

Doberman Dan's Gary Halbert Secrets From Beyond The Grave

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BEN SETTLE: This is Ben Settle of www.BenSettle.com talking to Doberman Dan Gallapoo of www.DobermanDan.com. Recently we were talking about all the lessons, stories, and all the techniques that he learned while he was working side-by-side with the late great marketing genius, Gary Halbert, so we thought we might want to get it down on a recording for everyone to benefit from.

What he's going to talk about today is actually just scratching the surface of what he knows, but you'll be able to get more information at the end of this call where you can get more from Dan, including his Gary Halbert stories. Dan, thanks for doing this.

DOBERMAN DAN: My pleasure. I've been looking forward to it.

BEN SETTLE: I'm going to start out and I'm just going to ask you some questions, things that you learned while you worked with Gary, and I'm just going to basically sit back and let you tell the stories as they unfold in your mind as you think of these things.

The first thing I want to ask you about is starting from the beginning, you've talked about when you first met Gary Halbert and he had some kind of interesting technique for getting people's attention. Could you maybe explain that?

DOBERMAN DAN: How this all started was I had a job that I realized was pretty much going to be a dead-end job, and I wanted to make a whole lot more money and wanted a lot better lifestyle. I realized that my childhood dream of being a rock star was probably never going to happen, so I had to figure out another way to do that.

I learned that probably the only way I could do that is with a successful business, which I promptly went out and tried to start numerous businesses, and they all failed. I had failure after failure after failure. Then I thought, "Hmm, nothing's working. I don't know what the hell I'm doing. Maybe I should seek out people who do."

Somehow or another I came across information on Dan Kennedy and sent away for his *Magnetic Marketing Kit* and subscribed to his newsletter, which I thought was pretty cool. I thought, "Wow, this guy's selling some paper in a 3-ring binder for \$400. That sounds pretty good. I'd like to do that."

Dan Kennedy always talked about Gary Halbert, and said anyone who's serious about direct response marketing needs to read the Gary Halbert Letter. It's required reading.

This was pre-internet, by the way. It wasn't so easy to track people down then. I don't

know how I finally tracked Gary down. It was really difficult just to find his office address and how to get information. I actually had to send a snail mail letter when I finally tracked his address down and ask for newsletter info, which they sent me. They sent me a sample issue, and it was \$197/year back then, which would be around the middle 90's - '93, '94, '95, I don't recall.

To me back then, that was an enormous amount of money for a newsletter subscription, but I sent my money in and read his newsletters every month. The minute they came in I ripped them open and sat right then and there and read it.

He revealed a technique for getting a VIP's attention, or a real high-dollar client or something, and I'll reveal that technique now. The technique was to write like a fake magazine article or a fake newspaper article about them and actually have it formatted to look like it was from a magazine or it was in the newspaper, frame it and put it in a really nice frame, have it delivered to them by courier or by FedEx or something like that, along with a letter with your contact information.

So here's how I applied that. Gary was born and raised in Barberton, Ohio, a little blue-collar town outside of Akron, Ohio, the same town I was born and raised in. I made up this newspaper article and I made it look like it had been run in the *Akron Beacon Journal*. I don't remember the headline, but it was basically, "Two direct marketing guys make so much money that they buy the entire city of Barberton, Ohio and turn it into a parking lot."

I put stuff in the article specifically about Barberton that I knew he'd find funny. Basically the article was about that he and I partnered and wrote some copy and came up with a bunch of direct marketing projects. So like I said, I framed it, sent it to his office via FedEx, and it was a few days later that I got a personal call from Gary Halbert wanting to say thanks for that. He got a good laugh about it, and the stuff I talked about in Barberton brought back some memories.

So anyway, the technique worked on him even. The guy who came up with the technique, it even worked on him, and that's how I first met Gary and how I got his attention, by reading his newsletter, and that led to other things.

The relationship didn't start then, but at least he knew who I was, and then some other things happened. He offered a free consultation to his newsletter subscribers one time, and I figured he was just fishing for copywriting prospects, and I didn't have any money back then, so I was pretty poor one.

But I sent him my name, and sure enough he called me and we spoke then. Then he came out with an issue several years later about Costa Rica and his Costa Rican girlfriend, and I sent him a fax or a letter asking him something about Costa Rica, because I had recently been to Columbia, South America, which I really liked, and I wanted to ask about Costa Rica.

So a couple weeks later he called me. He had his Costa Rican girlfriend, Sirian, with him, so he called me while she was there so that she could answer my questions about Costa

Rica. She got me so excited about Costa Rica, I actually wound up selling everything I had in 2003 I guess it was and moving there, having never been there. I just decided, "Okay, it sounds pretty good. I think I'm going to sell everything I have and move there."

I sent him an email after I got settled in there, like, "Hey, you talk about Costa Rica all the time. I really like what you said and it sounded good, so I moved there. I'm here now."

He answered my email back, "Holy crap, did you really?"

So whenever he was in town visiting his girlfriend, we'd get together for dinner. That's how I got hooked up with Halbert. He actually wound up living with me in my house in Costa Rica for about three months too down the road, but what started it all was the technique I learned from him in his newsletter about how to get a VIP's attention.

BEN SETTLE: So really somebody listening to this, if they wanted to hook up with a joint venture partner or they just wanted to make contact with someone that they really wanted to work with or do business with in some capacity, that is a great way to do it. Who could not read an article like that, especially if it's from the same town, but I'm sure somebody could find some other similarity they could play up on.

DOBERMAN DAN: Exactly. If you really want to get somebody's attention and you really want to make an impression, the last thing I'd do is send them an email. These guys get tons of emails, which probably never even get read, or get deleted. I get them, too. Everybody's pitching you on wanting to JV with you or wanting you to send out their thing. It seems like there's a product launch every other day. "Send out my product! I'm doing a product launch next week. Please send it out to your list." That is probably the worst way to get somebody's attention.

If you really want to get somebody's attention and you just want to set yourself apart from the crowd, that's the absolute best way to do it.

Now Halbert and I did have that Barberton, Ohio connection, but you don't need to have anything in common with the person. What you're basically doing is you're sending them what looks to be a magazine article or a newspaper article about themselves, so of course somebody's going to read an article about themselves.

BEN SETTLE: I can't imagine anybody throwing that out. They'd probably keep it forever.

DOBERMAN DAN: Yeah, exactly, put it in a real nice frame, and I guarantee that nobody has done anything that creative or gone to that much trouble to get their attention. It just works like gangbusters.

I have used it only one other time and it worked. So although I've only done this twice now, I'm shooting at a 100% response.

BEN SETTLE: And the first one is just something that probably opened so many other doors for you that you probably couldn't even calculate it all.

The next thing I want to ask you about is everyone kind of knew just from reading his newsletters or reading someone who knew him's newsletter, like John Carlton's newsletters and that sort of thing, that Gary was a pretty trickster type of guy, not exactly a cold fish, so to speak.

I'm really curious, because you've told me about this goofing off method for coming up with breakthrough ideas, so he would actually come up with ideas by goofing off. How did that work?

DOBERMAN DAN: This took me awhile to figure out, and this is something you and I have talked about. Gary had a unique method of teaching, at least when I was mentoring with him. He never sat me down and said, "Okay, Dan, this happened and this is why it happened, and this is what to do if it happens in the future." No, not really.

Gary just kind of let me observe his life and how he worked, and allowed me to figure this stuff out on my own. I wish he were around to ask him this. I would honestly like to know if he did that deliberately to allow me to figure out my own lessons, or if that's his method of teaching. I don't know. I guess I'd have to ask somebody who knew him really well, like John Carlton, to get some definitive answers, since Gary's not around to do it.

One of the first things I learned was his method for coming up with breakthrough ideas. Like I said, I had to figure this out on my own by observing him, because he didn't teach it to me. He'd say stuff like, "All right, tomorrow we've got a full day." I had moved back to the States. I moved to Miami and was staying in the same building as him in Miami so that we could work together. He had a lot of client work at that time that we were working on together.

He'd say, "You need to be up at my apartment at 8 a.m. because we've got a full day, and I don't know when we're going to be done. Just count on being there the entire day and maybe most of the evening."

"Okay, Gary." I'm all fired up! "All right man, working with the master, working with the Prince of Print, nose to the grindstone from 8 am to midnight. We're just going to be working our little fingers to the bone writing copy like crazy." I'm all psyched up. I'm thinking, "Wow, I hope we can at least have time to go grab some lunch or something."

So I'd show up at his apartment at 8:00 and he'd just gotten up. He was still in sleepy head mode and he'd be like, "Yeah, let's go downstairs and get something to eat." It was a cool building he lived in, and they had a lot of stuff in the actual building. They had a restaurant and a little shop downstairs, so we'd go downstairs and get something to eat and get some coffee. That would turn out to be about an hour.

Then he'd be like, "You know what, we've got to go run this errand. I've got to go pick up this part for my boat," or something, so we'd go run that errand, and then come back

to the apartment. Two hours have passed and we haven't even started doing anything.

He'd look at the pile of work that we've got there to do. It's sitting there and he'd look at it on his table and he'd go, "Let's go out on the boat for awhile," so we'd go out on the boat.

Of course I enjoyed it. It was a blast hanging out with him, but this went on actually several days in a row. We had just gotten all this work from a client, and about the third or fourth day I'm thinking, "Hmm, we're really screwing off here. We're just not doing anything," and I'm thinking, "This is not productive."

I was almost going to say something to him, like "Gary, we should really be working," but I thought, "Well, he's the master so I'll just follow his lead." Like I said, this went on several days in a row, and it appeared to me that we weren't doing anything or making any headway or anything like that.

What I finally realized was one day, as we're pulling the boat back in to dock, he says, "You know what, let's go back upstairs." We go back upstairs and he throws the yellow notepad in front of me and he sits down with his yellow notepad, and we start to write. Gary's just writing feverishly.

One thing about Halbert, anybody he worked with, he almost insisted you write out by hand your copy on a legal pad. It didn't matter if you were a great typist or you told him, "You know, I work better on my computer." That didn't matter, that's not what he wanted, so he always had you write it out by hand, like he liked to do.

He was just writing away feverishly, and he finishes this ad in maybe about an hour's time. I got to thinking about it and I thought, "I get it now." He was letting all that information that we had there piled up, that we'd both read for this client, he was letting that percolate in his mind, however long that took.

Now it appeared to me that we were goofing off, and that's honestly what I thought for that entire first week. I was actually really concerned that the client was going to cut us off and think we're pissing away his money not doing anything. That's why I almost said something to him like, "Hey, we should really get to work here, Gary."

But what I finally realized, like I said, was he was doing things that relaxed him and that he enjoyed so that his mind was free to work on this. It's not like when we were out on the boat he was deep in thought. We never talked about it. We talked about nothing related to marketing.

BEN SETTLE: Like a Seinfeld episode.

DOBERMAN DAN: Exactly! We talked about nothing important, but I realized much later, like I said, Gary had to do things which freed his mind, which allowed what some people would call his sub-conscious to digest all that information and to come up with a big idea, a big hook.

After we read all that research material, yeah, we could have sat down and written out some copy, but he was waiting for the big idea to hit him, the hook, and that's what hit him while we were out on the boat.

And I'll be honest with you, that was a hard lesson for me to learn. I kind of come from the background like, "Okay, we've got a job. We've got to sit down and crank this and just slug it out if we have to, just force the copy and do it now."

But observing Gary, I took that lesson to heart. What comes out when you do your goofing off or whatever you want to call it – goofing off for breakthrough ideas. When you do your goofing off, your sub-conscious can come up with so much better copy and better ideas and come up with the big idea and the big hook than if you just sit down and try to slog it out without allowing that time for your mind to kind of chew on that information and come up with it.

BEN SETTLE: Do you do that to this day exactly how he did it, or do you kind of modify it for the stuff you work on?

DOBERMAN DAN: Well, most of us don't always have the luxury of goofing off for a week or so while everything percolates. John Carlton calls it "circling the desk," where you've got all your material on your desk. You kind of look at it and walk around the desk and let your mind think about it for awhile. I'm calling it goofing off for breakthrough ideas.

I don't do it to the point that Gary used to do it. To this day I have to force myself to do it, believe it or not. I have to force myself to goof off, because my first inclination is to read the stuff I need to read, do the research, read the research materials, and then just sit down and start slugging it out and just slogging through it, just writing it out.

But everything flows so much better when I do allow myself a couple days to just goof off, not go back and keep looking at my research stuff, just let it percolate in my brain.

I'll be honest with you, I just did a product launch this week and I truly pulled a Halbert on this one. I let that stuff percolate for I don't know how long – two months, I guess. I got my research material, I read my stuff, I think it was even close to three months, and I didn't do anything with it for three months, until like the day before when I realized, "Crap, I promised I'd send that product tomorrow at noon."

I just looked through my notes again and just read the highlighted stuff on the research stuff, and then just sat down and cranked it out, and it flowed really well. Now two or three months may be a little extreme. Most of us don't have that option.

But I would recommend a minimum of 24 hours. Read your research material and then put it down and do nothing related to that particular project for at least 24 hours. Goof off, go see a movie, take a nap, or do other business stuff that you've got to do – return phone calls or whatever.

BEN SETTLE: Recently I think I was reading this in one of John Carlton's old *Marketing*

Rebel Rant newsletters, and I remember him saying something similar about that when he was working with Gary Halbert. He thought they were going to sit down and get some serious writing done, and he'd end up taking them on the boat, and he's coming up with headlines and stuff while he's driving his boat around looking at bikini women, and that was his way of doing it. It just freaked everybody else out, including his clients.

DOBERMAN DAN: Yeah, I was worried about that, actually. This client gave us a lot of work and a lot of money, and I was thinking, "Oh no, man. If he saw the method, he'll probably have a cow," but the guy didn't care. He wasn't concerned about the how, he was only concerned about the results, which always happened.

But imagine accepting \$40,000 from somebody and having them check in with you two or three weeks later, like "How's it going?"

"It's going great! Man, I'm every day out on the boat looking at women in bikinis, going out to eat at real cool places, and watching NCIS every Monday. Yeah, it's awesome!"

They'd have a frickin' cow, but this client wasn't worried about the method to it, he was just worried about the results, and that's what Halbert needed to do to allow his mind to come up with the correct copy and the right hook and everything.

BEN SETTLE: This was probably around 2003-ish. I don't know when he wrote this newsletter. Maybe it was an older one, maybe it was around the time you were working with him, but I remember he wrote a newsletter where he basically explained what a typical day was for him.

It was a very fun and entertaining newsletter, but at the end of it he reprinted an ad he wrote that he said he wrote in like two hours, but it took him six weeks to figure out what to say. It was that one about vagina-tightening cream. Do you remember that one?

DOBERMAN DAN: That's right. I was working with him during that time.

BEN SETTLE: So that was a totally true story, and that's exactly how he was working then.

DOBERMAN DAN: That's exactly how he was working. Another thing about Halbert was he had a different sense of time than the rest of us do. First of all, chaos followed Gary. He never planned his day. He couldn't plan it, because for some reason chaos was attracted to him. He could have every minute planned out and it would never, ever happen. It didn't matter how much he wanted it to. Chaos just followed.

His sense of time was completely different than the rest of the world. Halbert's talked about it. He's done it to Scott Haines. Scott has told me about some of the stories. He's done it to me.

"Hey Dan, you've got to write this piece. It needs to be written now. We've got to get it done today. Nose to the grindstone."

He'd always talk that talk. "It needs to be done now. You've got to get up at the crack of dawn! I'll be cracking the whip and you've got to finish it."

"Great, Gary. I'm ready."

Then he'll be like, "Oh man, you know what? I almost forgot. We've got to take the car for this."

"All right, Gary." And the whole day would be like that.

"Oh, you know what, oh man. This fire has just come up. Now we've got to put that out."

Then we'd finally come home and it'd be like 5 in the afternoon. We've been out doing all these errands and screwing off all day, and I'd sit down or I'd go up to the other apartment in the building and I would have been there for maybe 20 minutes and he'd be calling or pounding on the door.

"You get that ad done yet?"

"Gary, it's impossible to get the ad done. I've been with you for nine hours doing nothing but screwing around, and only been writing copy for the past 15 minutes."

And he'd be like, "Oh, okay."

BEN SETTLE: Long-hand too, right? You're writing it by hand?

DOBERMAN DAN: Writing it out long-hand.

BEN SETTLE: Which takes forever. I don't even know how somebody can do that, any significant piece in 20 minutes by hand.

DOBERMAN DAN: His mind just functioned differently with respect to time, I guess.

BEN SETTLE: This is interesting, because it seems like there's a contradiction in his earlier days than maybe his later days, because I always kept hearing about how he was a big proponent of Operation Money Suck, and all he worked on was what was going to bring the money in. All the other errands were nagging and the fires could wait till later. Was that the opposite of your experience with him?

DOBERMAN DAN: Yeah, pretty much. It was the opposite.

BEN SETTLE: So it was like he totally changed.

DOBERMAN DAN: Well, what it came to was when things were okay, then the minutiae and every daily little fire and all the little chaos that followed him, we always dealt with. But when the wolf was at the door, as he used to say, or his back was to the wall and all the sudden it was like, "Wow, you know what, I'm broke. I don't have any

money to even pay for my apartment, or I need money for this," all the sudden then Operation Money Suck was in full mode.

The phones were turned off, we didn't leave the apartment, nothing was dealt with that didn't have to do with Operation Money Suck. But back when I was working with him, that was not a normal thing. That was only when things were desperate and money needed to be made like right now.

BEN SETTLE: That's amazing. [laughing] Is that what you meant when you said chaos followed him? Was this like self-inflicted chaos because he just put things off, or was this literally that he just seemed to attract chaos from other people and that sort of thing?

DOBERMAN DAN: [laughing] I honestly don't know the answer to that. All I know is any time I was with Halbert, and you talk to anybody who knew Gary Halbert well, anybody I was with Halbert, life was just an adventure. Chaos truly followed the man, and excitement too.

He was a genius in what he did. In marketing and copywriting, he was a genius, but in managing his life and managing the daily minutia of life, he was completely ill equipped to handle it. He could not ever find his car keys – never, ever, ever. Just real simple things like that. That's what he had Theresa for, his secretary.

The only problem is, she did as good a job with it as she could, but she was in Ocala, Florida, which was like a five-hour drive from Miami, so they had operate by phone and email. The stuff like finding his car keys or finding the \$3,000 that he left on his dresser the night before and now he can't find in the morning, she couldn't help him with that stuff.

BEN SETTLE: You mentioned he couldn't find his car keys – he wrote a headline for a sales letter, "How to Live to be 100 Years Old and Still Remember Where Your Car Keys Are." I'm wondering, did you notice that he would pull headlines and copy from real life like that, from his real life adventures?

DOBERMAN DAN: All the time. That was the inspiration most of the time, definitely for the newsletters.

BEN SETTLE: So if we look at his sales letters, they may seem like high drama. You read these things and you're just so sucked into these stories that he writes, but now there's maybe a little tinge that it's not just an ad story, it actually comes from real life.

DOBERMAN DAN: That's exactly right.

BEN SETTLE: That's amazing. Last week or when we had our last Mastermind call, you and I and the other guys started talking about swipe files. You told me this very, very important story, and I still think about it, actually, even up till today, of what you learned from Gary Halbert's sales letters about swipe files and how some of them aren't always what they're cracked up to be. Could you kind of fill us in on that?

DOBERMAN DAN: Yeah, I'd be glad to. This is a very recent lesson, by the way, and actually this little Halbert analogy – there's two lessons in one – but we'll start with the swipe file one.

In Miami we had so much work from this one client that there were two other copywriters that were working with Gary at the time – Craig Garber and Carlos, and his last name escapes me. Gary used to put us in the ring, so to speak, and allow the three of us to slug it out and to find out who the winner was.

In the two times he did that, I did win both times. One was an ad for a cosmetic product. Actually, remind me to tell you about that. That's another Halbert lesson that just popped into my mind.

BEN SETTLE: Are you talking about the wrinkle cream?

DOBERMAN DAN: Yeah, the wrinkle cream.

BEN SETTLE: You wrote that one?

DOBERMAN DAN: Yeah. Halbert basically used a lot of the stuff that I wrote in my ad when he wrote his ad for the product called Deception. He pitted me, Craig, and Carlos against each other, and I won. Then another one was for a book that Ed Dale had written about how to make money on the internet, and I won that one too.

I have a secret technique that I'll share, and it's the reason I won against these other two copywriters, because Craig especially is an excellent copywriter. Carlos was a decent copywriter too, so it's not like I had an advantage over those guys. I just had a secret.

Gary asked me to write an ad for this book about how to make money on the internet. He says, "It's a good ad. We'll test it, but first I want to do one and we'll test mine first."

So Gary dictates the ad to me. He'd had some problems with his eyes and had cataracts and I think was having a hard time seeing what he wrote, so I was the slave he happened to dictate some of that stuff to, and made me write it out long-hand too.

So he dictates the ad to me and Theresa formats it as I believe a quarter or a half-page newspaper ad. He used to work with a guy named Jay, and I can't remember his last name, but he had a company called Standby Ads. Jay could get remnant space in newspapers really cheap. Remnant space is unsold space.

Gary ran it in three or four newspapers which are known to be real hot for these kind of offers, and the response device was to call to order the book. Gary routed the calls to the telephone number in his apartment, and me, Craig, and Carlos were going to be answering the phones.

He goes, "I just want you guys to see what it's like when a successful promotion hits, the amount of calls you get. You've got to limit each call to 30 seconds. Just get their name and credit card number and everything, and get off of there. The minute you hang up, another call will come in."

He goes, "I want you guys to actually have contact with these customers so you can see what kind of questions they're asking."

Well, that ad was a complete bomb. I think we got three or four calls, and they were all from these surly, nasty old people that were pissed off from the start, like, "What the hell is this? This is a bunch of bullshit. I don't really believe you can make money with a computer."

That's the kind of calls we're getting. Not a single one ordered. So I'll talk about Gary's lesson on failure in a second, but that ad just completely bombed. In fact, it was such a bomb that Gary didn't even take the time to analyze why it failed. He didn't even go through the, "Hmm, maybe we should try a different headline." No, it was stinking up the place. It just needed to be abandoned. That was the only solution, just abandon it and move on.

I'm writing a book about all the lessons I learned from Gary Halbert, and one of the lessons is a lesson on how Gary handled failure, and this particular ad is part of that lesson.

I thought, "Wow, I wish I still had a copy of that ad so I could include it in my book. People could actually see that the Prince of Print actually wrote ads that failed, and I could actually show them the ad that failed."

It's long gone now. I tried to get hold of Theresa, his old secretary, and she's moved away and I don't know where she is. But just a couple weeks ago John Angelache contacted me. He goes, "Hey man, I've got a bunch of old Halbert stuff. You want to take a look at it?" and I said, "Yeah, sure."

One of them was a swipe file. I forget what it's called, but it's a Gary Halbert swipe file. It has a lot of his famous stuff, like the coat of arms letter, and it's allegedly all his successful ads.

I'm looking through it, and sure enough there's that ad for that book on how to make money on the internet, the ad that just completely stunk and just was so bad that he abandoned it without even trying anything else, and it's included in this swipe file.

BEN SETTLE: The Motherlode is what it's called.

DOBERMAN DAN: That's right. The Motherlode Collection. I have no idea how it got included. I don't even know if Gary put that together or who put it together. Perhaps Theresa put it together and she had a copy of that ad and didn't know that it stunk and she put it in there. I don't know how it wound up in there, but that ad was a completely failure, and now all the sudden it's in the Motherlode swipe file.

I'm imagining these young copywriters getting that and going, "Oooh, a successful ad written by Gary Halbert on how to make money on the internet. I'm going to swipe this!" and use it as a template, not even realizing they're using an ad that just completely

sucked.

BEN SETTLE: That is huge. I admit I drink the Gary Halbert kool-aid. We don't know any better necessarily, unless someone like you comes along and says something. You just can't tell. Some of them are written so well, you're thinking, "That had to have been a winner."

DOBERMAN DAN: Exactly. Be careful when you use swipe material. Unless you absolutely know it was a success, you might be using stuff that just didn't work at all. Even the great Gary Halbert had failures.

I have to say, it wasn't until I guess about last year that that lesson finally hit me. Here was his reaction when we found out that thing was just completely dead, that ad just completely sucked out loud, so to speak.

I read the results off to him, and it ran in a bunch of newspapers – at least four or five for the test, and they had big circulations. There wasn't anything going on that day in the news, like sometimes you know a major breaking news event can affect response, so none of that was going on.

I read him the results. He just kind of looks off into space and then looks at the table where all the pile of stuff was he was supposed to be working on, and he says, "Okay. What else are we working on?"

That was it. He didn't go through any hand wringing, "Oh, woe is me. I've lost the edge. I was the great Gary Halbert but now I wrote an ad that sucks. Oh my god, what's wrong with me?"

He didn't go through trying to figure out why it didn't work. "Well, you know, maybe we need to change a headline. Maybe we need to change the offer." No, it was a complete bomb. I mean it just really missed the mark. So the smart thing to do was just completely abandon it, just drop it and go on to something else.

But his reaction was what got me thinking about all this. The biggest lesson I learned from Gary Halbert was this lesson on failure. Seeing him "fail" with that ad made me realize something.

First of all, for about four to five years when Gary first started copywriting and got into direct response marketing and mail order, he told me about this. He said project after project, sales letter after sales letter that he wrote just completely bombed, just failure after failure after failure, not even a base hit.

A base hit is like you got kind of a decent response. Maybe you didn't break even. We can tweak that and maybe improve that and get that performing better, but with complete bombs, it's just time to drop them. That's what happened to him time after time after time for at least four to five years.

He would be thinking, "I've got a great piece. This is going to do awesome," and him

taking utility money to pay for printing and stamps, and dropping those letters in the mailbox and sitting there in a dark house a week later waiting for the orders to come in so he could pay his electric bill, because he spent the money on stamps – orders that never came in.

That went on for years, but the man still kept getting up, brushing himself off, and going right back at it, coming up with another project, writing another sales letter, putting that sales letter in the mail, just time after time after time.

The amount of intestinal fortitude it takes to do that is incredible. First of all, most people never get started, period. They just simply don't have the balls to get off the couch and do something. Those that do something, most of them, the first little obstacle they come across or the first failure that they have, it's, "Oh my god, I failed, I lost money. Woe is me," and they quit.

Halbert persisted time after time after time for five years. There is some sort of law of the universe. It's almost like the universe tests you, "You think you really want this, huh? You think you really want to be successful? You know what, we're going to see."

It just throws all kinds of crap at you and tests you time after time, and those that just have the guts to keep going and keep getting up and keep trying again and again are rewarded.

I asked Gary that when he was telling me about this. I said, "So what was your first project that you had a little bit of success with?" You know what that was? It was the coat of arms letter. That was the first mail order project that Gary Halbert did, the first one that was a success. To say that was a success is an understatement. That was a business that brought in tens or hundreds of millions of dollars I guess. I don't know if it still holds the record, but at one time it was the most widely-mailed sales letter in direct marketing history. It spawned a business called Halberts, which was later changed to Numa, which was just a huge business.

Even when Gary was still owner of it, because Gary sold out after a few years, he had to have 40 women working in the section that received the envelopes. It took 40 women just to pull the checks and money out of the envelopes and prepare his daily bank deposit.

BEN SETTLE: That's amazing! You know what always amazed me about that sales letter, and maybe there's a lesson in this too, especially since we're talking about swipe files – most people would not look at that ad and swipe it. I mean there's no headline, the original one I saw has misspellings everywhere, it's not long copy by any means, it's less than a full page.

It breaks a lot of rules that we're taught when you're learning how to write sales letters, and yet that was his biggest winner, the most mailed sales letter in history.

DOBERMAN DAN: Yup, and it came after nothing but failures. I asked him about it. He didn't even have what I call base hits. He didn't even have a little project that was

kind of, a tiny bit successful. He couldn't even claim, "Hey, on this project I made \$100."

No! He lost money on every single thing he did for years. Everything failed. The first one that worked spawned a multi-million dollar business that made a ton of people rich beyond belief.

When I saw his reaction to that piece that he'd worked on for Ed Dale for that make money on the internet book that failed, his reaction was just like, "Okay, what's next? What are we working on next?" and that was one Halbert strength. He just didn't let that stuff get him down. He just worked on something else.

It is so much easier to test now than it was back when he started. In the late 60's or early 70's when he started, direct mail was the only way to test. You'd have to wait several weeks for your results. If you ran an ad in the newspaper, it might be a week or so or a few days, but if you ran an ad in a magazine it may be months, because of the lead time and stuff like that.

Back then there was no telephone ordering. The only response was send a check or a money order through the mail. I mean it was a lot more difficult then than it is now, the environment he had to test in then.

BEN SETTLE: No PayPal, no 1ShoppingCart, no Google Analytics, no Google AdWords. [laughing]

DOBERMAN DAN: No credit cards! Back in the early days you couldn't even take credit cards that way. The only way you could do a credit card was in person. You actually had to swipe the card, so you couldn't even take orders with credit cards from mail order customers back then.

BEN SETTLE: There's one more question I have to ask you about this, because to me it just seems very telling on why that was his big hit. I don't know the full story behind it, but maybe you do.

I could have sworn I remember reading one of his newsletters where he said as he was testing versions of that coat of arms thing, from my understanding he tested maybe one or two or maybe more versions before the big hit, and he said he went door to door and started asking people questions before he mailed that final version, like he really got in with the market and found out what they wanted. Did he tell you anything about that?

DOBERMAN DAN: That very well may be true. I don't recall him saying he went door to door asking people about it, but I definitely believe that.

BEN SETTLE: It's like he wasn't just about the writing, it was about the salesmanship and getting into the market's head first.

DOBERMAN DAN: That's exactly right. Especially a lot of the young copywriters now, if they were to look at that sales letter today and not know who had written it and not know it's the famous coat of arms letter, they would probably think, "This thing's a

piece of crap.”

I’ve got the insight about the whole background to that entire project and that letter that unfortunately I am not prepared to reveal today, but I am going to do either an audio or a video about it, because it’s the behind the scenes stuff of why that was so successful.

Now I’m teasing you with something, but I’m just not prepared to talk about it today, and I really need to do it complete justice because it’s some of the heaviest marketing stuff you could ever learn. It goes beyond just mere copywriting and parlor tricks in direct marketing.

Sorry to tease you like that and then take it away, Ben.

BEN SETTLE: No, believe me, nobody appreciates a good tease and takeaway more than me. Anybody listening to this, they can always find you through www.DobermanDan.com and follow you there, and when it’s ready they’ll be the first to know.

DOBERMAN DAN: That’s right.

BEN SETTLE: The one thing you can say about his ads that you don’t see in everyone else’s ads is he was like this master storyteller. What did he teach you about writing compelling stories in your ads?

DOBERMAN DAN: Maybe I’m a little slow or something, but this didn’t finally make sense to me until several years later. When we met for the first time in person it was in Costa Rica when I had already moved to Costa Rica, and we went out to dinner. We were just hanging out and he was asking me about what I’m working on.

At the time I was in the bodybuilding niche. I was selling some info products and supplement products. He wasn’t really doing a hot seat, we weren’t really talking about business and it wasn’t like he was doing some sort of consultation. We were just hanging out. But that was pretty much it. I told him, “I’m selling information products and selling some bodybuilding supplements,” and that was it.

So we just continued the conversation about other stuff, and then I noticed a little while later he was just staring off into space. I’d never met Gary in person. This was the first time I’d met him in person. We’d spoken on the phone, but I really didn’t know him that well.

I’m just wondering, “Hmm, did I say something to offend him or is he just spacing off or what?” So I just shut up and let him stare off into space, and I ate my beans and rice and plantains, typical Costa Rican food that we had.

He stared off into space for probably 10-15 minutes. It was actually a little uncomfortable for me, and then he asked the waitress for a pen and a piece of paper, and he starts writing. Again I just kept my mouth shut. He didn’t say anything, he just starts writing.

He wrote a headline and wrote a lead and some sub-heads, and it was basically about a substance has been discovered in the jungles of Costa Rica which builds muscle like crazy. I wish I still had that piece. All my stuff in Costa Rica got stolen when I had come back to the States temporarily, and I saved that handwritten piece by him, which I planned on saving forever, and it got stolen along with my other CDs and books and stuff, and that breaks my heart.

He wrote out the headline, which like I said was something about this stuff discovered in the jungles of Costa Rica, and then the compelling story was like, "I was in Costa Rica exploring this and that on an eco-tour, and I noticed the natives were built really well with lots of muscle, low body fat, and it was this plant," and blah blah blah. It was just an awesome story.

It was not a complete ad, but it had some real cool sub-heads, a great headline, and he hands it to me. I'm reading it and I'm like, "This is awesome, Gary!"

He's like, "Yeah, go ahead and take it. It's yours. Maybe you can model something after it someday." It was a really good story. In fact, when we went back to my house a couple days later he saw it on the table and he actually called John Carlton from my place in Costa Rica.

He was like, "Hey John, check this out," and he starts reading the ad. I thought, "That's really cool. That could be a real successful ad," because the story just sucked you in. But it wasn't until several years later I found a product that had somewhat of a similar story, except the ingredient was from Malaysia.

I used Gary's ad as the model for my ad. It was the same thing, like "In the jungle of Malaysia, a secret herb has been found. The natives used it for sexual enhancement and for increased strength, so the universities there studied it and they found out that it increases testosterone. Even in castrated animals it increases testosterone."

I remember how Gary had used a compelling story in that ad he wrote, and I did the exact same thing and wrote an ad for it. I was so broke. Talk about the wolf being at the door. I was completely broke, living in a one-bedroom apartment in Miami with no furniture, recently married. All my stuff in Costa Rica had been stolen and I couldn't even pay the rent that month.

I had a small list of bodybuilders from a business I'd been ignoring for years while I was working with Halbert and doing freelance stuff. I thought, "Well, let's see if anybody on this list is still interested in something," and I sent that sales letter to them. It was just the most successful sales letter I'd ever done up to that point, and it was all because of the compelling story.

Like I said, it took several years to realize that when I was desperate and needed to make money that that would be the ad that would bring in a lot of money for me.

Then when I went back and read a lot of Gary's stuff, I realized that that was the basis

for a lot of his successes too, the power of a compelling story. For years the way humans passed along history was through the spoken word and telling stories, sitting around the campfire telling stories. Jesus taught in parables. This is ingrained in our DNA, listening to stories and learning from stories.

Stories cause mental pictures. You read something and it's a compelling story and it starts causing mental pictures. We're conditioned for that kind of stuff, and Halbert was the master of it.

That's basically when I learned the power of a compelling story. He showed me by doing it, by writing that ad at dinner in Costa Rica, but it took me several years to figure out the true power of it on my own by implementing it myself, and then like I said going back and looking at successful ads and seeing that the most successful ads are based on a compelling story – Joe Karbo's *Lazy Man's Way to Riches, They All Laughed When I Sat Down at the Piano* ad, and a bunch of others that are escaping my memory right now. You could probably remember, Ben, but they're all based on compelling stories.

BEN SETTLE: Besides goofing off and driving around in his boat and doing everything except working for weeks on end, what was his secret for never getting writer's block?

DOBERMAN DAN: That's easy, and that has served me well over the years. There would be numerous times where I'd be sitting looking at a blank page until I learned this technique from Halbert, and it's really simple.

You don't sit there and look at a blank piece of paper or a blank screen. That's the worst thing you can do. Just start writing something, it doesn't matter what it is. Gary even at one time made me sit there and literally write "blah blah blah."

That's what Gary told me. Just write "blah blah blah" until something comes to you, and then write that. It's served me well, but I've kind of added a few of my own little Doberman Dan refinements.

First of all, sitting down and saying you're going to write, to me, without putting a time limit on it is not always a good thing, at least for the way my brain works and for my work ethic. Set an actual time limit to it, whatever it is. I use the old 33 minutes and 33 seconds, which is what Eugene Schwartz used to recommend, so I have a little timer on the computer that counts down from 33 minutes and 33 seconds.

The minute that time starts going, I do exactly what Halbert told me. I just start writing, and it doesn't matter what it is. Now if I've done the goofing off for breakthrough ideas thing, I've read my research material and I've let it percolate for a several days or weeks, there's normally a lot of stuff up there in my cranium that is just itching to get out, so things start flowing right away.

If that's not the case, I literally do write, "blah, blah, blah." Sometimes I prefer to write "yada, yada, yada," but out of memory and respect for Gary, I've recently just stuck with "blah, blah, blah" because that's what he told me to write. It does not matter if I sit there for 33 minutes and 33 seconds writing "blah, blah, blah."

That is what I will do if that's what I have to, because I'm writing something. That has never, ever happened, and everybody that Gary has shared this technique with, that has never, ever happened to any of them either. What usually happens is you're looking at your blank page or your blank screen and you're thinking, "Oh crap, I can't think of anything to write. I've got 30 minutes to sit here and do this." You start writing "blah, blah, blah." What happens is something does pop into your head, and the second that happens you write that whatever it is. You're writing "blah, blah, blah, new breakthrough ingredient from the jungles of Costa Rica flushes every single speck of plaque out of your arteries in no time flat." Then your mind goes blank again. Instead of sitting there with your arms folded like, "Oh crap, I ran out of stuff to write," you immediately go back into writing "blah, blah, blah." What happens later is something else pops into your mind too, like another thought comes in. "Has no side effects. Is safer than prescription drugs." You write that.

I think you see where I'm going. The thing is just to write. Writers write. When you sit down to write, you write. If that's what you've got to do to get things going, that's what you've got to do. Like I said, that's what Gary taught. It works extremely well. I've never seen it fail.

People claim to get writer's block, and some guys claim to get it for years. I don't buy into that. If they would do this, they would find out that they don't have writer's block.

It doesn't matter, let's say, that after a half an hour you've got nothing but "blah, blah, blah" and one page of some decent stuff you can use. Great, that's a victory. Celebrate it, because more than likely you probably would have been sitting there looking at a blank page wringing your hands.

I've added a couple little Doberman Dan refinements to that in that a thing that seems to relieve anxiety. I never start with a blank page. There's no reason to. If that's how you work and you want to, that's fine, but there's a way around that. It doesn't matter if I'm writing out long-hand, which sometimes I still do, or if I'm working on the computer. At the top I write "Lead in here." Under that I write, "Big ass headline here." Under that I write, "Dear friend." I have that set up as a template in Microsoft Word. Under that I write, "Body copy here." Under that I write, "Subhead here." I never start with a blank page. Most of the time I start writing the bullets, and everything else is just a template with "Big ass headline here, subhead here, lead in here, Dear Friend, body copy here," and then I start writing the bullets. When I blank out writing the bullets, I literally write, "blah, blah, blah."

BEN SETTLE: I think it was Dan Kennedy I heard say this, but he was saying that work expands to fill the time anyway, so when you give yourself that little window - if you have to get it done, you will - but if you give yourself four hours to do it, it will take you four hours, but if you give yourself 33 minutes, it will take you 33 minutes.

DOBERMAN DAN: That's so true. To me sitting down thinking, "Okay, I've got four hours to write this. I'm going to spend four hours writing it," causes anxiety to me. That's just too big of a block of time. To sit down and know that I'm only going to write for the next 33 minutes and 33 seconds, that eases my mind.

Some days it turns out I may write four hours that day, or longer in the case of the product launch this week, but when it's done in 33 minute chunks, it's just easier to take, with way less anxiety and way less stress. At least for me, it keeps my mind a lot fresher. After 33 minutes, my little timer goes off. When I had a PC I had a timer you could program your own sounds into, and when it went off, I heard Cheech's voice from Cheech and Chong saying, "Bye-bye lard ass." When I heard, "Bye-bye lard ass," I knew it was time to get up and take a walk and rest.

So 33-minute chunks, the Halbert "blah, blah, blah" technique, and the Doberman Dan never start with a blank page technique.

BEN SETTLE: Those three together, you should never have that problem. There you go. Good stuff. Of all the Gary Halbert's lessons he taught you, which one was the most important success lesson?

DOBERMAN DAN: Most important success lesson from Gary Halbert? That was the one he lived. The one I had lived and was responsible for, the success I had in business that I didn't even realize until Gary clarified it, and that was probably one of his most favorite sayings, "Motion beats meditation."

He said it all the time, and it didn't matter what the topic – business, finding a used car. Actually it goes back to what we were talking about, never sitting down to write and wringing your hands not doing anything because you can't think of anything to write.

"Motion beats meditation." Writing "blah, blah, blah" is better than writing nothing, because the motion gets you moving forward and that's progress. Like I said, he said it all the time. He lived it. Look at all the failures he had before his first project hit, which was a multimillion dollar success. He just kept moving forward.

I'm amazed at how many intelligent, highly educated, highly talented people are just almost complete derelicts because they never take any action. This stuff is almost too easy. Taking action, even when you're doing stuff wrong, still works and gets you moving in the right direction in a lot of cases.

Woody Allen used to say, "99% of success is just showing up." I've found that to be true. Gary found that to be true. "Motion beats meditation." I hear people talk and talk about what they're going to do and tell me plans about projects they're going to start, businesses they're going to start, dreams they're going to pursue, relationships they're going to pursue, and they never take any action, or they start to take a little bit of action and encounter some resistance and then they promptly quit. I'm talking about people with all of the talent in the world, people way more talented and gifted than I am, that just have really sucky mediocre lives because they never take action. They're always meditating on it and they're talking about it but they never get moving.

Here's another Halbertism. "You don't have to get it perfect. You just have to get it going." You've just got to start moving forward. When he was staying with me in Costa Rica, he came to stay for a week or two and then decided, "This is pretty nice." Actually,

a big thing in that decision was the Securities and Exchange Commission started an investigation based on an ad he wrote for a stock trading system.

He thought, "Costa Rica's pretty nice and they're investigating me in the US, so I think I'm going to stay in Costa Rica."

BEN SETTLE: Smart move.

DOBERMAN DAN: He decides he's going to look for an apartment. Me and another friend of Gary's in Costa Rica, Chris Rabalais, were in my apartment and I got the newspaper. I'm asking him, "Gary, what part of town do you want to live in? How many bedrooms? Do you want to rent a house? Do you want to rent an apartment?"

He got tired of all the questions and snatched the paper out of my hand and he says, "Give me that. Motion beats meditation. We're just going to go down the list and start calling apartments. We're going to find one that way." Actually, in that case that wasn't such a good idea because all the ads were in Spanish, and Gary didn't speak Spanish at the time.

It turns out he didn't need to find an apartment. He wound up staying in my house with me. That same thing did work looking for a used car when I was in Miami, just picking up the paper and calling from the top of the list until you find one that sounds good.

I was, "Oh well, geez. I should probably decide what I want. Here's my price range. Gee, I don't know if I want a Pontiac. Maybe I should get something cheap like an older Chevy." He snatches the paper out of my hand like, "You know what? We're going to lose the entire day if we just dilly-dally around. Motion beats meditation."

It applies in business and your personal life. Sitting around thinking about, sitting around reading about it, sitting around studying, sitting around talking about it really accomplishes nothing. It's motion and taking action is what gets things done. It doesn't even have to be perfect. You just have to get it going.

That's the most important success lesson I learned from Gary Halbert.

BEN SETTLE: What was the big direct mail lesson he taught you? I know he was big on direct mail. I know you're one of the few marketers that I know and talk to on a regular basis who even uses direct mail anymore. What did he teach you about direct mail and why is it so important for everybody else?

DOBERMAN DAN: Gary was the master at direct mail, that's for sure. It seems like most of the marketing guys nowadays have gotten their start since the internet and don't have any clue about it, but millions are still being made every day with direct mail.

It's one of my biggest secrets, and it's a huge secret if you have an online business. If you're not using direct mail or don't know how to use direct mail, you're using about 50% of your potential income on the table. I knew the power of direct mail. I'd been using it before I'd met Gary Halbert.

When we were roommates in Costa Rica, I tried this idea that was pretty cool. I started a customer newsletter for the body building market I was in at the time. I had not been active in that business because I was doing other projects, but I still had this list. I thought, "I'll send a newsletter to these guys." I sent a 12-page newsletter, but actually four pages were editorial content and eight pages were a sales pitch for a nutritional supplement. I sent it out to that list which I'd kind of been ignoring, so it wasn't like I'd been communicating to them regularly. I think it may have been the first direct mail piece they had gotten from me in years, and I thought it got a pretty good response. I thought, "Dang, that's pretty cool. This worked out well. I'm going to show it to Halbert and see what he thinks." I told him the results I got, which weren't bad. I don't remember what it was. I'm not always so concerned about percentage of response. In most cases, I really don't care about that. What I'm more concerned with is return on investment. It got a good response, but more importantly, it got a really good return on investment. So I show the newsletter to Halbert and he reads it over and he says, "Take the product pitch out of this newsletter, reformat it to look like a personal letter, put it in Courier font, and personalize the salutation." Now it's no longer, "Dear friend" it's "Dear Jim" or whatever the first name is. He says, "Put this letter in a #10 envelope with just your return address in the corner card and address the envelope with a Courier font" – Courier font is what it looks like from a typewriter, if anybody even remembers those – "and address the envelope with a Courier font with the customer's name and address and make it look like A pile mail.

Gary's famous talk on A pile and B pile was A pile is stuff that looks like it's either personal correspondence or maybe a bill or a check or something like that. B pile mail is obviously commercial mail. He wanted me to make it look like a personal correspondence.

I don't know why everybody always wants to question their mentor, so I thought, "This works pretty good. Maybe I should just do it again next month, but change the editorial content a little bit." I was going to ask him that, but I knew better so all I did was say, "All right, Gary." I did it. I don't remember by how much, but the response to just the product pitch made out to look more like a personal letter or personal correspondence greatly eclipsed the combination newsletter/sales pitch. Gary never explained why I should do that. He just told me to do it. Again, I was left on my own to figure out why it works. What I figured out is that any distraction or anything that distracts your prospect from the sales message or that delays your prospect from taking action on the sales message or delays them from the sales message is death of a sale.

I wanted to sell something. That editorial content as a newsletter was just an idea that I had that I thought, "Maybe I can slip under the radar that way." It was a distraction to the sales message. Gary knew what he was doing. It showed me the power of direct mail. Delay is the death of a sale. Distraction is the death of a sale.

You don't want to send a letter out and all of a sudden you open it and a little animated clown comes jumping out doing a dance and singing a song, like they do on TV commercials. If you want to sell something, send your sales pitch to the prospect without the distractions, without stuff that will delay them.

That was a lesson I got from Gary Halbert. That was my big direct mail lesson from him.

BEN SETTLE: Didn't this similar type of thing happen with one of your promotions on the internet, or you sent a letter out for a special offer and you had a similar thing where there was a little delay and it hurt your sales?

Even though you did all this other cool stuff, like you made it look like a handwritten letter and all that, didn't that sort of happen to you recently but applied to the internet?

DOBERMAN DAN: Yeah, exactly. I swear, as soon as that thing failed, I swear I could hear Halbert telling me, "You shit weasel, you know better than that. Delay is the death of a sale." I could hear his voice saying, "Delay is the death of a sale." Yeah, the same thing happened.

I had this great idea that I'm going to send out a handwritten letter on actual yellow lined, legal pad paper, personalized also in a number 10 envelope that's also handwritten. It was in a font that looks handwritten. A handwritten letter, blue ink on yellow lined paper, personalized, in an envelope addressed by hand, and I'm thinking this thing is going to completely kick ass.

Inside the letter, it's very personal. I say stuff like, "Hey, the economy sucks." It's very me to you, very earthy, down to earth kind of stuff, exactly like you'd say in a personal letter. You wouldn't write your friend and say, "I've been contemplating for quite some time that the lack of funds may have prohibited you..."

"Dude, the economy sucks. That blows, but what the hell can we do about it? Here's a way to save a few bucks." That's exactly how I wrote this letter, and I directed them to a website where they could get a special for a list of my most active and my multi-buyers, my preferred customers.

I did a lot of things right – the personalization, the handwritten letter, the hand addressed envelope, the style of copy – just a lot of things right. The list selection was meticulous. I picked out multi-buyers. These were guys who had bought numerous times, like more than three times over the past three-month period.

I had a very highly responsive list and I was just counting the money. I was thinking this is going to completely kick ass, and it just totally sucked. When I sat down and looked and realized I had maybe one or two orders from this out of the best possible list I could have is when I heard Halbert's voice saying, "Delay is the death of a sale, you shit weasel."

It delayed the sale by sending them to a website. They're going to get the letter and maybe they'll look at it and think, "There's a special for me on that website. I'll look at it later." Forget it, it's gone. You just lost the sale. If I would have put the sales pitch right in there, and I'll test it again soon, I have a feeling that's just going to be a really big success.

BEN SETTLE: I've wanted to ask you about this for a while. What did Gary Halbert teach you about how to make millions and still be broke?

DOBERMAN DAN: Halbert taught me a lot about money. He taught me how to make an awful lot of it, and he taught me what not to do if you want to keep the money you make. I asked him about it, because that coat of arms letter and the business that it spawned, he told me he could have retired for the rest of his life from that if he would have managed his money better.

My reply to that was, "Gary, how could you make tens of millions of dollars and still be broke?" Halbert was always broke. He never had any money. It didn't matter how much he made. When I first started working with him, he had a stock trading system that he was personally taking \$40,000, \$50,000 a month out of, his part of it.

Then he'd get a big client gig or something like that and maybe pull in another \$30,000-40,000 from that. So \$50,000, \$80,000, \$100,000 in a month, but yet the man was always broke. I never understood that. "How in the world can you make tens of millions and not have anything to show for it, Gary? I don't get it."

His reply shocked me actually. It must have been filed away deep in my subconscious, because it came back to me years later when I really needed it. Like I said, Gary was born and raised in the same town as me, Barberton, Ohio. It's a little working class, blue-collar town. He told me when the coat of arms thing really hit and he had that thing humming along, he invited his mom and dad to see his operation. His dad came in and saw the room where he had to employ 40 women just to take the money out of the envelopes every day and make his bank deposit.

His dad sees the tens of thousands of letters coming in with checks. He sees tens of thousands of direct mail letters being prepared to be mailed. Basically, his dad witnessed one of the most massively successful mail order businesses in the history of mail order at that time.

His dad says to him, "The Halberts have never had any money. You better enjoy this while it lasts, boy, because it's going to be a short ride." Actually, for Gary, it was kind of a short ride as far as that kind of money. That is what Gary explained as how a person can make millions and still wind up broke.

Basically, Gary had been told all of his life he's white trash from Barberton, Ohio. "You're never going to amount to anything." Stuff like his dad said in his business, "The Halberts have never had any money. This ain't going to last." That kind of early program gets so ingrained in your subconscious and in your self-image that regardless of how much money you make, your subconscious will do everything in its power to get you back to your comfort zone.

If that is your comfort zone and that is what you've been brainwashed to believe, that you are white trash from Barberton, Ohio, your family's never had any money, you're never going to have any money, it doesn't matter if you're making tens of millions. You will do something subconsciously to screw it all up and to get you back to your comfort

zone.

It is possible to overcome that kind of negative programming and reprogram yourself. That is the exact kind of negative programming I received all of my life also. My mom's family were dirt poor from Mississippi, bare foot hillbillies from Mississippi. Now we live in Barberton, Ohio where we're poor. We're never going to have anything.

It takes a lot of work to overcome that negative programming, but you can. Gary even explained that to me. He said, "When you're raised like that, you'll do whatever you have to do to get back to your comfort zone, regardless of how much money you're making." I thought, "He's just full of crap. It's just poor money management or something." I didn't understand it at that time. It wasn't until a few years later that I really understood that your expenses always rise to match your income somehow. You really have to keep a handle on that. If you've had that kind of negative programming growing up and you've got that negative programming about money, you have to do whatever you have to do to overcome that.

Money is neutral. It's not bad or good. It's what you do with it. You need to get your head straight about that, and on top of that, here's another lesson from another Barberton, Ohio guy. Halbert taught me about that about negative programming and your past dragging you back into your comfort zone, regardless of how much money you're making, but another guy from Barberton, Ohio taught me about your expenses always rise to match your income. That's my grandfather. He always tried to show me how he saved money when he was young. He showed me a savings account book with deposits of \$0.05, \$0.10, stuff like that. Unfortunately, I didn't get it at the time. I get it now. It took me a few years later and me making and losing several fortunes. You can be broke on \$2,000 a month. You can be broke on \$200,000 a month or \$2 million a month.

The lesson from Halbert is if you've got that kind of negative programming about money, you need to overcome that, however it is. You need to do that through counseling or reading books like *Think and Grow Rich* and stuff like that, and just pouring in a bunch of positive stuff to overcome the years of negative programming you had as a kid.

The second part of it is the Doberman-Dan part of it, which I'm going to impart, which Halbert never learned but I'm going to teach it to you now. You can thank my grandfather for this. You need to live under your means. 70% I think is the minimum in my opinion. You need to live on 70% of your income. That allows 10% to be used for charity or whatever, 10% for investments, 10% for savings, and if you can live on less than that, even better. If you live on 50% of your income, you're going to have a whole lot more peace of mind. At one point not very long ago, just a few years ago, I was living on 5% of my income. You can't even imagine the peace of mind when you know you can live on 5% of what you make. If you're a freelancer, you're not so worried about if that next job is coming in. You're not so worried about if there's a down month in business. Those are your two lessons on how not to be broke - the Gary Halbert part and the Doberman-Dan part.

BEN SETTLE: Did Gary ever get through that? By the end of his life, did he finally

overcome that, or was that something that plagued him forever?

DOBERMAN DAN: No, that plagued him forever.

BEN SETTLE: Even though he was consciously aware of it?

DOBERMAN DAN: Yeah, he was consciously aware of it. He could never get a handle on it. Back in 2003 when I was still living in Costa Rica, I went back to Barberton, Ohio for my 20th high school reunion. I went and saw the house that Gary grew up in and actually took a picture of it to bring back to Gary.

Gary was staying at my place in Costa Rica at the time. It was just a piss poor area and still white trash people living in that house years later. It's really, really hard to overcome that early programming when your own father is telling you stuff like, "You're never going to amount to anything, boy. Best you can probably do is join the Army, and you might not even make it there."

It's really hard to overcome that kind of programming, and that's what Gary said was his biggest problem with money, why he could never keep it. Somehow his subconscious tried to get him back to his comfort zone, which was having no money.

BEN SETTLE: Very good advice though. I can understand how that would be easy to get on that treadmill, and all of a sudden you're trying to finance stuff that you're paying for with money that might not necessarily be there every month.

DOBERMAN DAN: It took me learning that lesson the hard way, especially when things are really, really good. You always think that it's going to be that way forever. Your expenses start creeping up, you buy a bigger house, you buy some cool toys, and then in being self-employed or being in this business where all of a sudden we've got a down economy, now that you've let your expenses creep up and income is down, now you're in a bad position. Gary never taught me this. Gary was not able to teach me this. This is what I learned by observing, to live under your means. Just because things are going great now and you're just raking in the fungolas like crazy, doesn't necessarily mean it's going to stay that way. There are ups and downs.

BEN SETTLE: To kind of segue into the next question, which surprisingly kind of complements your last answer there, Gary, I understand, was not this big, "think positive and everything's just going to fall into place" type of guy.

DOBERMAN DAN: No, he wasn't. I'm trying to think, what's the saying he was so fond of quoting? He used to say, "Things always look darkest right before they go totally black." Or he'd say, "The light at the end of a tunnel is actually a train coming right at you." When he was living in Costa Rica, especially when that SEC investigation of his stock trading ad was going on, he was not a happy camper, to say the least.

We walked to this little bagel place every morning to get breakfast, and he'd just talk about all the different bad things going on in the world and that was the conversation the whole time. There was no, "Rah, rah, things are going to get better." There was no,

"Rah, rah, this ad will work and it's going to change the world and make us multimillionaires and make the client millions of dollars." At that point, when he was going through some struggles, it was just focusing on everything that was wrong in the world. At the time I let it get to me, because when you're around that for too long it does kind of get to you. It was also a great lesson in that I figured out that, yeah, sure, he was down at the time. All he did was talk about negative stuff, but then we'd go back home and we'd get to work and just do the stuff we needed to do. We'd write copy and just make progress on the work we had to do. A lot of that work was incredibly successful. Everybody has a different personality type. There are some people that are optimists, some people that are not, some people that are complete pessimists. You don't have to be the rah, rah, jumping around, Tony Robbins kind of personality to be a huge raging success in this business, in direct response marketing or copywriting.

That was an important lesson for me, because I kind of struggle with the same things that Gary does. When things are going wrong, I'm not the guy who's going to be saying, "It's okay. The sun's going to come out tomorrow and the birds are going to sing, and doggone it, we've got our health and everything's going to be great."

When I'm down, those are the kind of guys I want to choke out. When things are crappy, I'm the guy who's bitching about it. I say, "You know what? Things suck. This sucks. I'm not happy." That's just my personality type. I honestly used to think, after reading all the success literature like *Think and Grow Rich*, *Master Key to Riches* and *Positive Thinking*, I'm thinking, "Wow, I'm never going to be successful." I'm pretty positive most of the time, but I go through some pretty down periods where I get pretty fricking negative. I'm thinking, "I'm cursed. I'll never be able to enjoy the kind of success I want to." That's not true at all. If you're down and you're in a negative funk, like Halbert back there for a time in Costa Rica or like we all go through, and you are feeling crappy and you're focusing on the negative, as long as you keep making progress and keep taking action, "Motion beats meditation," that's okay. You're still going to make progress. Yes, you still can be successful, even if you aren't a jumping up and down, raving optimist.

BEN SETTLE: This can be applied to a lot of things. You can harness your fear or your anger. Those things can be tremendously helpful. You can get more stuff done when you're angry, down, scared or depressed if you focus it than you can when you're all happy, jump and down, "I just got shot through the heart but everything's cool. I'm thinking positively type stuff."

I remember hearing stories about this that Gary would show up at these seminars with a hat or a T-shirt that said, "Clients suck." What was that all about? What did you learn about his clients suck attitude?

DOBERMAN DAN: That is true. He'd wear a hat that said, "Clients suck." He'd say it at seminars, "Clients suck." I'd see him treat clients - he wouldn't be nice with them. He'd say stuff to them like, "Why are you fighting me on this? Why don't you just sit down and shut up and do what I'm telling you so you can get rich? If not, I'm sick of working with you. You can take a hike."

It was amazing. The more he said, "Clients suck" and the more he said he didn't want to

take on any clients, the more people wanted to hire him. It wasn't until later I realized that's ingenious. Basically, what he's doing is he's doing a takeaway. He's telling them he's not going to take on any clients. He hates clients. They all suck.

He'd go teach a seminar on copywriting and he'd show up with a "Clients suck" hat. He'd talk about how clients suck. He never wants to take on any more clients. They're all a pain in the ass. "I'm going to teach you in this seminar everything you need to know about copywriting so you can do this yourself, because there's no way in hell that any of you are hiring me because I don't take clients."

He literally would. He'd teach the whole seminar and literally teach them everything he knew about writing copy and still would be swamped by people begging him to take them as a client, with checks in hand. "Please, Gary, please." Of course, he'd always, "Oh, all right." He'd reluctantly accept their checks. It wasn't until a few years later that I realized, "That's just his way of doing a takeaway." They've shown up at the seminar. He's told them clients suck. He's abused them. He's shown them everything they need to know to write their own copy, but they didn't show up to the seminar to learn how to write copy. Most of them didn't. They showed up at the seminar just to be sure he knew what he was talking about. Once they realized that and realized that they couldn't hire him, there was nothing they wanted to do more than hire him to write copy. It was an ingenious positioning method.

BEN SETTLE: Do you ever notice how the very best sales and marketing principles are the ones that take the most guts? Like if somebody just starting out did that, they would probably be swamped with clients within a couple of weeks, no matter what they're selling – it doesn't have to be copywriting. You're that person at the top of the mountain.

What's the other one? Candor, where you just be blatantly honest and admit flaws. These are things that nobody ever wants to do, but yet didn't Gary do these types of things all the time, these real gutsy things, and they just worked like gangbusters?

DOBERMAN DAN: That's right, that's right, exactly. You're talking about being the guy at the top of the mountain. You don't necessarily have to slave and pay your dues for years and years. You do have to pay your dues and you've got to learn your craft and learn how to do it, but being the guy at the top of the mountain has more to do with positioning and attitude than most anything else.

As Dan Kennedy says, "A big part of it is when you quote them your price, you do it without snickering or while keeping a straight face."

BEN SETTLE: You mentioned positioning. If you had to take away every sales thing you know and you just had positioning, you don't even need anything else. One of the people who agreed to let me interview them for this series is Ken McCarthy, and it's all going to be about positioning like that because it's so powerful.

I've heard him teach this kind of stuff, and it is amazing what people do when they're positioned right. In fact, it's almost a danger because some people really aren't ready to be at the top of the mountain, and all of a sudden there are expectations on them

because they position themselves so well.

That is just amazing that Gary would go to that length. "I'm not taking you on, so don't even bother asking."

DOBERMAN DAN: Yeah, and they'd still just practically beg with check in hand, and I have a gut feeling – well, not a gut feeling, I'm almost positive about this – if he would have said, "Hey, I'm here to teach you copywriting, but really you should hire a guy like me because you're going to take a long time to learn copywriting so I'm available for hire," I just have a feeling that most of the people would not be very hot to hire him like they were when he said, "Clients suck," and there's no way that they could hire him.

BEN SETTLE: What were some Doberman Dan sales and marketing adventures while speaking at Gary Halbert's seminars?

DOBERMAN DAN: I think I only spoke at two or three. I'm blanking out. It was only two or three. At the very first one, it was Gary, me, and Caleb O'Dowd, and we were like the panel. Gary had me and Caleb up there at the front table there for the whole seminar.

First of all, speaking at Gary Halbert's seminar, I was so freaking nervous. I had done a little bit of speaking in front of people, but all of a sudden to be "anointed" by the great Gary Halbert of being worthy of speaking at one his seminars, I was so nervous.

All of a sudden, all of these people were coming up to me wanting to shake my hand and wanting to pick my brain. Before, I was a nobody. Nobody had even heard of me. Now all of a sudden, people were coming to me for advice. This one guy asks me about a project that he had, which was destined for failure. I knew it was soon as he described it. I forget what I told him. I'm like, "You know what? You come up on the hot seat and we'll deal with your project then." Hot seats are where Gary would bring people up from the audience and they'd state their business problem, and then we'd tell him what he needs to do to solve his problem or increase his sales or whatever.

The reason I said that was because I didn't want to be the one to tell this guy that his project was a big flop. There was no way it was ever going to work, and he needed to cut it off right now before he lost any more money, time, or invested anymore emotional energy in it. I just didn't have the guts to tell him that. I said, "Just come up during the hot seats and we'll handle it there." I wanted Halbert to do it. On the break I said, "This guy's going to come up during one of the hot seats." I told him about the project and I said, "There's no way this is ever going to work, Gary, but I'll let you handle it."

Gary's like, "Nope, nope, not going to do it. You're going to have to do it." I'm thinking, "Oh great. I'm nervous enough as it is speaking at this thing, and now I've got to tell this guy in public something that I didn't have the guts to tell him in private." I had to tell this guy that his project sucked. It was a stupid idea. It had not even a snowball's chance in hell of working, and he needed to drop it and move onto something else right now.

Gary recorded this seminar. I forget what he called it. He either didn't record it or he

recorded it and the little things he was using to record it didn't work. He was trying to record them with iPods. I'm so glad, because as I look back my voice was shaking and my hands were shaking on the microphone.

I had to tell this guy in front of all these people his project sucked and he had to drop it. I figured out a real diplomatic way to do it and I positioned him – basically, the product was for women who were in abusive relationships. I was able to take that and position him as, "Everybody look at this guy. This guy is such a good guy. He is such a caring guy. He's passionate about getting these women out of these abusive relationships."

I went on and on and you could see this guy, his chest puffed up a little bit and he was feeling really good about it. I told him the reason why this would not work. I went into all of that. The way I turned it around was, "You're so passionate about this. Let's find you something else in a way easier niche and a way easier product to market so you can make a bunch of money. With that money, you can fund this project for the women in abusive relationships and don't worry about the fact that it's losing money." This guy was feeling really good, and you could tell the crowd was taking it well. Halbert stands up, "ATP! ATP! Do you know what stands for? Abandon This Project. This thing sucks. This is a stupid idea and I'm going to tell you why." He was really that blunt. "These women want to be in those abusive relationships. There's a reason why. Their self-image won't allow them to be in a decent relationship."

Everything I'd done to try to position this guy and make him feel good about dropping this project, and Halbert just drops the hammer on him. In looking back, I thought, "Well, hey, at least, I'm not the bad guy." In looking back, I thought, "I'm the one who did a disservice to that guy. What he really needed to hear was what Halbert said."

It's the truth. He needed to be hit upside the head with a hammer because he would not let this project go. In fact, I even found out later on, Caleb Osborne, a friend of ours who's a copywriter, was in the audience, and this guy at that seminar, even after we told him his project sucked, hired Caleb to write more copy for his product for the women in abusive relationships.

BEN SETTLE: Did it bomb? Do you know?

DOBERMAN DAN: It bombed. He could have Gary Halbert, Jim Rutz, Gary Bencivenga – he could dig Robert Collier up from the grave and have the best copy in the world and that thing was never going to work.

BEN SETTLE: But probably saved people a lot of money, time, and frustration.

DOBERMAN DAN: That's exactly right. That's what most of them needed to hear. They needed to have the hammer whacked upside the head and told their projects sucked.

BEN SETTLE: What was Halbert's offline lesson?

DOBERMAN DAN: That's something that's made a huge difference in my income.

When I started out in direct response and mail order, I started out the old-fashioned way with magazine ads, newspaper ads, and direct mail. The internet was not at all like it is now. I think back when I started it was not for public use at all.

I started online in '97 with real basic stuff, and then by early 2000 I kind of got seduced by it and had abandoned my offline stuff in the body building market. I remember when I first moved to Costa Rica, and I was talking to Gary on the phone. This was before we had met in person for the first time. He was asking about what I'm doing and I told him, "I'm doing this stuff online." He asked about my offline stuff and I told him, "I'm not doing it anymore. I've dropped my magazine ads and I haven't been doing any direct mail." He said, "That was a really stupid decision."

He asked me how much money I was making. Gary was never embarrassed or intimidated to ask that kind of information. He asked how much I was making a month or how much I was grossing in a month and I told him. He said, "If you would start doing the offline stuff in addition to the online stuff, you could probably add at least one zero to your bottom line or maybe a couple of zeros."

I thought, "I think he's got a point there." It was going pretty well and I thought, "This is great. I can drop the offline stuff. I don't have to pay for those ads, because the internet is free. I can grow the business or get the same amount of business coming in and not have to pay for advertising." Free basically kind of sucks.

It was true. I fought that for a while, to be honest with you. I didn't immediately do that. It was a couple years down the road when things weren't really growing at all. In fact, they'd maybe go up a little bit and kind of go back down. The online stuff just wasn't cutting it, but when I went back to my offline stuff along with it, the business really started growing and growing very quickly.

I do understand why people say they want to start on the internet, because what they think is an internet business, they equate that with a certain type of lifestyle. You don't need a building. You can have other people do stuff and your messages can be delivered without doing any work. What they really are looking at is a lifestyle when they say, "I want an internet business." I don't understand that. I want a successful business, and what form of media I use to advertise or promote it is not important. The internet is just a form of media, just like a newspaper is or advertising in a magazine.

I had that kind of lifestyle that these internet-marketing gurus talk about -- "Complete freedom, just work a few hours a day." I had that kind of lifestyle back before the internet even existed when I was doing this stuff offline because you can sub out all this other stuff.

You can sub out your product fulfillment, your phone orders, your customer service, and sending your direct mail. All that stuff can be subcontracted out. The internet didn't come and make a magic thing and now all of a sudden, everybody can have this internet business lifestyle. I had that before the internet ever existed, or at least existed in its present form. Halbert was completely right about that. It's just a form of media. Use it as that. Offline media is still a great way to reach customers, and in many circumstances

it's more affordable than the internet and more effective. There are certain niches that the only way you're going to really reach them is by using offline media in combination with your online stuff.

That was my big lesson from Halbert on offline. It still holds true today. The internet marketing gurus never talk about it, probably because they don't know about it. Those of us who were in mail order before the internet existed, this is how we had to do it with space ads, magazines, newspapers, direct mail, postcards, radio, and TV. It all still works just as well today.

Let me channel the voice of Gary Halbert right now or the spirit of Gary Halbert and tell you, "If you're just marketing online right now, you're leaving a lot of money on the table. You literally could add at least one zero to your bottom line, maybe two zeros, if you start doing offline marketing too. "If you're afraid to do it because you don't know how to do it, seek out people who know how to do it. It's not that difficult. Listen to your old pal Doberman Dan and Gary Halbert, and don't look at the internet as a business. Just look at it as a form of media and use all the media that is available to you."

BEN SETTLE: This call has been great. Is there anything final you want to add? I know people can contact you at www.DobermanDan.com, but is there anything else you want, any final parting words of Gary Halbert-inspired wisdom and advice that you'd like to share?

DOBERMAN DAN: I'm trying to think of something that Gary Halbert would say. This isn't coming from me, so don't get mad at me. Gary Halbert would probably say, "Don't be a shit weasel. Quit sitting on your ass, talking about what you're going to do. Motion beats meditation. Go out there and do something, even if you do it wrong. Do something. At least you're moving forward."