



# The Raphel Report

**Observations on marketing,  
advertising, sales and  
promotions  
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## Words, Words, Words. . .

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "It means just what I choose it to mean, neither more or less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master - that's all."

Words - and what they mean - are the basis for successful marketing, advertising and promotion.

We're not talking about dictionary definitions because that only gives general meanings. We're more interested in what certain words mean to a specific group you're trying to attract to buy your product.

Where are the words that surprise, delight, enchant us?

Where is the story that brings us into the selling message?

Where is the focus on me, the reader, my wants and desires?

And, as important, do the words you write relate to the product you sell?

Many copywriters try to be clever with word play and forget the object is to have someone buy something, not to seek praise for their brilliant wordsmith.

Customs and attitudes of a society and country differ by words for the same situation.

Examples: If an American child misbehaves, the mother says, "Be good" which implies the child is being bad.

The French mother corrects a child with, "Be wise."

The Scandinavian mother says, "Be friendly."

The German mother says, "Be in line."

The Hopi Indian mother says it best: "This is not the Hopi way."

Words also reflect place, time and age.

**Place:** The Greeks may have had a word for it but it certainly isn't English. Even the English words in England don't mean the same as the English words in America. "Underground" means subway. "Chemist" means drugstore. "Lift" means elevator. "Boot" means the trunk of a car.

In the US the same item has different names in different places. The long sandwich roll filled with cold cuts is called a "Hero" in New York City, a "Hoagie" in Philadelphia, a "Sub" in Washington.

**Time:** David Mamet doesn't write drama the way William Shakespeare wrote drama. Not in terms of literary talent but in terms of language. Both write and wrote universal themes to be played before the mass audience. But the words are different.

**Age:** Children talk one way to one another. Adults talk another way. We once wrote this headline for a magazine called KIDS that was written by children for children: "Adults Read Magazines for Adults. Kids Read KIDS for Kids." We began the copy with, "Do you remember

having dinner with your oldest and younger child. The younger child said something that you didn't understand. Instead of asking him to repeat his words, you turned to the oldest child and asked, 'What did he say?' and the oldest one told you. Because kids have their own communication."

A good example of how words convey a specific message is the use of slogans: A good slogan should, if possible, have the name of the product and a reason to buy.

Here's one of my favorites from the past for underwear: "Next to myself I like BVD best."

I liked a previous Ford slogan, "There's a Ford in your future" better than the new one, "Quality Is Job One." Can you think of ANY product that couldn't make that statement?

Ford is not alone with "what's-that-mean" slogans. Can you match the following slogans with the car they represent? (Answers at the end of this month's Raphael Report. No fair peeking...)

"Own one and you'll understand."

"What a luxury should be."

"The relentless pursuit of excellence."

"Go farther."

"Let's go for a drive."

Here's my favorite slogan using great word choices from W. Attlee Burpee who produced packets of flower seeds. He once gave an interview and said, "Our slogan is the best because the first word tells you who we are, the second word tells you what we sell and the third word tell you what it does: 'Burpee's Seeds Grow.'"

Our message: Good ads are composed with words. So you must concern yourself with what the words mean to your customer.

Here are five suggestions for using the power of words that work successfully for us and others:

1. Be enthusiastic. Walter Chrysler once said he would pay more for enthusiasm than for any other product. Bill Gates, Microsoft's co-owner, when asked the secret of his success, said, "What I do best is to share my enthusiasm." Enthusiasm is contagious.

2. Use short words, short sentences short paragraphs. If someone reads the first 50 words of what you've written, they'll probably read the next 250 words.

3. Write naturally. Personal. Warm. Friendly.

4. Use "you." The newspaper or mailer with your ad may go to thousands of readers. Or more. But the customer must feel you are writing to him or her alone. Use the word "you" freely. Either implied or specifically.

5. Every ad is an investment in your business. Each ad must stand alone, telling one story the best you can. Read the words aloud to yourself and to others. Does it "sound" like your business? It does? Great. You're on your way!

*"How forcible are the right words." - Job, 6:25*

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Here are the car slogans in the correct order as listed: Infiniti, Lincoln, Lexus, Isuzu, Saturn