELF: This is just a fun little example. Big Black Book was certainly a home run product for Boardroom for many years, but this is a fun little example of ways to engage people. I mean, if you put people in a focus group and said, “How do you feel about products with alliterations in the title?” I don’t think you’d get much of an answer.

It operates below the level of what people are conscious of in terms of their choices, but it happens to be a very engage device, and in this case, it certainly worked. So, the little sort of mini fun point here is that product titles and marketing language that I think gracefully and eloquently employ alliterations; it’s an engaging language device.

This is not a direct mail concept. This is certainly not channel specific. This can be demonstrated on the web or on television or anywhere that your clients are marketing.

SENOFF: So, ordinarily, let’s say it didn’t have that alliteration. You are working on the list on that campaign. Would an infomercial list – are infomercial lists something you test when mailing book offers like that, or was it just simply because of this alliteration?

MICHAELF: Great question. Infomercial lists have had a very, very lengthy record of success for direct mail offers, if and only if they’re mailed in magalogue format. Gene Schwartz, the late great copywriter who was a dear friend and really a mentor of mine when I was starting said that magalogues were like infomercials in print.

Once again, you could start at any page. There would be calls to action anywhere you started. You could kind of get the hang of it even if you didn’t start at the beginning, and the thing about mailing magalogues to infomercial buyers is that magalogues were virtually always four color, high kinetic, highly engaging, lots of information and value all over the place, gives a good representation of what the product is like and what the experience of interacting with that product would be like.

The magalogues were just a super format for engaging infomercial people because of their vibrancy, where as closed envelope formats, mailing to TV sources, once again, that obstacle of that sealed flap, not always but in a tremendous number of cases proved to be a physical barrier that infomercial people just would not pass where as the ability to open a magalogue just freely from any page and kind of like a no pressure situation, no moment of

truth like, “Do I open it or do I not open it?” Magalogues engage infomercial people extremely well.

SENOFF: All right, so the lesson here and the idea here is consider alliteration as something similar that worked in another campaign as a possibility to test.

MICHAELF: Yes, it’s a copy device and it’s also a product naming device that really kind of sparkles and jumps, and it’s just another nuance in the toolkit of ways to engage people.

SENOFF: How successful is the Big Black Book campaign? Do you know how large of a mailing it went out to?

MICHAELF: Boardroom mailed that for many years actually longer than a typical two to three year lifespan of a one shot book, so they certainly had numerous campaigns that were into substantial seven figures, into the millions.

SENOFF: Do you have any idea on this part of it? When you’re mailing the Bill Me Later offer, the percentage of people who never end up paying?

MICHAELF: Yes, at the end of the campaign, a good book, if the copy accurately sets expectations with the buyers such that when the book shows up, it’s along the lines of what they expected. The perceived value is there.

A solid campaign with everything kind of all cylinders firing will be paid for between 85 and 90 percent of the books you send out.

SENOFF: Without any collection efforts?

MICHAELF: Right.

SENOFF: That’s pretty good.

MICHAELF: You may have a billing series just like in the magazine business. You’ll have a billing series. In a billing series, every billing effort needs to pay for itself in terms of recovered revenue, and then when the last bill that can’t pay for itself is the one that you don’t do. Over time, you learn how many billing efforts you can put out there where each one pays for itself, but at the end of the campaign, you’re paid for 85-90 percent of your books which is a lot better

than the magazine business where you'll be paid for maybe 50 or 60 percent of the magazines that get ordered.

SENOFF: Let's move on to another case study. That was great.

MICHAELF: Here's another small one to save a couple really interesting ones for last, but just another interesting one has to do also with language and in this case the source of language which of course is the copywriter.

If you have clients who operate in markets where the copywriters tend to write for a bunch of companies in that market category, the interesting thing here is that if you have a particular copywriter writing for you, and you know that copywriter has written for another company where that company actually has generated a list that you use, in essence you're sending your mail piece to a bunch of people who have responded to the same voice. Do you see that?

It's very, very powerful, I mean I remember one instance many, many years ago where my client had a mail piece written by once again Jim Punkrey, and there was a list that we wanted to use which wasn't a slam dunk, but had some possibilities, but I knew that that list was generated by direct mail efforts that were also written by Jim Punkrey.

SENOFF: That's brilliant.

MICHAELF: So, for me that became kind of the X factor or like the little secret weapon of why that list might get over the top because those people would be responding to it language style and a voice, and by voice I mean the written word, but the fact that those people would be receiving another piece of mail written by Jim Punkrey could sort of be the X factor that would get that list to work.

SENOFF: That's great, and from our previous interview, when we're talking about doing direct mail from your perspective, you're able to increase the universe and these are some of the ideas to give you larger universe in the mailing.

MICHAELF: Absolutely. The interesting thing, and once again, this may be true in some of the markets where your clients and listeners operate, if there are lists of copywriters where there's a tight and intimate market and the writers are writing for a bunch of companies in this space, it's just one other factor of insurance or affinity or imagine if

you will matching your client's offer to their list they're mailing in. If they can find out that what they've got and the list they're mailing to are both sort of authored by the same writer, that's another little secret that they can put to work in their advantage.

SENOFF: Let me ask you on the Big Black Book promotion, who wrote that? Do you remember?

MICHAELF: I don't remember, but I'm going to guess it may have been Eric Betchel, who still writes today and was certainly very, very active in the eighties and nineties.

SENOFF: All right, what do you have next?

MICHAELF: Here's a pretty big one, and once again, the line between creative strategies and list strategies to me is really blurred. I mean there are some purely creative strategies, and some pure segmentation strategies, but they really go hand and hand. For me, they're dovetailed.

This is a concept around headlines. It works in direct mail, but it's not channel specific. It works amazingly well online as well, and this is what I call the three Cs, and you can actually tie all three of these into your headline.

The three Cs are credibility, community, and current events. Those are important components of any copy, but to the extent that you can with authenticity or without having it sound phony or contrived, but to the extent that you can bring those concepts in your headlines is the way to make them very, very powerful and a way to once again expand your list universe by raising performance and making that many more lists profitable.

I can give you an example of this which is a headline that I recently wrote in fact for the top of a web landing page. So, the first part of the headline is, "There is a diabetes debacle in this country," which really refers to really the epidemic of new diagnosis and new cases of diabetes and diabetes is rampant in the country. It's an unfortunate circumstance, but that part of the headline acknowledges a current trend, and if you are diabetic, you obviously have a high identification and a high affinity with that statement. So, that's the current event.

The credibility is I credit that statement, and the balance of that headline to the CEO of the company that's doing the marketing. So, I say this is from health advocate, and the name of the CEO that I'm going to leave out from now. This is from this health advocate and his team of hand assembled doctors.

The CEO of the publishing company while I known to his customers and is a high touch guy and a warm fuzzy very beloved guy to his customers, he's not an MD, and he's not a health practitioner. So, we want to surround him with others that can be a bridge to this unshakeable credibility.

Then, community, I just come straight out and say, "Our dear customers are a community of thousands nationwide who are now living the new diabetes reality." So, our dear customers are a community of thousands of nationwide. There are certain products or services that lend themselves to market to their very community oriented, and diabetes and other health concerns you know are certainly one.

Coin collecting could be one. You could generate a sense of community probably around most things.

SENOFF: Right, any one with a list of customers.

MICHAELF: Right, particularly when it's hobbies or personal interests or investing clubs, anything that's hobby or interested oriented lends itself to that idea of community. So, credibility, community and current events are very, very powerful engagement devices.

You're listening to an interview on Michael Senoff's [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://www.HardToFindSeminars.com).

SENOFF: Give me an example. How would you tie current events into that, or is it already because of the diabetes epidemic?

MICHAELF: Yes, exactly. So, it's really talking about something that is topical, that is current and that people who are affected have a very high sensitivity and high identification with.

SENOFF: Okay, that's good.

MICHAELF: The next one goes back to product titles. A lot of companies with services and products targeted to particular age groups tend to put an age bracket or an age number in their title like Travel for People

Fifty and Beyond, or Health Tips for People Sixty and Over, things like that.

The real danger there, once again, this is not channel specific but certainly hold true in direct mail is people are listening for really direct mail guidance.

If you pick a number for your product – whatever, whatever for people fifty and above, for somebody 78 years old, fifty was a long time ago, and even though they are over fifty, they really are not identifying with your product the way you think they are.

So, the point here is no matter what you're doing, to be very careful about bringing ages into your product titles or your headlines unless you're quite a bit more inclusive than you originally might be thinking.

So, the fifty and beyond thing or fifty plus should be changed to fifty, sixty, seventy and beyond. So, now you're casting a wider net, and even if someone is 82, it's a lot easier for them to identify with fifty, sixty, seventy and beyond versus fifty plus which is a number that they felt connected to thirty years ago, but really not for a long time now.

That actually helps in the segmentation that you're doing on lists where you can now get to people that are between sixty and sixty-nine or seventy and seventy-nine. It will help you do more expansive, more in-depth work in your lists and databases into age groups that can identify with the language that you're using.

SENOFF: How about male and female? Would that be the same thing? Have you seen people making mistakes where they're trying to identify a certain sex, where they may be excluding potential qualified prospects or buyers of the opposite sex?

MICHAELF: I love the question, and there's actually a very clear list strategy here. Most products that are gender specific that can be Men's Health magazine, or it could be a hunting or fishing offer, or something like that. Most offers for men are clear that they're for men, clear and the position. Products that are conceived for men are generally pretty clear for how they've been conceived, same for women.

But, here's the thing. You've got lots of gender neutral products where even though they're gender neutral the product and/or the marketing copy that's been creating to sell the products, may in ways that we can not envision do better with men or with women.

The only way to unconceal that behavior or that difference is to split test gender in your first mailing. So, anytime I have a gender neutral product – appeals to both men and women as far as we could tell equally as well – we take at least one or two lists in the very first mailing and split male and female to specifically illustrate any difference in affinity that might be there that we can't envision in advance.

Sometimes you'll find a ten or twenty or thirty percent difference in performance that's inexplicable other than the fact that's what's the market is telling you, and so then you can actually take that difference and make all your lists work better. It doesn't make just the list you split work better. That is a result that is not a list specific result, but rather that is some market place saying your product and/or your selling copy are doing twenty percent better to men, and you select men on all your lists.

SENOFF: What's another interesting list strategy like that maybe other than gender that you could do the same thing with?

MICHAELF: Really interesting in direct mail and list segmentation, and we may have discussed this in the first part of our interview together, but if so it even bares just brief repeating, and that's this idea of loyalty.

A lot of people and even sort of seasoned, experienced marketers think that if they market to say a magazine that the renewals of that magazine will be the best, or if they market to a catalogue buyer list that the people who bought multiple times will be the best.

In fact, those repeat transactions on the list you're mailing to do demonstrate what a good direct marketing buyer that person is, but more important than that, it demonstrates that person's loyalty to the company that they are already doing business with.

In fact, that loyalty depresses response. When I take a client to market to a magazine list, and it's a fairly substantial one, we will always segment the first year subscribers from the renews because they really are different animals.

The first year subscriber has yet to forge their relationship and their affinity and their commitment to that editorial product. They're much more open to other offers of other editorial products, especially if it's an editorial product in the same subject.

Renewals are by definition happy where they are. Whatever they subscribe for, whatever they bought for, they got the result, they got the experience, they feel good – they bought again.

So, if you can wrestle those people into ordering from you, they will be a great buyer for you, but on the first sale, many fewer will respond.

SENOFF: We're taught the opposite. We're always taught recency and frequency of buyers are sometimes the best people to mail to, when in fact, it may not be.

MICHAELF: For sure, Michael. Once again, it's not a hundred percent air tight, but recency is seldom sort of refuted. Recency tends to rule almost all the time. So, a recent transaction really is predictive of response behavior, but the real key is to get like someone who bought in the last month, and was a first time buyer to that other person's company.

If they're a new buyer to that company, that means that by definition, they're willing to consider other new buyer relationships or new companies or new information products.

If they're renewal or a multiple buyer with that other company, once again, there's a loyal, there's an affinity. They like that company. They're less likely to buy from you. If they do, they'll be loyal and great, but this is why when you market to large magazines or large catalogues, you always segment the first time buyers from the multiple buyers because they are different animals.

SENOFF: You've seen some pretty dramatic differences in response.

MICHAELF: Yes, dramatic. By dramatic, that could be between fifteen and thirty percent difference.

SENOFF: Is there anyway you've seen to break that loyalty? What's the best way to break that loyalty if you're mailing to a loyal buyer?

MICHAELF: Well, the same way you'd raise response to any lists. You'd have a lower price, or you'd have a bill me offer, or a sweepstakes or something that just jacks up response.

Now, your forfeiting other things in that case like revenue and lifetime commitment to your business because the easier you make it for people to come in, the less committed they need to be to come in, and that will show up in their ongoing and lifetime value to your business.

I think it's intuitive if they come in over a high bar, if they could actually get over this high bar that you present, like a high price point or no sweepstakes, no premium, just a high dollar offer, anybody who can get in over the high bar is a great committed long term customer.

I mean, let's take it to its extreme. You have a free offer. People can just come in for free. They don't have to pay anything which is what most email newsletters are these days. You can amass a great volume of those people, but to get them to convert the transactions is tough, on a percentage basis, not many will migrate to a paid.

SENOFF: Do you got one more for me?

MICHAELF: The last thing I thin sort of pulls together the multiple channels that I think everybody is thinking about these days. I'm sure most of your clients and listeners are on the internet as well.

Joe Polish and Dan Hollings came up with this concept called bridge gap marketing which really speaks to the fact that you may advertise in certain channels, but you need people to migrate to other channels to complete their order.

So, this is an idea where if you have landing pages where people are either coming from a direct mail offer or from a pay-per-click campaign or even from a billboard or some local retail handouts or whatever, it's very, very powerful to have a video on your landing page and have different landing pages for each source of traffic.

So, as an example, the landing page where your recipients of your direct mail are going to go to landing page and the CEO or spokesperson for the company will be on that landing page in a video saying, "Thank you so much for reading our direct mail letter.

We really appreciate you coming to this web page to learn more,” just like that.

Not only are you acknowledging appreciating the customer, which is always a good thing, but you’re specifically acknowledging exactly what they just did and where they came from to get to the landing page.

Once again, they may have originated from your direct mail letter, from a billboard, from a handout in a supermarket. It could be anywhere, but have the URLs in each of those venues be something that is memorable, that the person can sort of remember and readily get to without misspellings, without all kinds of errors and memory loss, but at the same time, have some different landing pages that acknowledge where the person came from, and it’s a very, very powerful way to keep people moving in the marketing process to do ultimately what you want them to do.

SENOFF: Last time we talked in the interview, I’d asked you had there been any good tests in converting people from a direct mail postcard to the web. I think you were testing some stuff at the time. Have you got any more further insight into that?

MICHAELF: The value there for everybody listening is that I did not see that work. It did not work.

SENOFF: Tell me what was tested.

MICHAELF: This was a two-sided postcard in the fitness category mailed to a number of subscription segments from Health and Fitness Magazine, and true to what I just told you, we tested men and women. We tested renewals and first year subscribers to just see who we could get to move from the receipt of the mail piece over to a landing page.

SENOFF: How big of a postcard was it – jumbo?

MICHAELF: No, it was not a jumbo. I’m going to say it was like a six by nine – either four by six or six by nine.

SENOFF: What was the offer? Do you remember?

MICHAELF: Yes, the offer is a downloadable book about fitness methods and work out techniques and so forth.

SENOFF: How many mailed in the test?

MICHAELF: About 35,000. It's interesting and also doesn't make sense and we didn't expect the sale. We knew it was possible because it was not a slam dunk, but it was something that this particular marketer wanted to evaluate so that he could know if it was tried and he didn't have to think about, "Gee, maybe I'm leaving direct mail on the table, and it's this whole huge thing that I'm not doing that could be successful."

So, he really wanted to evaluate, and I thought it made sense to evaluate it, and what we found was that the number of people that migrated from the receipt of the postcard over to the landing page was sort of woefully small. So, the migration was the number one obstacle, but that those people that made it to the landing page bought at an extremely high rate.

Of the people that got there, a high percentage converted to purchase, which once again makes sense because if very few people go where you want them to go, that means the people who did go had a very specific commitment, and were really strong in their intention and their appeal and their resonance with the benefits that were promised.

So, it stands to reason that those who were particularly committed made it to the landing page, they converted very, very well, but just not enough of them went there.

SENOFF: That's a great example. You haven't seen any examples of offline to online with a postcard work, or anything on a decent credible large level working.

MICHAELF: I think we may have acknowledged last time catalogue orders are mostly on the web right now. That's pretty standard. Of course, the ISPs are marketing in direct mail, and those transactions are completed on the web, but in the postcard format, I have not seen it. I'm fairly certain there are some out there, and if any of your listeners are interested in communicating or reporting to you, I think it would be a service to both you and me to know what is out there that is working.

SENOFF: This is good. So, these are all your case studies?

MICHAELF: Those are mine.

SENOFF: These are all great.

MICHAELF: I appreciate that very, very much.

SENOFF: What's the best way for anyone who wants to contact you?

MICHAELF: The firm that I'm at is Specialists Marketing Services, in Hasbrouck Heights, NJ, and the phone here is 201-865-5800.

SENOFF: Okay, and so they can call you, and then you'll set up a time and you'll talk about I guess their needs and just go from there.

MICHAELF: Sure, I've been very fortunate to have done a good amount of speaking, and I'm fairly visible on Twitter and places like that. There's certainly more folks calling. I wish I could help everybody. I know people in this business tend to be so purpose driven, and we want to help, help, help. I wish I could everybody, but I can't, but I certainly invite anybody to call and if I personally can't help you, I promise you a referral that you can trust to help you.

That's the end of part two of my interview with Michael Fishman. I hope this has been helpful. Make sure you listen to my other interviews on direct mail on [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://www.HardToFindSeminars.com). Look specifically for my interviews with Melvin Powers, and also my interview with Ted Nicholas, and my interview with Jim Straw, all direct mail icons in their own right. Thanks for listening.