

Copywriting UNIVERSITY

Michael Senoff Copywriting Interview Series



**Work Smart, Make Money, Retire Early With
Two-step Classified Advertising Promotions**

Seminar Transcript From The Bill Myers Direct Mail Bootcamp

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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Classified Advertising

Work Smart, Make Money, Retire Early With Two-step Classified Advertising Promotions

This is a great recording of John Eger. When John Eger speaks, direct marketers listen. At the time of this recording, John and his partner Phil Kratzer were the nation's leading experts on classified advertising. John's low-cost, 2-step direct response methods allow both large and small advertisers to test with the least possible risk. This recording was from the Bill Myers seminar in Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas. John presents the secrets that have helped many work smart, make money and retire early. This recording is from the Bill Myers direct mail boot camp.

Michael: Hey, John, is it all right if I record this?

John: You have my full permission to record it, absolutely.

Michael: Great, because if we get to talking about something really good maybe the visitors to the website would like to hear it. What are some of the things that you remember about that first seminar that stick out in your mind?

John: One of the very first things I remember was on the very first day. I wrote it down and it's been one of my mottos ever since. Jay said "it's more important to be 'interested' than 'interesting' and everybody has a story. They want to tell you where they've been, who they've seen, what they've done, how much money they've made, and the toys that they have."

Michael: Right.

John: Up to that point, I had never read *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, but, of course, I have read that several times since then. The most important thing you can do in sales marketing - if you're a consultant, if you're an employee, if you're an independent contractor, if you're anybody - is to take a real interest in other people. Rather than run on with diarrhea of the mouth, basically

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telling them everything about yourself and your product and so on and so forth, listening was the key. The second thing that I took out of the whole deal, and I formulated this over the past twelve or thirteen years, is that business is nothing more than two people coming together exchanging value for value.

Michael: Right.

John: So, Michael, if you sell widgets and I need a widget, I come to you. Let's say widgets are twenty-five dollars. I give you twenty-five dollars for your widget. You're happy because the twenty-five dollars covers your cost of making and distributing the widget - plus gives you a fair profit. If the widget is good, and serves me, and makes my thingamajig run longer, I'm happy and everybody is happy.

Michael: Right.

John: So, business is really nothing more than developing relationships. That's why, and I might go off on a little tangent here, but I sometimes chuckle when people say "well I'm into Internet marketing." The Internet is nothing more than the best, cheapest, most effective way of communicating between people that the world has ever seen.

Michael: True.

John: But you're still dealing with people. For you to make some money, what has to happen, is that you have to deliver some value to an honest to goodness, real, live, flesh and blood, breathing person on the other end.

Michael: Right.

John: The communication media is just the Internet. I chuckle when people say, "Well, I'm into Internet marketing." That's like me saying, "Well, I'm in newspaper marketing or yellow page marketing." Marketing is marketing; the vehicle is just the vehicle.

Michael: Exactly, I agree.

John: The message is always more important than the messenger. So what really impacted me with the whole Jay Abraham training, and kind of my life, or my story in marketing, is that Marketing is nothing

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more than building relationships. We all know how to build friendship relationships, but most people totally forget that process when it comes to building business relationships.

Michael: Right.

John: Personal relationships start off the same way business relationships do. Just ask any teenage guy... if he's got his eye on a girl. He doesn't walk up to her the first time he sees her and say, "Hey, I'm not doing anything Saturday. Should we get married?"

Michael: Right.

John: No. What he does is he says, "Well, let's go out for a cup of coffee." "Let's go to a movie." "Let's go to dinner." Things of that nature and then he progresses along. It's the thing with marketing. That's why giving people information up front is so important and moving them down the path and just keeping in touch with them. It's simple, that's not hard.

Michael: I think I remember your name from listening to the Protégé tapes. You were at the very first one?

John: I was at the very first one. If you've listened to them then you have probably heard me.

Michael: What were you doing back then?

John: When I first attended, actually, I was working for the postal service. I went to his seminar and that kind of started things up. Within six months, I had managed to quit babysitting computers for the post office and stuck out on my own. It's kind of funny because one of the things, I'm sure if you've listened to some of the early Protégé tapes, that Jay would say is, "Listen guys, armed with the information that you have right now, you know more than ninety percent of the businesses out there know." For me, coming from a blue collar background, I said, "Well this is kind of interesting." I grabbed some of my friends who had businesses and tried out some of the techniques on them - and low and behold they worked. Along the way I joined a Chamber of Commerce and sat down with the director. This is a funny story. It was a new member orientation and I was the only one who showed up. So this poor director walks in and I can see it in his eyes: "Oh goodness! I'm this guy's captive audience - plus I've got to buy breakfast." So he said, "Tell me

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what you do.” I shared with him some of the success that I had, and some of the principals that I had learned, and he said, “You know, I think our members could use some of this information, could you put it together in a seminar form?” I’m of the mind set that you say “yes” first and then figure out how to do it later. So I said, “Sure.” He said, “Well, I’ll tell you what. I’ll show you exactly how to put this thing together so you’ll get the maximum number of people to attend. First, don’t write a letter. Our members are way too busy to read. Come back to the office with me and we’re going to go through the membership directory - about five hundred people. We’ll pick out about a hundred that I think are good prospects for you. You just start calling those people on the phone and you’ll probably wind up with around twelve to fifteen people.” I was kind of new to the world of business, but I’m no dummy. I realized that getting in touch with a hundred business owners by the phone is going to take me one heck of a long time.

Michael: Right.

John: I just politely said, “Thanks, but no thanks.” I went back, drafted a six page sales letter, mailed it out to all five hundred people, and thirty-one people showed up.

Michael: Okay.

John: It blew this guy away. He’s never been able to get more than fifteen people out to anything in his five years there. That’s how I launched my Smart Business Ideas and it kind of took on a life of its own.

Michael: So, you went through Jay Abraham’s training. You learned some of the techniques you needed to get in contact with some potential prospects. You found one guy who had a group of people and you set up a simple joint venture. He said, “Let’s do a seminar for my members. You can educate them.” It was for the betterment of the entire group. He gave you the mailing list, right?

Jon: Yes, it was a membership directory.

Michael: He gave you the mailing list. Who paid for the mailing, you?

Jon: I did.

Michael: You paid for the mailing and you got thirty what people to show up?

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- Jon: Thirty-one people to show up... and the ticket was nineteen dollars each. A nice deal.
- Michael: Okay, let's talk about what happen at the seminar.
- Jon: Sure.
- Michael: Go ahead.
- Jon: You have to also understand that was the first time I had ever spoken in front of people in my entire adult career, other than a speech class in high school. I showed up with a variation of the "Ten Marketing Mistakes." I am sure you're familiar with them.
- Michael: Right.
- Jon: I just kind of ran through those things. The seminar itself was supposed to be an hour long; just a breakfast seminar. I had my ten little note cards with me and I got through half of them in about ninety minutes. I realized that people there had been in business longer than I had been out of diapers.
- Michael: Right.
- Jon: Taking fast and furious notes.
- Michael: Okay.
- Jon: I said to myself, "There's something to this. Most of these people don't have a clue about things as simple as making sure that you capture the name and address of anybody who does business with you and following up with them." This is back in 1990, before the Internet was popular, so it was basically capture everybody's name and address and send them a mailing, or a letter, or a postcard once in a while.
- Michael: These people were mesmerized, like you were, at Jay Abraham's material, right?
- Jon: Oh, absolutely. I mean, they were frantically taking notes. I just kind of looked at this stuff because I had absorbed it so much it was second nature, like breathing to me, but they were writing this stuff

down. To make a long story short, I took something like sixteen thousand dollars worth of business off of that one seminar.

Michael: Wow. Tell me... can you remember back then, out of those thirty clients after the seminar what occurred. Do you remember?

Jon: There was probably a half of dozen who stayed afterwards just to pick my brain. They had asked me, "How would you apply this to my particular businesses"... "What would you do?"... "Here's my catalog"... "Here's my space ad"... "Here's my yellow page ad. What would you do to improve this, enhance it, and increase the response from it?" Things of that nature. "Would you come up to my office and talk to me? I think we've got some ways where we can utilize your expertise." Things of that nature.

Michael: Okay, and what did you do?

Jon: I basically took on consulting clients.

Michael: Okay.

Jon: I worked with some people and did things as simple as take a person who had a service business, auto repair, and told them to start and put together a newsletter - an ink and paper newsletter - to send out to there clients on a quarterly basis. In this newsletter there were little articles on different things you can do to make your car go to two hundred thousand miles or whatever, the little things you can do in the winter to ensure your safety. Then, of course, on the back page would be some coupon for different specials that were running.

Michael: Right. Did you just take on anyone or did you look for set-ups? Isn't that what Jay taught you?

Jon: I looked for set-ups. Very early in my career, when I was still working basically on word of mouth, I was young and realistic and I had the "Messiah complex" Than means I think I can solve anybody's problem. Well, I found out very quickly that I am not the Messiah and I can't solve everybody's problem. There were some people who came to me with products that the public did not want.

Michael: Okay.

Jon: There's nothing on earth that I can do to sell something that there is no demand for.

Michael: Did you take them as a client or just say, "I'm sorry there's nothing I can do for you."?

Jon: I took that kind of client on once and I learned my lesson.

Michael: Okay, so explain: what is a "set-up," in your opinion?

Jon: A set-up is a business that already has been in business for a while. They have a group of customers, people who have purchased something from them, which shows me that they're producing a product or service that people actually want. But, they're either not following up with them or they're using very inefficient lead generating or sales conversion tactics. In the beginning they are succeeding somewhat in spite of themselves.

Michael: Okay.

Jon: That's what a set-up is. It is something where I can work for the same amount of effort it might take me to increase one company's sales by ten percent; I can increase this company's sales by fifty, seventy-five, one hundred, two hundred percent. That's my idea of a set-up.

Michael: All right, let me ask you this: after the meeting, you've got people who talk to you and say that they are interested in learning more and they want to do something with you, how do you set the appointment? Did you charge money for the appointment? What offer did you make to the client when you took them as a client? Did they have to put money down? Did you do it all on one hundred percent contingency? Did you sign contracts? Did you have a simple letter of intent? Go through the structure, the details of what you did with the prospect, to have that first meeting, Tell me what kind of papers were signed and the details on setting the deal in motion.

Jon: Sure, absolutely. Back then, again I was a little bit naïve, I was just starting and there were times I worked with contracts and there were times when I worked just on a handshake deal. The big thing I found about contracts is that "contracts only keep honest people honest." If it's somebody that you don't have a good gut feeling about, that you're really going to trust them, then don't do business

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with them. I've had iron clad contracts where they've refused to pay me and I've had handshake deals with people where they've paid me very well. What I would do, initially, is, if someone came up to me and said, "Hey, Jon, that was interesting, what you shared this morning. I think that there's something's that you can do for our company. Can we meet?" I'd say, "Absolutely." Let come out to your office and spend a couple hours with you." One thing that I do, even to this very day, is I don't charge people up front to find out about their business and to find out if there is a match there.

Michael: Okay.

Jon: I guess I take the "pay for performance" concept to the extreme. I don't think anybody should earn a dollar unless they return multiples of that dollar.

Michael: Right.

Jon: Nobody gets paid to breath and nobody gets paid for efforts. The second thing is I want to find out as much as I can about that company to see if in fact it is a set-up or if it's going to something that is going to be very difficult to work with. So I would set up a time, go out to the company, and I would just sit there and ask them a ton of questions. I would ask them to walk me through their lead generation process. How do they get people in the front door the first time? Do they walk in or call? When that person comes in, what did they do with them? What's their sales conversion process like? What do they do with the people that they don't sell?

Michael: Would they open up to you?

Jon: Nine time out of ten, absolutely.

Michael: Okay.

Jon: I mean they would open up pretty much anything I wanted to ask for. The financial records, the books, the whole works. You have to understand, these were people who realized that there was something missing in their business. They knew instinctively that they should be at a different level then they were at. They saw me as the doctor who comes in and says, "Listen, I can probably fix your problem, but you're going to have to let me poke and prod for a while to find out exactly what's wrong."

Michael: Okay.

Jon: Then after asking all these questions, I would just come down to the end and one or two things happened; either I knew that this was a set-up or I knew it wasn't a set-up.

Michael: Right.

Jon: If it wasn't a set-up I just kind of shook hands and parted friends. If it was a set-up I said, "Okay, here's the deal. I can see one or two or three or four areas in your sales process that can very easily be enhanced. Now if you want me to work with you, I'm not going to ask that you do physical implementation work, writing the sales letters things of that nature, but I'll show you the whole process. If you want me to do that, then what I am going to ask for is a certain percentage of the increased sales over an above what your base line. What you have historically been growing by. So if you've historically been growing for example ten percent per year we're going to base my fee on anything over that as the increase that I bring. Fair enough?"

Michael: Okay, fair.

Jon: Nine times out of ten, they would say, "Absolutely."

Michael: So you established that price right there in that meeting, or the next meeting?

Jon: Right then.

Michael: Okay.

Jon: Then, usually I would say, "What I'm going to do is this: I'm going to ask for x number of thousand of dollars up front just as a kind of retainer against the commission."

Michael: You would ask for that?

Jon: Absolutely. I learned early that if both parties don't have a stake in making something happen, what happens is, the party who has no stake in it often times takes advantage of the party who does.

- Michael: All right. So you would ask for a couple thousand dollars as a retainer from them to retain you if they were interested in moving forward?
- Jon: Right, it shows that they are serious. You can ask for anything from two thousand up to ten thousand dollars.
- Michael: So, it separated the men from the boys.
- Jon: Yes. I wanted to find out if they were serious about doing this or did they just want to play me along and get some free advice.
- Michael: Now, percentage wise, out of all the people you made this offer to how many of them balked at the deposit?
- Jon: I would say, back in those days, it was probably 50/50.
- Michael: Fifty percent. That's realistic.
- Jon: Yeah.
- Michael: You're doing a numbers game.
- Jon: It is a numbers game.
- Michael: So then you moved forward and implemented these marketing strategies that you had learned from Jay Abraham. Tell me about your most memorable deal.
- Jon: My most memorable deal? Probably the one that is the most funny is not the one that either made me the most money - or even increased overall sales – but it was funny because of the situation. A little mom and pop type meat and deli shop. They sold meat and deli stuff plus they did wild game processing in the fall. In Minnesota, there are tons of deer hunters, so everybody would bring in their wild game for processing.
- Michael: Right.
- Jon: I worked with them. The first thing was that I did was teach them how to write ads that were like Jay's ads. All their competitors were running ads with a little character of the butcher, showing some meat or something, and then they would have coupons at the bottom. We wrote ads that were more advertorial type ads.

Michael: Right.

Jon: I think I can still remember some of the headlines. Wasn't one: "The Three Most Important Things That Most of our Competitors Hope You'll Never Find Out About the Meat They Sell."?

Michael: Right.

Jon: Things of that nature. There were a couple times that they would run those kinds of ads and the newspaper say, "You've got to let us design your ads for you. These things are just not working." They were working like crazy we were laughing all the way to the bank. One time, unfortunately, we just didn't have enough lead time to put in that style of an ad so we listened to the newspaper and put in their kind of ad. They ran the traditional type of ad. The response to the ad, because all the ads we ran had a coupon so we knew when someone came in from the ad, we could track it. The response to the newspaper style generic-type ad was something like three or five percent of what we were getting from our kind of ads.

Michael: Wow.

Jon: Also during wild game processing season, we wrote an ad that I am sure you're going to remember from Gary Halbert stuff. I think it's the one that he has in his book *How to Make Maximum Money in Minimum Time with Chiropractor Yellow Page Ads*. We wrote an ad like that said, "Don't have your wild game processed anywhere until you read this. Its unfortunate but most wild game processors only understand a couple techniques, we understand and use many others..." so on and so forth. We put this ad in a publication called *The Outdoor News* which goes to all the hunting enthusiasts.

Michael: Okay.

Jon: This ad was so successful, that this little company started doing over five hundred percent the amount of business that their well established competitor was doing. It infuriated the competition so much that the competition started making phone calls to the Department of Public Safety about this meat market.

Michael: Oh really?

Jon: They were just doing anything. I'm not really sure if it was the Department of Public Safety but whatever government department is responsible for inspecting places where food is prepared. So the inspectors would be coming out to my client's business almost every day and say, "Well, we got an anonymous call we've got to check out and make sure that everything is clean and sanitized and running according to regulation." It became kind of a game after a while because the inspectors had to come. If they received a call, they had to come, but they would come in and say "Somebody must be really upset with you." My clients would say, "We know who it is. It's the competition - because we are just trampling them." Our competitors called the newspaper, in fact, and said, "If you ever run this company's ad again, we're going to pull our ads."

Michael: Okay.

Jon: So that was probably my most memorable case. Again, it wasn't the one that made me the most money or made my client millions and millions of dollars, but I think it stands as a testament as to how effective this can be.

Michael: So when you were dealing with these clients, thinking back on all the client's you've had, actually working with them, are you working with them on a one on one basis with the owner? Or do you work with the marketing director? What kind of challenges do you face, especially if the owner says, "Okay, we're going to do the deal." and he turns you over to some employee who's handling the marketing. Can you go into that?

Jon: I think I was probably fortunate, and/or selective enough, to never get in a situation where I was really butting heads with somebody. I think what you may be talking about is going in and working with an existing marketing manager who might, for whatever reason, have their own private stake and say, "Well, if this idea didn't come from me, it can't be good." Is that what you're talking about?

Michael: Yes. If anyone's going to become a marketing consultant, obviously they may find a deal with a company who has a principal who may make all the decisions but may not actually handle the marketing. Since you've made an agreement with the owner, let's say the owner turns you over to some employee who's not real savvy on marketing, who doesn't really know what they are doing, doesn't even know why you're there. Are there any challenges that you can remember when this happened, where it became very

difficult to continue on with your marketing agreement because you were not directly involved with the decision maker?

Jon: I never had those. I think, probably, it was just that either I was lucky enough, or maybe I was selective enough, that I didn't get into a situation where I was dealing with one person to close the deal.

Michael: Right.

Jon: They never handed me off to another person who was either not in the loop the first time around or who was not the most cooperative. My clients were always very cooperative.

Michael: Okay, that's great. So this whole Jay Abraham protégé program educated you enough to be pretty dangerous?

Jon: Listen, it took me from a guy who was babysitting computers at the post office to somebody who is a very well respected marketing strategist, consultant, and coach.

Michael: Okay, that's great. Obviously, I buy and resell Jay Abraham material and am a student of it. People who visit my site and buy this material - I think it will be really helpful to someone who actually implements and studies the tapes and wants to get out there and do some marketing consulting, to hear it from an actual original first time Jay Abraham protégé. I think that is wonderful.

Jon: I was at the very first one, the pilot program, actually.

Michael: Right. How was it? Amazing?

Jon: It was eye opening to me. I was at three of the programs during that first year that he did those.

Michael: What do you know about Mack Ross? He's a pretty sharp guy. Do you remember his background?

Jon: I remember that he was very heavily involved with Phillips Publishing and he may be to this day. I'm not sure.

Michael: Okay.

- Jon: He obviously knew a ton about direct mail. Mack is a good guy; he's one of the best.
- Michael: I really like Jim Sesal. I really like him.
- Jon: I remember Jim Sesal. He made a name for himself as a "slug doc".
- Michael: Do you know if he's still around today?
- Jon: You know I haven't heard what Jim Sesal is up to lately. He obviously is more geared towards the sales end of things, training sales forces and the whole sales conversion process, which is part of marketing but probably wasn't the part that I was most jazzed about or interested in.
- Michael: Right. Do you remember Gary Halbert being at that seminar at all?
- Jon: He was not at the seminar. They played a video tape of him.
- Michael: Okay.
- Jon: They used a tape, in lieu of him being there. I think he had a schedule conflict or something of that nature.
- Michael: Can you think of anything that you'd rather be doing to make a living?
- Jon: No, absolutely not. I don't work... I just have fun. I help people.
- Michael: Right.
- Jon: Everybody in business has some sort of problem, some sort of challenge that keeps them awake at night where they say, "If only I could solve x." I talk to people and say, "What is this that keeps you awake at night?" Or, if your business is humming along just fine like a well oiled machine, you're selling all the products you can make, you've got no problem. Maybe that was the case two or three years ago, but in the current economy everybody's got some sort of challenge.
- Michael: Right.
- Jon: So what I do now is say, "Tell me what your biggest challenge is? I can't guarantee that I can solve it, but, if I can't, at least I'm not

going to charge you anything. If I can solve it you pay me a percentage of the additional money I help you make or the costs that I can help you save.”

Michael: I’m always on the search for a good marketing consulting who knows this stuff.

Jon: Okay.

Michael: As my customer lists expands and I have calls and people who want my time, there are only so many hours in the day.

Thank you again for listening, this is Michael Senoff with www.hardtofindseminars.com. If you want to get in touch with any of the people in the interviews, please email me at Michael@MichaelSenoff.com.