

# Guaranteed Marketing™

“Your guide to marketing dominance and small business success!”

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## **Important Traffic-Building Announcement!**

You have a Web site, right?

Want to learn about the most-effective traffic building tool I've ever seen or used in my 7 years online?

It's called StartBlaze ... created by Internet marketing genius, Mark Joyner, of Aesop.com. It's breathtakingly cool. Powerful. And FREE!

You can try it out yourself and start driving hordes of visitors to your Web site within 5 minutes. Free.

Learn more here -

<http://www.guaranteedmarketing.com/startblaze>

Kevin Donlin, Profit Grower for Small Business Clients  
Guaranteed Marketing LLC

## FREE Marketing Copywriting Course

It doesn't matter what you're marketing online ... you need words to sell it. The right words help you find more clients, get them to pay more and buy more often.

In other words, without words, you're out of business.

The **Netwriting Masters** course worked wonders on my online copywriting skills. It's an intensive five-day e-mail course that shows you exactly how to write effective, profit-making copy for your Web site or e-mail messages.

To enroll for free and start making money for your small business, just send a blank e-mail to [twmsgmco@sitesell.net](mailto:twmsgmco@sitesell.net)

## Low-Cost E-Commerce Solution

Looking for an inexpensive way to accept credit cards over the Internet? [ClickBank](#) is the answer. I researched 14 e-commerce solutions for three months before choosing [ClickBank](#) to help sell my latest e-book. This is the company I recommend to friends at parties when they ask me: "How do you sell your products online?"

[ClickBank](#) lets you deliver your products and services over the Internet and get paid by credit card. They handle all the electronic fulfillment, give you detailed reports, mail you a check and, best of all, there's a free affiliate program built right in, so you can tap the awesome power of affiliate marketing. I strongly recommend [ClickBank](#).

## Introduction

Welcome to Guaranteed Marketing!

In this report, you'll learn proven methods that can transform your small or home-based business into a money-making machine. One that produces years of security and enjoyment for you and your loved ones.

What separates Guaranteed Marketing from the hundreds of other marketing books and theories out there?

**Guaranteed Marketing teaches that when you remove all risk to the buyer by guaranteeing the results of your work, your sales will soar. Period.**

By removing the risk, you grease the skids and make it incredibly easy for people to buy from you. Because, although nobody likes being sold, everyone loves to buy!

You'll learn how guaranteeing results for customers is an incredibly powerful way to increase sales. And how to create a guarantee that will cause a shock wave in your industry and cause customers to practically line up to give you their money ... no matter what product or service you're selling.

Keep in mind that I haven't invented a new system of marketing here, although my strong emphasis on risk removal through guarantees is rare. My purpose is to help you uncover the hidden success that lies dormant in your business right now.

Using the techniques and principles outlined in this book, I doubled sales three years straight, for my home business, Guaranteed Resumes. (I believe so strongly in the power of guarantees that I made it part of my company name!) Sales and profits have reached the point where I no longer need to advertise. My Web site ([www.gresumes.com](http://www.gresumes.com)) and referral systems do all the work for me.

Much of this report is based on the best methods of the world's greatest marketing minds. People like [Jay Conrad Levinson](#), [Jay Abraham](#), [Claude Hopkins](#), [David Ogilvy](#), [Paul Hartman](#), [Jack Trout](#) and [Al Ries](#), [Michael Gerber](#), [Joe Vitale](#) and others. I've studied, modified and adopted their most effective, most actionable marketing techniques in my business. They've worked for me and they'll work for you, too.

This report also borrows from the world's greatest businesses. You don't have to love what they do or what they stand for to recognize their marketing brilliance. These companies offer a glimpse of what you can accomplish in your small businesses. Companies like Microsoft, 3M, Intel, Gateway, Dell, Nordstrom, Coke and many others.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to FedEx, especially their Electronic Commerce Marketing Department. I assisted them for nearly three years in my last corporate position before striking out on my own.

In my duties as Webmaster for FedEx, I was fortunate enough to work with the very best and brightest marketing minds anyone could ever hope to encounter ... while answering more than 11,000 customer e-mails in two languages. You might say I was baptized by fire into e-commerce.

The FedEx corporate culture is an entrepreneurial one and encourages the kind of marketing excellence I will try to help you recreate in your own business.

Finally, I would consider it a privilege if you would share your successes with the readers of future editions. Please send e-mail to [kevin@guaranteedmarketing.com](mailto:kevin@guaranteedmarketing.com)

Now, let's get started creating a Guaranteed Marketing system for your business!

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<http://www.guaranteedmarketing.com/>

Minneapolis, Minnesota  
November 2001

## **\$104,000 Tool Kit**

Below are some of the tools I've used to generate \$104,000 in sales from my business Web sites in 2000. They'll help increase sales for your small business, too!

After spending nearly \$10,000 and hundreds of hours researching and perfecting my online marketing techniques since 1995, I don't recommend just any old resources. These are the best online marketing tools I've found — the same ones I recommend to friends.

Now, I recommend them to you.

### **Two Best Online Marketing Books**

- Since learning and applying the Web-site design and marketing techniques of [Make Your Site Sell](#), by Dr. Ken Evoy, I've increased sales and profits 13 months straight, while doing less work than I used to. You can always tell which Web site owners have read [Make Your Site Sell](#) — they're the ones making money!
- You've probably heard about Marlon Sanders' [Amazing Formula That Sells Products Like Crazy](#). It's really a 10-day Master's Degree in Online Marketing. That's the only way to describe the massive amounts of profitable information I found in it.

It gives you the nuts and bolts on how to create products from thin air, write a killer sales letter, do deals that increase Web site traffic, profit from backend sales (overlooked by 95% of small business owners) and more. Highly recommended.

## Spread The Word!

If you have friends, relatives or neighbors with a small or home-based business, feel free to spread the word about Guaranteed Marketing! Here's what you can do:

- Send this file to your friends or business associates by e-mail
- Send your friends to [www.guaranteedmarketing.com](http://www.guaranteedmarketing.com) so they can download it themselves
- Give this file away on your Web site
- Print out and give away as many copies as you'd like (just don't sell it!)

## What is Guaranteed Marketing?

This first and most important part of this report will explain why a guarantee is one of the most powerful marketing tools you can create for your business.

Because so few businesses guarantee the results of their work, the opportunity for you to stand out in your industry is staggering!

This part will explain how and why guarantees work, then show you how to create a million-dollar guarantee for your business.

The principles in these next two chapters have helped me double my sales every year for three years straight. They're the foundation for the success of such businesses as FedEx, Domino's Pizza, Land's End and Saturn.

## Part 1: The Simple Secret

### The facts

Here's a quick marketing quiz. Look at this list of highly successful companies. What one thing do they all have in common?

Nordstrom  
FedEx  
Domino's Pizza  
Prestone  
LensCrafters

All of them rose to prominent industry positions because they used strong guarantees of satisfaction, usually in the form of a money-back guarantee. These companies reversed the risk of doing business with them. And tremendous profits followed. You should do the same. Strong guarantees form the cornerstone of Guaranteed Marketing, so please pay close attention -- this is the most important chapter in the book!

First some good news and bad news. The good news is there's never been a better time to own your own small business. The economy is booming in North America and much of the world, technology advances such as the personal computer and the Internet let you compete with the IBMs of the world, and society now accepts that it's OK to step off the career ladder and work for yourself. With powerful associations such as the Home Office Association of America ([www.hoaa.com](http://www.hoaa.com)) you even have access to lobbyists, travel discounts and credit card processing.

So, what's the bad news? There's never been more competition than now. According to a recent study, one in four people own their own business. Talk about competition. Your next-door neighbor could end up as your fiercest rival!

There's more. In 1998, the average consumer is bombarded by more than 3,000 commercial messages each day. It's never been more difficult to rise above the noise of the thousands of commercials, direct-mail pieces and telemarketing campaigns all vying for the attention of your prospect. This is a large part of the reason most small or home-based businesses are forced to close their doors within five years.

Success doesn't go to the company with the best products, ideas or technology. It goes to the company with the best marketing. That's not fair, but that's reality. Expensive, too -- it costs three times more to market your business than it did a few years ago in 1988. The odds are not exactly in your favor.

To survive, your business must stand out from the crowd.

### The end. For now...

That wraps up this report on Guaranteed Marketing. But I hope this is just the beginning for you. The beginning of increased sales, profits and security for you and your small business.

Like most people, you might need some help along the way as you put your new marketing methods to work. And I'd like to help. So, for a limited time, I'm arranging to consult with you personally to improve your marketing. Risk-free!

Here's how it works.

Send e-mail to [kevin@guaranteedmarketing.com](mailto:kevin@guaranteedmarketing.com) and briefly describe your business, your revenues and your most difficult marketing problems. If I see a good fit between you and me, I'll arrange for an in-depth consultation by phone or by e-mail.

I'll present a series of marketing ideas to you. If you choose to use them, we'll come up with a modest retainer that fits your budget and requirements. If not, we can part ways, with no cost or obligation on your part.

Interested?

Just send e-mail to [kevin@guaranteedmarketing.com](mailto:kevin@guaranteedmarketing.com) today to get started!

**Example guarantees**  
Here are some example guarantees to help get your creative juices flowing. See if you can find one that applies to you and your business.

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Guarantee</b>
Real Estate	I'll pay you \$1000 if I can't sell your home.
Restaurant	You'll love our food. Or the next meal's free.
Sports therapist	Free follow-up visit if you're still in pain.
Dog walking service	Free bag of dog food if we're ever late.
Florist	Free box of chocolates if our flowers disappoint.
Computer repair	We'll fix it right. Or repair it free PLUS \$10.
Retail store	Double your money back if you find it cheaper.

You need a marketing system that ensures a steady flow of customers eager to buy only from your company. Not just today, but several more times over the next two to five years. And you want to turn those customers into an army of salespersons, eager to refer more new customers to you. Sound like an impossible dream?

It's reality. It's easy, too. It's Guaranteed Marketing!

### **Guaranteed Marketing defined**

First, let's define marketing. For our purposes, marketing is defined as everything you do to get and keep customers. It includes advertising, sales, product fulfillment, billing and customer service.

**Guaranteed Marketing** is defined as this: When you make it risk-free to buy from you and tell the world about it, more people will buy.

*If you forget everything else in this report but the last sentence, that's OK. You will have grasped the powerful essence of Guaranteed Marketing.*

With Guaranteed Marketing, your aim is to eliminate all danger from the buying transaction for your customers. If you do so by removing the risk with a money-back or other strong guarantee, you make it less threatening for people to consider your offer. You lower the barriers that prevent people from doing business with you. You give them a compelling reason to buy today without fear of looking bad tomorrow. It's that simple.

Guaranteed Marketing will help you produce new customers, repeat customers and referral customers. By removing the risk to buyers through guarantees, your business will stand out. You'll make it easy and fun for people to buy from you. And your profits will dramatically increase. Guaranteed.

Guarantees are not new. They've been used by successful mail-order companies for decades. Companies like L.L. Bean and the Sharper Image. They're hugely successful now, but they were once small businesses. Perhaps smaller than yours is now. But their profits grew from a trickle into a mighty torrent because customers knew they could buy without the fear of being stuck with an item they didn't like. Strong guarantees and quality products are an unbeatable combination.

Yet, guarantees frighten many small business owners. If you're like most, it might only take five or six big refunds or major revisions in a year to spell financial disaster. What if your clients called their friends and all started asking for refunds at once? What if word got out around town that your business was an easy target for crooked people who could take your product and then take back their money?

The way I see it, you already have a guarantee -- you just don't know it.

Let me explain. If a customer called to complain that the work you did was unsatisfactory, what would you do? Offer to redo or replace it, probably. Because it's a smart investment of your time and money to satisfy one current customer now than it is to combat a lot of bad word-of-mouth later. It just makes sense.

Especially when you consider that, according to one recent study, a satisfied customer tells one person about your company. But an unsatisfied customer tells NINE people. You need to put those numbers in your favor. You need to satisfy your customers. And a guarantee makes it all possible.

There's more. At most, only about 1-2% of your customers will ever ask for their money back if offered a refund, so guarantees are a safe, calculated risk. How do I know? Ask yourself the following questions:

- How many of my current customers have complained to me about my products or services in the past month?
- In the past year?

If your product or service is of acceptable quality, you should have few complaints, if any. (If you have a lot of complaints, that's OK. Now you know where to focus your efforts!)

If your customers are mostly satisfied now, there's nothing to worry about. By offering a risk-free guarantee, you'll simply call more attention to the quality you already have in place. Make the strongest promise you can comfortably live up to, and feature it prominently in all your marketing materials -- advertisements, letterhead, business cards, on your telephone hold message, your Web site, etc.

My experience as owner of Guaranteed Résumés has proven this. Over the three years I've offered an unconditional money-back guarantee, less than 2% of my customers have ever asked for a refund. In fact, I can count them all on less than two hands. Yet, during this time, my sales increased every single year.

It's why most customers choose me. I know, because I've asked them. In survey after survey, they cite my guarantee as one of the main reasons for doing business with me. Some of their comments are: "I like what I hear," "You must know what you're doing," and "I feel safe doing business with you."

When I think of how much lower my sales would probably be without my guarantee, it's frightening. I'd probably be living under a bridge down by the Mississippi. Actually, my problems run in the opposite direction. My money-back guarantee has created such a swarm of new clients that I regularly turn off the telephone so I can get some work done! Wouldn't you like to have this problem?

4. **Choose a payback.** As unlikely as it is that you'll be making good on your guarantee (remember -- only about 2% of customers will ever take you up on it), you want to create an attractive payback in case customers are unsatisfied. Ideally, it won't cost you much but will have a high perceived value.

A hassle-free money-back guarantee is a good place to start. But try to dress it up a bit. Remember, a better-than-risk-free best guarantee is the best guarantee of all. Yours should exceed customer expectations and be memorable. Examples:

A bakery can offer money back -- and a dozen cupcakes.

A computer repair shop can offer money back -- and a free shareware program.

A book publisher can offer money back -- and let readers keep a special gift just for their trouble

Or you can offer customers their money back -- plus one dollar for their trouble.

A courier service can refund the purchase price if they deliver late.

In order for your guarantee to work, the payback must be fast and easy for customers to get. A late refund, for example, or a complicated refund that forces customers to jump through hoops, is almost as bad as none at all.

5. **Start small, test and track your results.** This is vital! You must know how well your guarantee is performing before you make it a permanent part of your marketing. How? You might advertise the guarantee in only one of the publications you advertise in. Or you mention it on your telephone message. Or on one set of business cards. Or in a letter that you send to a small segment of your customer base.

Then, track the results. How much have sales increased over your previous totals, before you had a guarantee? Be sure to test at least two combinations of your guarantee to find the one that works best for you. You can guarantee results for 30 days in one test and 90 days in another (longer guarantees generally work better). You might even use a lifetime guarantee. Experiment!

6. **Get the word out.** Once you've tested and found a guarantee that you're comfortable with, publicize it! Make your full guarantee -- in writing -- a part of all your advertisements and marketing communications. Put it in your newspaper and Yellow Pages ads, your business cards, your Web site, your letterhead, your brochures, etc.

My competitors are extremely short-sighted and offer only the vaguest and weakest of guarantees, if any.

And even if the competition all decide to match my guarantee tomorrow, it's too late. The word "guarantee" is permanently identified with my business because it's built into the name -- Guaranteed Résûmes. The name doubles as a billboard. It's incredibly effective.

This name also was incredibly easy to come up with. I just looked at the resume-writing industry before starting my company and saw a huge niche for a business that guaranteed results. Much the same way as Federal Express filled a giant void by guaranteeing overnight delivery, or your money back. The postal service and competitors like UPS thought FedEx was insane for doing this. Now, they're trying mightily to catch up, but FedEx has always kept the lead it took the day they began guaranteeing results.

Think about your small business. How outrageous a guarantee can you think of? What would set your industry on its ear? What would keep your competitors up all night throwing darts at your picture? That's the kind of guarantee I want you to create!

### Create your guarantee

Now, here's a step-by-step method for creating your guarantee and using it to supercharge your marketing efforts.

1. **Look at your competitors.** Go through the Yellow Pages or the newspaper. Search the Internet. Write down every guarantee you see. Odds are, there won't be many. But when you see an advertisement that guarantees satisfaction in some way, make careful note of it. When you finish your research, what patterns do you see? Are there many guarantees in your industry? What kind did you find? Guarantees of specific performance? Or the more common, dull-as-dishwater, "Satisfaction Guaranteed" variety?

2. **Look at your strengths.** What area of your business is a strong point for you? Are you fast? Do your products/services produce consistently outstanding results? Do you have the widest selection in town? Do you save money for your customers?

3. **Guarantee results.** Think about what specific RESULTS a customer wants when he or she does business with you. What good things happen when customers use your products or service? Write down the answer in specific detail, then guarantee that outcome. (Just make sure you can fulfill on your promise.)

A company that works fast can guarantee delivery times -- by 10:00 a.m., within 24 hours, whatever. Do you have the widest selection in town? Guarantee it by dating customers and competitors to find more products somewhere else (just be sure you can back this up). Do NOT simply guarantee "satisfaction." Guarantee in detail what that satisfaction will look like to your customer.

Of course, if you offer a guarantee, some people are going to take advantage of you. But if you double or triple your sales in the process, are you really going to care?

Let's look at a worst-case scenario to see how much you'll *really* lose if a customer asks for a refund or replacement. If you sell a **service**, all you've lost is the time it took to do the project. Since you probably did it wrong somehow (which is why your customer is taking you up on your guarantee), you've learned a valuable lesson -- how NOT to perform your service. As long as you don't repeat the error, this lesson will put you one step closer to perfection. Which can lead to bigger profits down the road as you outperform your less-than-perfect competitors. A small price to pay.

If you sell a **product** and the customer wants a refund or replacement, subtract your markup to find the real cost. If you sell a \$20 widget that costs you \$8.50 wholesale, replacing it will cost you \$17 total. But the customer will receive \$40 in perceived value by getting it twice. If you give a refund, you're out even less -- just \$8.50. In either case, if that customer is satisfied after taking advantage of your guarantee, you'll generate word of mouth publicity, which is far more valuable tomorrow than the cost of replacing an item today.

**Why guarantees work (risk removal)**

In my business, I offer the only unconditional money-back guarantee in my industry. My competitors either hate me or think I'm insane. And that's just the way I want it!

Because there's more fear than fact surrounding guarantees, my competitors are too timid to back up their work by offering hassle-free refunds. That's opened up a gaping niche in the market for résumés, one that I've filled with growing success for the past three years. I've become a mini-FedEx in my industry. You can do the same in yours.

Think about it. Whenever any two parties meet to transact business, there's risk involved. Money and products are changing hands, and there's a chance that one side might get burned. In most cases, it's the customer who assumes all the risk. Without a guarantee, if the product or service doesn't perform, the customer is out his or her money. As a customer, this makes me less likely to buy.

But what if a business is willing to remove all of the risk involved in buying? What if the results that business sells are guaranteed? This makes it incredibly easy for people to buy. More sales and higher profits are the natural result!

When you stand behind your work with the strongest guarantee possible, you put customers in control of the buying process. Which puts them at ease. Which makes them more likely to lower their guard, relax and listen to your offer.

Don't believe me? Look at ANY catalog from Land's End, Damark, or any other successful mail-order firm. What you'll find -- prominently displayed -- is some sort of money-back guarantee. Why? Because buying something long-distance from a person you'll never meet is scary. All mail-order companies know this. By making strong guarantees, they eliminate risk and open a floodgate on sales.

Does it work? Ask the Sharper Image, or Victoria's Secret, or Gateway Computers, or any other successful mail-order company. They wouldn't be as profitable as they are today if they hadn't used money-back guarantees for years.

It's worth repeating: you probably stand behind your work right now with an unspoken guarantee. If an unhappy customer called with a problem, you'd fix it, replace it or refund part (or all) of their purchase price. If not, you won't be in business for long!

What I'm suggesting is that you make your guarantee a focal point in your marketing efforts. Your opportunity lies in how aggressively you're willing to tell the world about your guarantee. To the extent that you do, you'll enjoy a competitive advantage over all other companies in your industry. Your business courage will pay you tremendous long-term dividends.

A unconditional money-back guarantee was unheard of in the résumé writing industry (and still is, three years later). I looked at my strengths and found that my experience reading résumés and hiring people in previous jobs I'd held, coupled with more than a decade of writing and editing for publication, gave me a unique edge over other résumé writers.

My résumés spoke directly to employers who read résumés and hire people, because I used to do the same thing. As I surveyed my existing clients, I found most of them had had excellent results using my résumés. So I decided to take it one step further.

While I had stressed my 10 years of writing and hiring expertise in earlier sales scripts on the phone and in my early Web pages, I now took a calculated risk and guaranteed results. And I made the guarantee good for one year. Knowing that most of my clients would have questions or concerns within the first 30-60 days, I thought, "Why not extend the guarantee for a full year, just to head off any competitors who might come out with their own guarantee?"

The results were astonishing. I got a steady stream of clients within a few days of making the money-back guarantee a part of all my marketing.

On my Web site and in my Yellow Pages ad, the guarantee reads as follows: "Your résumé will get results. Or it's free." On my Web site, there's this additional language:

"Order a Guaranteed Résumé. Send it to employers. Use it for up to one year. If you don't get more interviews, if you don't get more job offers, if you're not satisfied with your results -- for any reason -- I'll rewrite your résumé or refund your purchase price. You decide.

This guarantee is good not for 30 days or 90 days, but for a full year. 365 days.

In any case, all copies of your résumé and cover letter are my free gift to you, just for trying my service. This better-than-risk-free guarantee means you literally have NOTHING to lose . . . and a new job to gain!"

The guarantee succeeds because it promises results. For most people, that means that they'll find a job or at least get more interviews. But ultimately, I leave the choice up to them, because everyone has a different picture in mind of an ideal outcome.

The guarantee makes people curious and thus, more likely to call for more information (which is the goal of my advertising). When prospects call and ask about my guarantee, I ask them: "What do you want from your résumé? What's the ideal outcome?" Whatever their reply, I tell them: "Well, that's what I guarantee will happen if you let me write your résumé."

Powerful? Yes. Profitable? YES.

## Part 2: How to Create Your Guarantee

### Example guarantees

No matter what business you're in, there's room for you to gain an immediate competitive advantage by offering a guarantee that promises RESULTS to your customers.

To illustrate, let's take a detailed look at guarantees from some of the world's leading companies. As you read, think about which parts of these guarantees you might be able to adapt and use in your own business.

Let me explain.

### Know what your customers are really buying

There's an old advertising adage that nobody goes into a hardware store to buy a drill bit. There's an old advertising adage that nobody goes into a hardware store to buy a drill bit.

They go to buy the hole that the drill bit makes.

Your customers are no different.

Your job is to figure out what your customers are really buying and then guarantee that they will get it from you.

Marketing experts have known this for decades. In 1925, advertising legend Bruce Barton told the American Petroleum Institute that they were selling gasoline as a bad smelling liquid. Instead, he told them they were selling "the juice of the fountain of eternal youth." He explained that fuel enables people to experience travel, romance and even health. He got to the heart of what customers really buy when they pay for your product or service.

If you're a restaurant owner, for example, you probably thought you were selling food. Wrong. You're selling the laughter and good times that come when friends and family gather to share a meal. (Recent television commercials for the Olive Garden Restaurant have picked up on this. They don't show menu items or talk about low prices. They show people smiling and sharing stories. The tagline is: "When you're here, you're family.")

Now, what does all of this have to do with guarantees? Once you understand what customers buy when they do business with you, you can articulate this result in your guarantee.

To illustrate, I'll tell you how I created the money-back guarantee for my business, Guaranteed Resumes.

When people look through the Yellow Pages or the Web for a resume service, they're not doing so because they want to buy a resume. Nobody wants to buy a resume, just as nobody wants to buy a coffin or a filling for their teeth. But everybody wants a better job. And everybody wants results. So I created my guarantee accordingly.

**Prestone** promises to replace your car's radiator if their anti-freeze fails to guard against freezing weather. This is a powerful, specific guarantee that entices people to buy ... and I've got a can of Prestone out in the garage to prove it! You might expect Prestone to buy you another \$8 container of antifreeze or refund your purchase price. But by offering to replace the radiator, they've removed all of the risk of doing business with them. And it's made them a market leader for years.

**Dominio's Pizza** made a similar guarantee. Their slogan: "Dominio's delivers fresh pizza in 30 minutes, or it's free." That's a powerful promise to make, especially when no other pizza maker was willing to guarantee satisfaction. But it worked. Within five years, Dominio's went from being number 18 among pizza restaurants in the Detroit area to number two WORLDWIDE. That's a stunning increase. Did Dominio's taste better? Probably not. Did they offer the most toppings or most exotic pizza crusts? No. They simply listened to what customers wanted -- hot, fresh pizza delivered to their doors in less than half an hour. Then they went one step further and guaranteed the whole thing in writing and in all their marketing efforts. No other pizza chain was willing to stick their neck out and with a money-back guarantee on timely delivery.

**Federal Express**, as they were called when they started back in 1973, guaranteed they would deliver your package by 10:30 a.m. the next day or your money back. This was unheard of in the delivery business. Can you imagine the U.S. Postal Service offering to refund your money if they didn't deliver on time? Of course not. That's why the FedEx money-back guarantee was such a breath of fresh air. And that's a big part of the reason FedEx now owns the overnight delivery industry. Today, FedEx gives refunds every day. The Postal Service doesn't. But whom would you trust with a critical overnight delivery?

One minor point: Nordstrom doesn't sell snow tires. But the clerk never argued with the customer returning those tires. And Nordstrom received thousands of dollars in free publicity once the word of this exchange got out. Not to mention at least one customer for life.

**LensCrafters** makes several guarantees. Their “30 Day No Risk Guarantee” states: “If for any reason you are not completely satisfied with your purchase, within 30 days you may exchange your eyeglasses for another pair of equal value or we’ll refund your money.”

They also have a Price Match Guarantee, which goes like this: “It’s tough to know if you’re getting the best price for your eyeglasses. At LensCrafters, we guarantee our prices are fair and competitive. If you find a lower price for the same glasses (frame and lenses) in stock at any other retail store within 30 days of your purchase, we’ll refund the difference.

I think LensCrafters could better publicize these two guarantees, because I had never heard about them until after I became a customer. Lesson: don’t hide your light under a bushel!

Here are other examples of guarantees that stand out.

**Joe Vitale**, author and marketing consultant, made this guarantee for his book, *The Seven Lost Secrets of Success*: “Use the seven principles for six months. If you’re out of work, you’ll find a job. If you’re employed, you’ll get a raise. If you’re in business, you’ll see a whopping 25% jump in revenues -- or return this book with your receipt for a full cash refund!”

Pretty powerful stuff! After reading this guarantee, wouldn’t you be more than a little inclined to buy Mr. Vitale’s book as opposed to the dozens of others that simply exclaim, in effect, “Give your money to me, not that other author!” This kind of “me-too” marketing is so commonplace, it goes largely unnoticed by the buying public. If you’re following a “me-too” format (as more than 90% of businesses do), chances are your marketing is invisible, too.

Here are more examples to drive that point home.

The **Maryland National Bank** in Baltimore guarantees 100% accuracy in their transactions with customers. And here’s how they say it:

“If you ever find an account error, we’ll make it right, right away .. refund any fees incurred, send letters of apology to anyone inconvenienced .. and even pay you \$10!”

This guarantee worked so well that the Bank of America adopted it. Did it work? In the first four months after introducing this Service Guarantee, more than 225,000 new customers signed up as a result. Yes, it worked!

**Saturn** has touted itself as a “different kind of car company” since its inception. And they put their money where their mouth is with an extraordinary money-back guarantee.

- **You’ll save money on marketing!** Don’t overlook that fact that it costs you NOTHING to create a powerful guarantee. Forget the thousands of dollars you might want to invest in Yellow Pages ads or a new Web site. Your only cost here is time. Time to think up, test and implement a guarantee (covered in detail in the next chapter).

#### **Guarantee customers for life**

I’ve experienced strong guarantees from both sides, as a consumer and a small business owner. As a consumer, I once bought a pair of khaki pants from the Gap. But after washing and wearing them several times, the pants had not shrunk as much as I had expected. They were just a bit too long. Soon, they were shoved in my “wear only in emergencies” drawer. I was disappointed, but had only myself to blame.

Two years later, I was in a different Gap in a different state. I was trying on pants and remarked to the clerk: “Well, I hope these fit. Last time I bought a pair that was too big, but I’m so lazy I never did come back and exchange them. Guess I’m out of luck, huh?”

The manager overheard my comments, walked up and said: “Oh no, if you bought them at the Gap and they don’t fit, you can exchange them for a new pair.”

“But,” I replied, “I bought those pants last year.”

“That’s OK,” said the manager.

“Yeah, but I didn’t buy them here. I bought them at a store in Michigan. We’re in Minnesota,” I said.

“No problem,” said the manager. “Just bring the pants back here for a new pair.”

I was stunned. This store manager was politely answering MY objections for why I couldn’t return the pants. She was bending over backwards to satisfy me. And, not surprisingly, she was creating a customer for life for her store. A customer who has told dozens of friends (and now thousands of readers) of a pleasant surprise he had while shopping at the Gap.

By removing the risk of my purchasing clothes with a no-hassle guarantee that ensured my satisfaction, the Gap has locked in my business -- I’m less likely to shop with any of their competitors in town. They’ve created a long-term relationship that will probably net them \$1,000 over the next five years. They did it by making it fast and easy for me to return merchandise that didn’t meet my expectations. Simple. Brilliant.

You can do the same for your business, by making the strongest guarantee possible. A guarantee of satisfaction will turn doing business with you from a chore to a pleasure.

- **Quality will increase.** Why wait for your competitors to come out with a new widget or gadget? Or faster or cheaper service? With a guarantee of satisfaction in place, your clients will tell you about bad experiences they've had, and you can adjust your efforts to make sure it never happens again.

Without a guarantee, your customers will tell their friends and your competitors about their bad experiences with your company. You'll not only lose business, you'll lose the feedback that can help you improve.

Everybody talks about quality, but few businesses do anything about it. To put your money where your mouth is, I suggest you hang your guarantee on the wall. There, it will remind your customers and employees of your very real commitment to quality.

- **Customers will love you.** Because you're going out on a limb with your guarantee, you're removing the risk from every transaction. People will sense your willingness to solve their problems and commitment to customer satisfaction. As a result, they'll be drawn to your business like bees to honey.

- **Clients won't go away mad.** A guarantee ensures that your customer will be satisfied. If not, they're going to get a refund or some sort of reward. This prevents people from saying bad things behind your back, which can kill your business fast.

Your goal is zero unsatisfied clients. A guarantee of satisfaction can make that goal a reality.

- **You'll leapfrog the competition.** Your guarantee will position your company in a class all its own. We'll talk at length in other chapters about how this can contribute to your unique selling proposition (USP). But it's enough to say that first is often best in the mind of your customer. FedEx was first to offer a money-back guarantee. So was Domino's. Today these companies still lead the pack. If you can be first in your industry with a strong guarantee of some kind, you'll reap windfall profits for years to come.

- **You'll create word of mouth advertising.** When you guarantee results, customers are more likely to refer their friends and relatives to you. Why? In a worst-case scenario, you'll refund the money of any unhappy customers, or else do something else to make it right. This means that nobody will ever look bad by referring a new client to you. The amount of business you get through referrals should increase rapidly as a result.

Now, a money-back guarantee is simply unheard of in the car industry, where showrooms are open to suit the needs of car dealers (not customers) and salesmen routinely try to sell you rust-proofing and warranties you'll never need. But Saturn stands out from the crowd -- way out -- by guaranteeing that you'll be completely satisfied with your purchase for 1500 miles or 30 days. During that time, you can return your car for any reason for a full refund.

This unconditional money-back guarantee is in addition to their 24-hour roadside assistance, free new owner workshops and knock-em dead customer service. It's one reason Saturn quickly became a leader in sales and customer satisfaction among American car makers.

From Australia comes this guarantee, made by the **Burger Bug Killer Company**. Their guarantee is as comprehensive and benefits-rich as they come. It's this:

"You don't owe one cent until all pests on your premises have been wiped out.

"If you're ever dissatisfied with BBBK's services, you will receive a refund for up to 12 months of the company's services ... PLUS fees for another exterminator of your choice for the next year.

"AND, if a guest spots a pest on your premises, BBBK will pay for the guest's meal or room, send an apology, AND pay for a future stay.

"AND if your facility is ever closed down due to the presence of roaches or rodents, BBBK will pay any fines, as well as all lost profits PLUS \$5,000."

Wow. Would you have any doubts about hiring the Burger Bug Killer Company to come clean up YOUR pest problems? But what about their sales? Has the guarantee helped?

The answer: BBBK became a \$30-million-a-year business and captured 80% of their market while using this guarantee. And they were able to charge 10 times as much as their competitors did. Now, what would you do with an 80% market share? Or the ability to raise your rates to 10 times what other businesses are charging?

**Better-than-risk-free guarantees**

The BBBK guarantee was extremely successful because it's a special breed of guarantee - the better-than-risk-free guarantee. It works because it not only promises your money back if you're not satisfied, but an additional reward for your trouble. Like a \$5,000 payment in addition to any lost profits you might incur.

While I don't advocate that you offer thousands of dollars in cash payments, a better-than-risk-free guarantee is one of the most powerful incentives to making people want to buy. Almost instantly, it removes the risk in the minds of your prospective buyers.

Here are some more examples of better-than-risk-free guarantees.

**Bottom Line/Personal**, a leading newsletter for executives and other busy people, offers the following guarantee: “It you ever become dissatisfied with *Bottom Line/Personal* during the term of your initial subscription, just let us know, and we’ll send you a full refund -- no questions asked.”

You can keep all issues of *Bottom Line/Personal* you may have accepted already. You can even call them after receiving your final issue and ask for a refund of your subscription. In addition to getting your money back, you can keep the entire year’s worth of the publication. That’s a better-than-risk-free guarantee.

**Infomercials** use the power of better-than-risk-free guarantees all the time. They’ll send you a special bonus video or audio cassette and allow you to keep it, even if you return the product. It’s yours to keep, just for your trouble. The next time you seen an infomercial, keep your eye out whatever bonuses they have to offer. These are extremely powerful and they must be working, because they’re a common part of many such TV offers.

**Sports Illustrated** has offered better-than-risk-free guarantees for years with consistent success. If you look closely at a television commercial for *Sports Illustrated*, you’ll see something amazing. They actually spend more than half the time selling a free bonus that you can keep even if you decide to cancel your magazine subscription. Usually, that bonus is a video of some kind, but they also offer free sports watches. Does it work? I’ve seen variations of this same ad for more than 15 years, so it must.

The bonus in *Sports Illustrated*’s better-than-risk-free guarantee attracts more buyers than the magazine itself. It works because people love to get something for nothing. Even if they don’t cancel their subscriptions (and most people don’t), people are moved to buy because the promise of a risk-free purchase and a free gift makes them get off the couch and pick up the phone to order. You should try to motivate customers in the same way.

I offer a better-than-risk-free guarantee in my business, too. It’s not enough for me to have the only unconditional money-back guarantee in the résumé-writing industry. I wanted to take it a step further. So I not only offer to refund the purchase price if clients aren’t satisfied, I let them keep the résumé, just for their trouble. In effect, I’m willing to give away all of my products -- valued at up to \$230. No questions asked.

Has anyone ever asked for this much money back from me? No! Am I worried that people are going to take advantage of me? No way! Is my competition worried? You bet!

#### **Still afraid of guarantees? Read this!**

Don’t fall into the trap of creating a wishy-washy guarantee for your business. This is as bad as having no guarantee at all. In some cases, it may be worse. It may make you a laughing stock in the eyes of your prospects.

Case in point: the “guarantees” below are guaranteed to do only one thing -- repel clients. They’re half-hearted, vague and found on the back pages of brochures (in microscopic print). Not surprisingly, at least one of the companies that used these guarantees is no longer in business.

Here are some examples of guarantees that DO NOT WORK:

- “All Work 100% Guaranteed. We Continue Working Until You Are Completely Satisfied.” (This is no guarantee -- any company should be expected to work until the client is completely satisfied. And it’s buried on the third page of this firm’s brochure. If it’s a real guarantee, it should be out front where you can see it.)
- “Our service is guaranteed.” (The lack of specifics sinks this claim. If a company is this timid about their guarantee, it implies that they’re not that serious about backing it up. It also implies that their work isn’t very good. You must spell out EXACTLY what you guarantee, for how long and how you will fix any problems.)

Worse than a half-hearted guarantee is one loaded with loopholes and qualifiers. If your guarantee reads as if it were written by a team of lawyers, you’ll turn off more buyers than you’ll ever attract.

Today’s consumer is smarter than ever and has no patience for guarantees that force them to jump through hoops to get their money back.

Here’s one example of a guarantee that makes unreasonable demands on the customer:

- “If you can prove you sent our résumé to 100 employers and have still not received a job, we’ll gladly refund your money.” (This came from a résumé service I found on the Internet. How on earth are you supposed to prove you sent out 100 copies of your résumé? And what product or service -- in any industry -- should be expected to work once in 100 tries? As you might expect, this firm is out of business.)

To work, a guarantee must be written from your customer’s point of view, not your lawyer’s. It must promise a clear benefit and an attractive reward if that benefit is not delivered. No more, no less.

#### **Benefits to your business**

By now, you get the picture. Guarantees are scary only to the uninformed business owner. The rest of us see a golden opportunity in creating and using the most attractive guarantee possible for customers.

Need more proof? Here are some of the real benefits of offering -- and publicizing -- the strongest guarantee possible. A strong guarantee will produce the following benefits: