



## Marketing Strategies to Help You:

- ◀ **Make \$1,000,000 to \$5,000,000 Every Year**
- ◀ **Dominate a Market/Eliminate Competition**
- ◀ **Triple the Value of Your Business**



## Evaluation: Do You Really Believe That?

### [Marketing & Advertising - 66 Strategies: Y2M TIP 35](#)

There was an article in the paper about a big lawsuit between Papa John's Pizza and Pizza Hut. Papa John's uses an advertising slogan of "Better Ingredients, Better Pizza" and Pizza Hut claimed that it hurt their business because it's not true. They said that their pizza is actually better than Papa John's and for Papa John's to say that their pizza is better, when it's not a proven fact, should be illegal - hence the big, multi-million dollar lawsuit. So what was Papa John's defense in this case? They said there's an element of advertising called "puffery" widely used by many companies. Puffery, simply stated, means that a company can use general, non-provable, vacuous claims about their products or services because everybody knows they're not necessarily true. So they said using puffery is not only acceptable, it's **expected** by consumers.

And you know what? They're right. It is expected. Consumers do get used to hearing those general, non-provable, vacuous claims about being the biggest, best, cheapest, and so forth...to the point where those kinds of claims don't really have any impact. Do you see a Papa John's commercial on TV with the slogan "Better Ingredients, Better Pizza," and think to yourself, "Well, I was going to go to Pizza Hut tonight but I didn't realize that Papa John's pizza was better. Their TV commercial said they're better, and I believe everything I see on TV commercials, so I guess I'll go there instead." Of course not. It's puffery.

So what does this have to do with you? If you're guilty of using puffery, it is most definitely hurting your business. There are three levels of business: level one, level two, and level three. Level one businesses, which account for as much as 40% of the gross national product, are directly or indirectly controlled by the government. Level two businesses are the big, national companies that offer standardized goods and services - everything from packaged goods to food, shoes, and haircuts. Level 2 companies are in the Fortune 500. These kinds of companies can afford to advertise with a broad based, image-oriented message with nationwide media blitzes. Then level 3 businesses include everyone else. That's you. And everyone else needs to be a lot more concerned with getting results than projecting an image.

Level 2 businesses would be well advised to stay away from puffery but the fact of the matter is, they've got enough advertising dollars that they can make it work effectively. Papa John's can say that they've got "Better Ingredients, Better Pizza" because they've got millions of dollars to say it with. Pets.com can spend 100 million dollars to have a sock puppet dog act silly and remind you "pets can't drive" so you should shop at their (now defunct) website. You on the other hand, should know better by now - regardless of the size of your company. This whole discussion leads us to today's writing evaluation: "Do you really believe that?" It is a puffery detector, plain and simple.

Car dealerships are notorious for failing this evaluation. We're sure you're familiar with these automotive ads. "We've got the largest selection of Ford cars & trucks in the entire city." Then you turn the channel and what do you hear? "We're the largest volume Ford dealer in the southwest." Next station? "We sell more Fords than anyone else in the state." After a while, you just quit believing any of them. Because you're used to this kind of hollow puffery, you expect the dealerships to say anything and everything in an attempt to impress you.

One of the great pioneers of action-oriented advertising was Claude Hopkins. He got his start back in the early 1900s with the Bissell Carpet Sweeper Company and later worked on many famous campaigns for products like Kellogg's Puffed Wheat, Goodyear Tires, and Colgate Toothpaste. He said, "Platitudes and generalities roll off the human understanding like water off a duck's back. They make no impression whatsoever." Read that quote one more time. *"Platitudes and generalities roll off the human understanding like water off a duck's back. They make no impression whatsoever."* What is puffery all about? Platitudes and generalities. If you believe Mr. Hopkins, those kinds of statements roll off the human understanding like water off a duck's back. They make no impression whatsoever. When you spend money on advertising, we're sure you'd like it to make an impression.

Here are some examples of "Do You Really Believe That?" advertising. An ad for a commercial realty company's headline reads, "We Go The Extra Mile For Our Clients." It's puffery, just like Papa John's and Pizza Hut. Then check out this great first line in the body copy of this wonderful ad... "Knowledge. Expertise. Determination." Blah blah blah blah bleeeech! That's the first line! That's their big "hook" to get you to read the ad. They might as well blow their nose on the money they spent on that ad. At least then they'd get some use out of it.

A company called Dolce International claims in their big, full color ad that they are "the global leader in learning through meetings and leisure." Do you really believe that? Or here's an ad for a residential real estate broker that boldly claims: "Abio & Associates is Dallas' choice in relocation." Really? Do you believe that? If you play the puffery game, it can cost you a lot of money. Another example would be an ad for a construction management company named Paric. Their name is Paric because they've decided that Paric would be a great headline for their ad. Right under the terrible headline is the rest of the terrible ad. It says, "We fine tune the process to create unique building solutions that function better, cost less, and open sooner." Those all sound like fine benefits. But do you really believe that? This ad is so far under-potentialized that it's silly to be spending money to run it in its current state. They might as well go to the bank, withdraw the cost of this ad in one dollar bills, and build a fire with the money.

Okay, enough said on that. We don't need to beat this evaluation to death; it's pretty straightforward. We'll summarize by repeating the quote by Claude Hopkins: "Platitudes and

generalities roll off the human understanding like water off a duck's back. They make no impression whatsoever." So use the puffery detector every time you write anything. Ask yourself, "Do I Really Believe That?" and "Will My Audience Really Believe That?" If the answer is no, don't use it.

**This Value Building Strategy was brought to you by...**

Michael K. Sipe  
(831) 438-9200

**Free CD Program:**

The Monopolize Your Marketplace CD program is packed with valuable marketing ideas like the above and it's yours FREE for the asking. Just call us or send an email to [Mike@Private-Equities.com](mailto:Mike@Private-Equities.com) with the letters "MYM" in the subject line and we'll send you the program.

**If you have enjoyed this Newsletter** - please feel free to forward it to a person who might find it beneficial.

**If you're not a subscriber** and would like to sign up for the FREE "Monopolize Your Marketplace" newsletter and learn how to "Separate Your Business from the Competition." Simply call us or send an email to [Mike@Private-Equities.com](mailto:Mike@Private-Equities.com) with the words "**Subscribe to MYM**" in the subject line.

Copyright © 2003 Y2Marketing and Private Equities except where Indicated otherwise.  
All rights reserved worldwide.