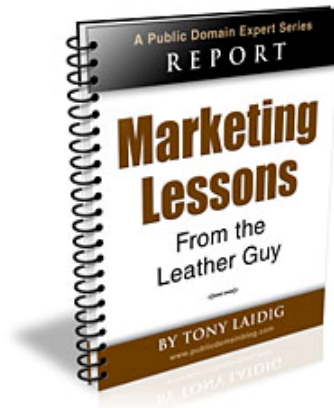


# Marketing Lessons

From the Leather Guy



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## Marketing Lessons from the Leather Guy

I was at a Powwow recently and had a chance to watch my leather guy, George, in action...selling his goods. I also had a number of opportunities to talk to him about selling. Of course, I bought a bunch of leather from him...mostly paper-thin white lamb skins for printing Public Domain artwork on...but seeing him sell...what a treat. As a mini-lesson, I thought I'd share some of the selling strategies I observed while watching George move **several thousand dollars worth** of leather over the course of the weekend.

Why should you care about some guy who sells leather at powwows? For one thing, while most of the vendors made a couple hundred dollars over the course of the weekend, George outsold them nearly 10 to 1 by pulling in nearly \$3,000 dollars. He also used some very smart tactics to move his product and generate traffic at his booth. Lastly, George also sells on eBay part-time in the evenings and is clearing several thousand dollars a month on the front-end and a bunch more on the back-end with some very clever follow-up techniques.

George certainly isn't the first or only person to sell leather at powwows, but the techniques he uses apply perfectly to selling online and certainly to the Public Domain. Here are a few lessons I picked up while observing George throughout the weekend. Some of these you may have seen or used before, others, perhaps not.

## **Lesson One: Find a hungry market and give them what they want...with a twist.**

If there's one thing Native Americans buy and use a lot of, it's leather...trust me. We buy a lot of it ourselves to make regalia, mocs and jewelry and rawhide for drums. To give you an idea of leather needs for regalia...the leather dresses my wife makes and wears (like the new white one pictured on my blog) takes 6 to 7 buckskin (deer) hides to make. One tanned deer hide is typically 6 to 8 square feet and usually sells for around \$6 to \$8 per square foot. So using middle of the road numbers, a single Lakota Buckskin Dress will set you back nearly \$300 just for the hides. That's a lot of money for many people. Enter George.

George is a leather guy through and through and has access to nearly unlimited content (leather) of all types. He shows up at a powwow selling buckskin for \$20 a hide...essentially half of what it normally sells for...and people get excited. He has the good stuff, but then you would expect him to. But that isn't the lesson...it's what George ALSO carries with him...tanned cow hide...split suede in a variety of colors. These hides are twice the size of buckskin (cows are bigger than deer, you know) and George decides to sell these massive hides for...get this...\$5 dollars a hide. How does he do that? We'll get to that in a minute. Here's the thing...now, instead of that dress costing you \$300, it's only going to cost you \$15 for the hides. Sure, they aren't deer hides, but it's still leather and a great place to start. So how well do you think George did in moving leather? I was there when he opened shop at the powwow...and he nearly sold out in two hours. Now for the tactics in Lesson One.

#1: His first customers were not the public, they were other vendors. He was selling content to other content creators.

#2: George could have charged a LOT more per hide but he didn't because HE wanted to be the "go to" guy for leather...and he is. His customers remember the deals for the cheap leather when they need the expensive leather.

#3: George knows how to find his content really cheap...here's a secret...all that leather George was selling for \$5 dollars...it cost him nothing! He had acquired a huge lot of heavyweight leather and found a buyer, except that the buyer wanted garment weight leather. George told the buyer that if the buyer purchased the entire lot of leather, he would pay to have the leather split to garment weight, which he did. The bi-product of splitting all that leather was the split suede he is now selling for \$5 dollars. He got paid twice for the same leather...brilliant!

Now think about the three points I just shared in George's example and apply them to the Public Domain. I'm not going to connect all the dots for you but the message is very clear!

## **Lesson Two: Use controversy to attract customers.**

"Hey...have you ever seen leather made from bullfrogs before?" George had leather there made from frogs, snakes, fish...hell, he even had kangaroo leather. But here's the thing...none of it was for sale (although he probably would sell it for high enough price)...it was there for show. The average person has never seen bullfrog leather (it's pretty frickin cool) and George knew that, so he would use it as a draw. I watched him do it over and over again. "Did you ever wonder what salmon leather would look like? Check this out!" Then, in a matter of minutes, he would say, "see all this other leather? Five bucks a hide...get as many as you want...I'm closing them out!" Very cool psychology...and I use it all the time myself...which is why you see robot patents and other weird stuff on my blogs. You can use the method too...it works brilliantly!

### **Lesson Three: Connect the dots for your customer.**

George knows he will sell more leather if he can get his customer picturing the end result...a dress, moccasins, drapes, upholstery coverings, whatever...so he played the card perfectly using testimonials and by sharing creation ideas. I watched people come up and say, "Well that's a great price, but I don't know what I would do with it." George would respond... "Are you kidding me? Imagine making a simple leather dress for your granddaughter, like the one the lady over there made yesterday from some leather I sold here. The girl looks adorable. Do you ride motorcycles? This leather is perfect for seat coverings, leggings...I have a stack of black right here...just \$5 bucks."

How can you use the same strategies in your business? Help your customer imagine the possibilities with the Public Domain or whatever else you're selling, and then direct them to your product.

### **Lesson Four: Make a plea for the customer's help.**

Over the course of the weekend, I bet I heard George say 50 times, "Take as many as you'd like...I don't want to have to lug all this stuff back home again. My back can't take it." While that statement was probably true, it was also a sales trigger. People like to help other people and so the psychology behind, "I'm giving you a great deal to save me pain, effort, time, etc." will often work very well. It worked perfectly for George. I would ask George, "How goes the selling?" and he would respond... "I've never worked so hard in my life...I sold so much leather, I had to make another run to get more...what a pain in the ass!" Yeah right...he was loving it because he was going home with everyone's money...including some of mine! "Take it all...please...I don't want to have to load it into the truck" (a brand new truck at that). Beautiful!

## **Lesson Five: When sales taper off...do something surprising as a reward.**

It's Sunday afternoon and the powwow ends in just a few hours. Suddenly, George starts telling his past customers... "Hey, I've decided to sell the rest of the leather 3 pieces for \$10!" Now the price was just over \$3 dollars a hide and a buying frenzy ensued. I just stood there with Kola and watch...and laughed. It was a beautiful site to behold and George worked it well. He went to existing customers first, and then, when new customers stopped to see what was going on, he hooked them with immediacy. "I just dropped the price so it's not going to last long. If you need leather, now's the time to buy...look how fast it's going!" Then, to make it even sweeter, he would ask the customers who just purchased again to do him a favor and let the people "over there" know that he just dropped the price. The viral effect worked like a charm.

George sprung this tactic not once, but twice. I commented to him about how well the strategy was working and he said, "Wait until you see what I'm going to do at 5:00pm (the end of the powwow)." He sold out at two hides for \$5 dollars.

## **Lesson Six: Save the best stuff (and the best deals) for the big spenders.**

Know who the big spenders are and take care of them. I can tell you from personal experience that the best deals George made that weekend were NOT from all the folks that bought the \$5 dollar leather (even though he made thousands of dollars from those sales). The real deals happened behind the scenes at his house where he had the high-quality stuff for those who had the money to spend. That's where the action was. The biggest users of leather didn't spend a dime at the powwow itself...they dealt with George outside the powwow because he had already proven himself as the best source for leather. My one

friend spends thousands with George and then makes dresses to sell from it, making tens of thousands of dollars in return for her investment. The lesson? Identify those who buy consistently from you and take care of them. It will pay off for you bigtime!

### **Lesson Seven: Find customers online and take them offline.**

In addition to selling leather at powwows, George ALSO sells leather on eBay. In all honesty, George only sells at a few powwows a year (of course he's made over \$7,000 from the past two powwows). George offers the same leather on eBay at a higher price...instead of \$5 dollars a hide, he'll set the price at \$7 dollars with a "Buy it Now" at \$10 dollars. Then, when someone purchases, his purchase confirmation e-mail includes an offer of \$5 dollars a hide if they purchase 10 or more. They often do. Plus, now that he has their e-mail address, he can promote specials to them, have them order direct by phone, offer special requests and more.

You can do the same thing with your products. You'll want to be careful to observe eBay's Terms, but certainly consider and explore the possibilities of serving your eBay customers beyond the scope of the venue.

## **Wrap Up**

I always enjoy spending time with George...and I only see him once a year. The guy is full of terrific ideas and insights and is a master at his craft. The lessons offered here can apply to nearly any type of sales business, including your online business, so I encourage you to consider HOW you might be able to incorporate some of the strategies into your business model. Here are the seven lessons once more:

**Lesson One: Find a hungry market and give them what they want...with a twist.**

**Lesson Two: Use controversy to attract customers.**

**Lesson Three: Connect the dots for your customer.**

**Lesson Four: Make a plea for the customer's help.**

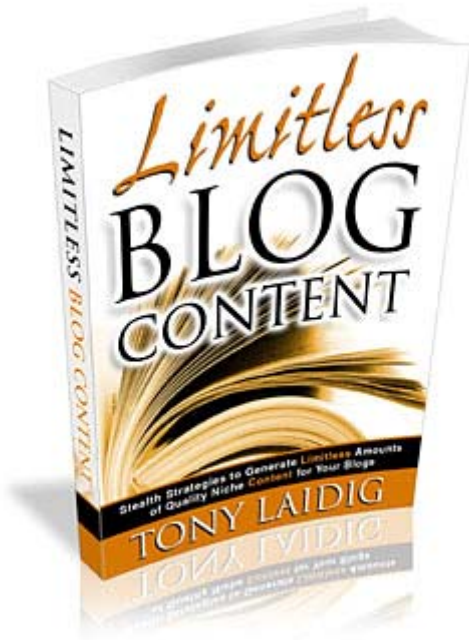
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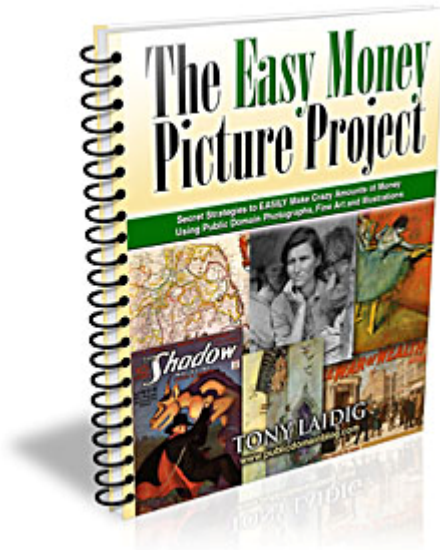
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