

MARKETING *Benchmarks*

5 pointers on turning guarantees into response magnets

Your management probably does not give the marketing department approval power over finances. Yet many businesses let the bean-counters castrate productive marketing initiatives, especially guarantees, because they fear “giving away the store.”

However, writes marketing consultant Mike Jezek, guarantees that most financial people think of as “safe” really depress sales. Guarantees, he advises, almost never are cashed in by customers, and more than pay off in boosted revenue.

■ Guarantees vital for sale-closing advertising.

Your prospective customers do not know you. Or your company. Or whether to take your word about your product. They need all the encouragement you can give them. A guarantee of satisfaction is key before they buy from you.

■ **The usual advertising guarantee** is bland enough to keep your company’s financial people tranquil. But it will not create even a ripple in the minds of your prospects — most of whom will not bother even to read ordinary content. They take it for granted. So they skip it.

■ **Time-limited guarantees.** An excellent way to make your guarantee stand out from your competition is to limit it to a specific date.

Bean-counters shudder at the idea of adding to the length of your company’s exposure. They perceive customers as muggers who lurk in wait to take advantage of guarantee opportunities.

Extensive research, however, shows that time-limited guarantees boost both sales and profits.

Not only that — 90-day satisfaction guarantees pull better than 60-day assurances, which produce more sales and net than 30-day offers. And 12-month guarantees beat them all.

■ Unexpected money-back guarantees also generate top results.

Alone, promising satisfaction or money back (yawn!) does not suffice to make customers sit up and take notice. Test:

1. Tell prospects they can keep offer sweeteners for instance, free reports you offer buyers even if they demand their money back (which most of them never do).

“My greatest strength as a consultant is to be ignorant and ask a few questions.”

— Peter Drucker

2. Promise to remit not only the customer’s purchase price — but \$10 or more extra — if he invokes your guarantee.
3. Tell your customer you will return any sales taxes paid with his purchase.
4. State that your refund will include all shipping and processing costs paid by the customer.

■ Dos and Don’ts:

- After you mail his refund to an unhappy customer, send him a note. Ask for his ideas on how to improve your product. You may receive valuable hints. You surely will earn respect for trying to do better.
- Don’t weasel. Guarantees that offer money back if the product is returned in “usable” condition (what is that?), or in its original shipping carton, are just annoying.
- Do avoid fine-print. It makes people suspicious. Instead, set your guarantee in larger type than your body copy. Frame it with a scroll. Sign it. Repeat it on your reply device. Cite it often in your letter and folder copy.



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