

**EVERY
THING**

———— I KNOW ABOUT ————

Marketing Magic

Maxwell Murphy



Contents

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Every Thing I Know About Marketing Magic - Chapter 1

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Introduction



The picture you're looking at is my partner, Acar Altinsel, and me, back in 2003. He's on the left holding the massive piece of cake. I'm on the right. This was our first "warehouse". It was actually an apartment on University of Michigan's North Campus in Ann Arbor. There were boxes floor-to-ceiling in every room—even the kitchen. There were delivery trucks in the parking lot trying to figure out how to turn around. If you could zoom out, you'd see our first "office". It was two desks, back-to-back, right about where the photographer was standing.

We launched Penguin Magic in June of 2002. My job was “marketing”. I didn’t know much about marketing when we started, or about magic. I didn’t understand the unique ethical issues, I didn’t understand the role the magic community plays, and I didn’t know how to produce a thing.

But, in the last 10 years, our small team at Penguin managed to produce and sell more magic than just about anyone. It wasn’t due

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to a lack of mistakes on my part. I’ve probably made every mistake a magic marketer could make.

But with the mistakes have come great lessons and enough success to keep me feeling I had the best job on earth.

Along the way, I’ve...

- Produced dozens of products, many of which became top-sellers.
- Visited magic shops all over the world.
- Worked with every major magic distributor.
- Opened warehouses in Las Vegas, London, and Sacramento.
- Visited magic factories in the US, China, and India.
- Lived on top of a magic factory in India.
- Spoken with thousands of magic customers.
- Attended a wide variety of conventions.
- Sold millions of dollars of magic.

In July 2011, I signed an agreement to sell my half of Penguin Magic to my partner, Acar. The time was right to take on new challenges, and the deal was great for everyone involved.

In my time at Penguin, I discovered my passion for producing products and starting things. If you’re reading this book, I’m pretty sure these are passions you share.

My plan for these pages is simple: I’ll tell you everything I wish I’d have known when I started. I didn’t learn these lessons on my own. I learned along-side great friends and colleagues.

Daniel Allard, Acar Altinsel, Mert Altinsel, Sam Blankenship, Bobbi Brockway, Kim Brown, Gayle Ellis, Brian Campbell, Kevin Froehlich, Gazzo, Luke Jermay, Greg Mulvey, Matt Murphy, Jay Noblezada, Oz Pearlman, Jeff Sidney, Morgan Strebler, and Desirae

Wright, and all other members of the Penguin Team: You've been like a family to me.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my close friend Uday Jadugar. Seeing Uday work with inventors from around the world is what first inspired me to write this book. If you know the right people, it's so much easier to bring your idea to life. Nothing made that more clear than watching products being born at Uday's magic factory in Bangalore, India.

I've spoken at length about the topic with the Indian mentalist Nakul Shenoy. His poking and prodding has been most beneficial.

I feel tremendous gratitude to Michael Weber and Eric Mead. They've influenced my thinking on the topic enormously. I couldn't have written "Chapter 1: Magic is Different" without the many hours we spent discussing the relationship between the magic market and the magic community. If you don't read another word in this book, make an effort to get to know these two men. If they love your product, you know you're doing it right.

Finally, I want to thank my friend and consigliere, Hank Schwaeble. Hank is an ex-special forces military officer, an attorney, a magician, and a Bram Stoker Award-Winning novelist. His first two books, *Damnable* and *Diabolical*, are two of the most entertaining novels I've ever read. They're supernatural thrillers that have special appeal for magicians. If you're looking for some extremely fun reading, you can find Hank's novels at all major bookstores.

When I told Hank about this project he graciously offered to contribute two sections dealing with some of the legal issues we've discussed together over the years. Hank's sections are my favorite part of the book. I'm thrilled to have him as a major contributor to this project.

This book comes with unlimited email support. If along the way you have any questions I haven't answered, send me an email. I'll be glad to give my best advice or point you in the direction of someone better qualified to answer your question.

This book also comes with a 100% money-back guarantee. If for any reason this book (my first!) falls short for you, please contact me for a full refund. If you're a Penguin customer, we go back a long way. If you and I are just meeting now, it's an honor to have your attention. Your time is worth more than the price of any book. I hope I can make the read worth your while!

With respect,

Maxwell Murphy
February 2012
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Chapter 1: Magic is Different

“If you don’t love magic, don’t sell magic.

Go sell t-shirts or something.”

– Derek DelGaudio

Getting Started

My performance background wasn’t in magic, but in comedy. I had a busy schedule of stand-up and improvisational comedy in college as part of the UofM Comedy Company. My friend, Acar, introduced me to magic. He taught me my first few tricks—Pen Through Dollar, Cups and Balls, Crazy Cube, and Tel-A-Vision. He and I started Penguin rather accidentally.

We were working for another magic company, a large chain of tourist shops headquartered in Florida. Acar had been hired to build their website and handle all promotions and internet marketing. He brought me on to help. In three months, we tripled their sales. Instead of giving us a pat on the back, they fired us—without payment! We had been promised a percentage of gross sales through the website, and suddenly that was quite a bit of money.

It turns out, firing us was probably the best thing they could have

done for us. It was a pivotal moment. We knew we could sell magic, and we were motivated to prove they’d made a huge mistake. So, we started our own little magic company and named it after a bird that looked like he’d been born in a tuxedo... or as we said, born to perform.

Acar had been a magician since he was a boy. I was a raw beginner walking around with a set of red, yellow, and blue cups in my pocket. Acar had grown up far away from any magic clubs, and I had never been inside a magic shop. We were both outsiders. Neither of us was connected to influential members of the magic community. That would come with time.

My goal in this chapter is to help you become an insider a lot more quickly than I did. The magic community is one of the most friendly and welcoming groups of people you can imagine. There’s no reason to make beginner mistakes that reduce the goodwill and income you generate from your products. You just need to understand the important role the magic community plays in the magic market, and you need to understand the expectations community members have of you as a magic producer.

The key to being accepted by the magic community is simple—love magic and make sure everything you do is respectful of those who have come before.

Falling in Love with Magic

Everyone has a different story about when they fell in love with magic. Oz Pearlman talks about being invited on stage to assist Lance Burton with the sponge balls as a boy. Gary Darwin talks about seeing his uncle do a coin trick. My moment happened a little differently.

I was in India with Uday Jadugar. We were developing new items at his factory in Bangalore. The Divali holiday season was approaching, and Uday invited me to travel with him to Shimoga, the town where he lived as a boy.

We booked one-way tickets on an overnight train. The train was packed, but Uday and I each had our own bunk in a six-bunk sleeper cabin.

An hour into the journey I was laying down, pondering the sound of more than fifty people snoring simultaneously. If you've taken any overnight train in India, you know the sound. I quickly joined the chorus.

I must have been exhausted, because, the next thing I knew, the train was empty, and Uday was saying, "Max, we slept too long... we missed Shimoga."

We jumped off the train while it was rolling slowly between stations and started walking. The sun was rising, and Uday soon recognized where we were. "We're only a couple of miles away."

We spent the days in Shimoga visiting Uday's friends and family. Uday is a celebrity throughout India, so you can imagine the reception we received in his home town. It was amazing.

The problem, was getting home. Because it was the holiday season, there were no first or second class tickets available for the train back to Bangalore. We booked 3rd class tickets, and hoped there would be space.

The train was crowded, but we were able to find a place to sit on one of the 3rd class bench seats. It looked like enough space to seat three people comfortably, but I soon found out, it was actually seating for six. As the bench got more and more crowded, Uday

pointed up and said I might be more comfortable on the luggage rack overhead.

I said, "Seriously, am I allowed to go up there?" Uday said, "No one will mind."

So, we moved a couple of suitcases, and I hoisted myself up onto the luggage rack.

More and more people boarded the train at every stop. Pretty soon it was full to the gills. Everyone had a laugh when they saw the foreigner stretched-out on the luggage rack.

I could have travelled for hours up there, quite happily, but we had to change trains. Uday prepared me a few minutes ahead of time. We'd need to hurry in order to get a seat on the new train.

We positioned ourselves as strategically as possible and were among the first off the train. There's really no such thing as a line in India, so we chose our positions more like basketball players getting ready for a rebound. The problem was, just about everyone from the old train was planning to board the new train too.

As the new train approached, I felt pretty good about our position. But, a more experienced passenger had something up his sleeve. With the train only a few seconds away, he jumped down onto the tracks and positioned himself on the other side of the train. It was a brilliant strategy. He'd be the first to board from the other side. Except for one problem. Hundreds of others saw his plan and instantly followed his lead. Our chances of getting a seat had just been cut in half.

As the train roared into the station, all we could do was laugh. It was already full. Hilariously full. There were hundreds of us hoping to board, and there wasn't room for anybody.

The person standing next to me turned and said, “Welcome to India.”

Uday said, “Come on, we’ll try the bus.”

I grabbed my bag and followed Uday. We asked directions to the bus station. It was close, just a few minutes walking.

When we got to the bus station Uday went to the counter and asked if there was a bus that would take us closer to Bangalore. There was. It would leave in about an hour.

We were at a random bus station in the middle of Karnataka, India. There was a stand selling food, but nowhere to sit, so we walked over and boarded the bus.

I’d guess the bus was 30-40 years old. It was made of thick painted steel—orange and green—and had an arched ceiling that made it feel a bit playful, almost like a circus bus, if there is such a thing.

There were twenty-five or thirty people on the bus when we got on. Some solo travellers, a few different families, some kids, some parents, some grandparents. It was hot, and nobody seemed especially happy to be waiting.

We grabbed seats on opposite sides of the aisle. I kept to myself, like I normally do. But, within a minute or two, Uday was making funny faces at the kids a few rows up.

The kids were laughing and pointing. The adults were starting to look to see what was so funny. Just then, Uday took out a rope and started doing an “invisible scissors” routine. Within another 30 seconds, Uday was standing up, and everyone on the bus was watching. Uday went on to do Twisted Sisters, Jumping Gems, and a couple of new routines he was developing. He used the sunlight

to do shadow puppets on the inside wall. He told jokes in four different languages. In the space of five minutes, he turned that hot, bored bus into a showroom. And, in the process, he connected with every single person on the bus.

I sat there watching the whole thing in awe. Left to my own devices, I’d have sat on the bus in silence, unprepared and introverted. Obeying some rule deep inside myself that says, “Don’t. Bother. Anyone.” Nothing to give. No way to connect.

This was the only time my life would ever cross paths with the lives of the people on that bus. Uday had so much to give. And I had so little.

But somewhere deep inside I had the desire. It was faint at first, but as I watched Uday perform, it started to grow. I wanted to be like him. I wanted to be able to connect with the people around me. I wanted to have something to give.

Most people just sit there. Even most artists have nothing to give when they meet someone new. They need their band, or their studio, or their cast and crew.

But a magician will take out a coin, or a deck of cards, or a piece of rope. And make magic.

I caught the magic bug watching Uday turn that old bus into a magic showroom.

And now, I carry a purse.

The Magic Community

Being part of the magic community is one of the greatest benefits of being a magician.

If you are a magician with a sincere interest in magic, you'll have friends in every city you visit. You'll have a couch to sleep on whenever you need it. You'll be welcomed with open arms by magicians around the world.

There's no official organization in charge of the magic community. There's no membership you need to carry or entrance exam you need to pass. It's a community bound together by a shared passion for magic.

Sure, there are organizations like S.A.M., I.B.M., The Magic Castle, and The Magic Circle. And, there are a lot of good reasons to join these organizations. But, don't feel like you need to join to be a part of the magic community. If you love magic and care deeply about the art, you're already a member of the magic community.

The magic community is non-commercial. The currency of the magic community is respect. You earn respect by demonstrating knowledge and skills, and by respecting other magician's secrets. When there is a mutual respect, magicians teach each other and share ideas freely. A specialized set of social norms govern behavior.

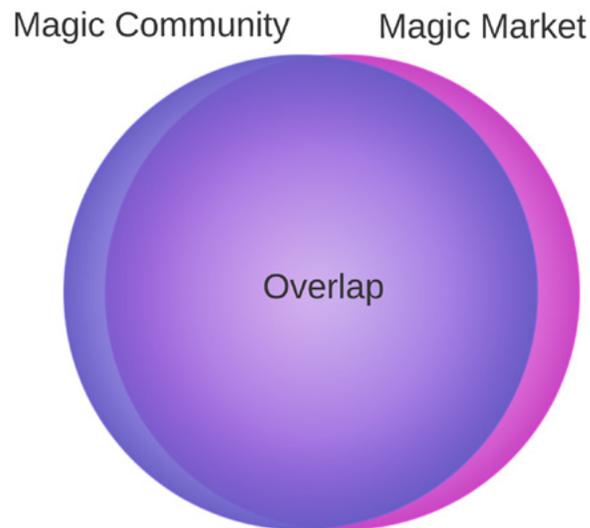
The magic market is commercial. The currency of the magic market is money. In a sense, the magic community is completely separate from the magic market. But, just about everyone who buys magic is, or will soon become, a member of the magic community.

There is so much overlap between the magic community and the magic market that the social norms of the community govern commercial behavior. All markets serve communities, but few markets serve a community that is as closely knit as the magic community.

Many competitive behaviors that are perfectly acceptable in other markets are unacceptable to the magic community.

If you're planning to get into the magic business, the first advice I'll give you is to become a member of the magic community (if you're not already). This is little more than a shift in perspective. You may feel like an outsider now. Decide to be an insider, and move in that direction. If I've done my job, this book will give you a clear understanding of how to succeed in the magic market and be a valued member of the magic community at the same time.

If you have an idea for one magic item, you will have many more. Take a long-term view, embrace the community. This is easier than it sounds, being a respected member of the magic community is good for business.



What the Community Cares About

Community members care about magic and the people behind the magic—past, the present, and future.

Magic - Magic is an art of ideas. Community members care deeply about the ideas that go into magic tricks and routines. Community members ask, “What’s good for magic?”

The People Behind the Magic - Community members care about the details of the history. Who invented it? When and where was it published? Do you have the inventor’s permission to share the idea with others?

One question you’ll hear asked time and time again about magic products is, “Is it original?” Community members care about all magic products, even beginner items.

Originality

Magic didn’t come from nowhere. It was people who came up with the ideas we use when performing. We know who many of those people were. We can study their magic, and share a special bond with them, even if they’re no longer alive.

Magicians protect and cherish the ideas they have inherited. And, magicians take great pride in the contributions they have made personally; the breakthroughs that make their magic unique and advance the art.

Every improvement is valued, no matter how small. Magic is an art form where the tiniest difference in finger position or body posture can be the difference between a perfect illusion and no illusion at all.

When developing a new magic product, it’s essential to develop an understanding of the history of the ideas you’re working with. Even if you’ve hatched an idea completely on your own, another magician may have come up with a similar (or identical) solution years ago. Re-invention happens all the time.

There’s no shame in re-inventing. Coming up with a brilliant solution is still something to feel proud of, even if you weren’t the first. You just don’t want to publish or market an idea that’s already been invented under false pretenses. A mistake in this area can do severe damage to your reputation. You’re expected to “do your research”.

Ideas come from everywhere. As an inventor, you need to have a road map for taking those ideas and turning them into successful magic tricks, and, if you’re so inclined, magic products. That’s where the next section comes in.

How to develop magic “the right way”

Here’s how to develop a magic idea the right way:

Step 1: Hatch the idea.

Step 2: Play with the idea until you thoroughly understand it.

Step 3: Use it yourself. If it can be performed, perform it hundreds or thousands of times.

Step 4: Search for other magicians who are doing (or have done) something similar.

Step 5: Share your idea with trusted magic friends. Ask if they’ve seen anything like it.

Step 6: Reach out to experts. Ask if they can point you in the direction of similar work.

I recommend the following experts. These guys are all very busy, so approach only after you have done everything you can to research the idea on your own.

- Joshua Jay
- Michael Weber
- Chris Kenner
- Max Maven
- Paul Harris

I haven’t included contact information for these magicians because I don’t want you to contact them until you’ve earned the right to do

so. You earn the right by doing steps 1-5 and becoming an expert on your idea.

When is Your Variation Not Just a Me Too

This is probably the most difficult judgement you will have to make as a magic inventor. We have a natural tendency to fall in love with our own ideas. We know exactly how hard it was to push into the unknown. But when other people hear our breakthrough they often respond without surprise. “That’s pretty obvious.” Yeah, it’s pretty obvious NOW THAT I SHOWED YOU.

99% of the time you shouldn’t market your variation.

How will you know when you’re in the 1%? Show your variation to magicians who are familiar with the original effect. If a high percentage of them start performing the effect your way, you know you might be on to a genuine improvement. But, before you decide to market your variation, contact the originator. Show him what you’ve come up with. (If the originator is no longer alive, contact his closest magic friends or students.)

You may be tempted to avoid this step because the original creator may not give you permission to release your version. And that’s true. But that’s missing the point. The point isn’t to make as much money as possible marketing magic. The point is to learn as much as possible and advance the art. Your conversation with the original creator is an opportunity to understand the effect more deeply than you ever have before. He may have thought of doing it your way and a hundred other variations before choosing his way. Or your way may truly be better. Connect with him and find out.

The connection you make with that inventor will enrich you and

will enrich the art of magic. Good things will come of it. It may not be marketing the item. It may be the start of a collaborative dialog that lasts for many years to come.

Should you Market Your Magic Invention?

Lets assume you've developed your idea "the right way". It's definitely not just a "me too" variation. Should you turn it into a product?

Some of the top magicians in the world don't market their ideas. Why? Because the ideas have more value to them as secrets. Keep this in mind. There's nothing wrong in deciding to keep your secrets secret.

Young magic inventors sometimes seem in a hurry to market their ideas. Consider this:

Selling magic items is quite possibly the least compelling reason to invent magic.

There is far more money to be made performing magic than in selling magic items.

If you're a performer, the way to make the most money from your magical invention is probably to make it one of your signature effects. That way, you can go out and perform it in paid shows for many years to come. I can't imagine a magician like Franz Harary marketing one of his original illusions, that would be crazy. He earns tens of thousands of dollars per show with his original material. Clients book him because he's one-of-a-kind.

If you keep your ideas to yourself, you'll be the only person performing your magic. If you market your ideas, there will soon be

hundreds or thousands of magicians performing your magic. It depends what type of magician you are, and what your plans are for the future, but it may be much smarter to hold on to your ideas and use them in your own performances.

If you're motivated to release a magic product for the money, keep in mind...

There are Easier Ways to Make Money

There are bigger markets, and there are easier ways to make money. The global footwear market, for example, is 180 Billion dollars. That's 3000 times the size of the magic market.

But you're not inventing shoes, you're inventing magic. The reason is, you love magic.

That's the right reason. Love for magic is the common bond that connects producer and consumer. Yes, money is changing hands, but for almost everyone involved, much more than money is at stake.

The Value of Respect

There's a great deal of respect to be earned by inventing magic items. You can get this respect without publishing or marketing your inventions. You just need to show your material to top magicians. If your material is good, your reputation will grow.

Inventors are very important people in the magic community. Being respected as a magic inventor will give you access to many top

thinkers in magic. These relationships can be extremely valuable to your career, both as an inventor and as a performing magician. There is an inner-circle in magic that is very real. The way to get there is by earning the respect of the most respected guys. When I think of the inner-circle, I think of guys like Michael Weber and Eric Mead.

Part of being a respected member of the magic community, is respecting other creators. When you're publishing material, that means two things: asking permission, and giving proper credit.

Permission to Use Someone Else's Idea

If the item you want to publish/market includes an idea that was previously invented by another magician (who is still alive), magic community etiquette requires you ask that person for permission to include his idea in your project.

If the person says "no", you simply don't include their idea. You either find a different way to accomplish the effect or don't move forward with the project.

Proper Crediting

Magic community standards require that anytime you include another magician's idea in your magic product (or publication), you give attribution to the inventor.

There is no standard format for giving credit, but you should give enough information the reader/viewer can easily find the original source for further research. The more information you include, the

better. Include author, title and page number if the idea appeared in a book. Include issue date and page number if the idea appeared in a magazine. Include title and chapter if the item appeared in a video.

If you skip this step, you're asking for bad reviews and political problems with your item. It takes effort and care to do proper crediting, but when you develop the idea "the right way", you already know who needs to be credited long before you bring the product to market.

What's a Classic Item?

Up to now, we've been talking about bringing new and original products to market. However, many of the best-selling items in magic are what are called "classic" items. You may want to produce a DVD teaching self-working card tricks, or put out your own version of a popular coin gimmick.

In magic, the term "classic" generally refers to an item (or trick) that is very old, very popular, and manufactured by several different magic companies.

Some examples of classic magic items are Svengali Deck, Ball and Vase, Thumb Tip, Scotch and Soda.

You can't copy another manufacturer's artwork or exact design, but generally speaking, no one will mind if you release your own version of a classic item.

The problem is, not everybody agrees on which items are "classics".

If you want to manufacture an item you think is classic, do your

research up front. That effect came from someone's brain. Find out who the inventor was. Find out where he/she is now. Become an expert on all other marketed versions of the effect. Contact anyone who still produces a version of the item or is regarded as an expert on the item.

Put the work in ahead of time. Talk with the people who have an interest in the item, and discuss your idea to manufacture a new version. See how they feel about it. See what they recommend.

Why? Because how people feel about your item matters as much as the actual facts about how long it's been and who currently has the "right" to manufacture the item. The people with an interest in the item (commercial or scholarly) are the people who are going to decide whether your item gets embraced by the community or called a knock-off on the discussion boards and in the reviews. It's much easier to put the work in ahead of time and avoid political problems before they arise.

As mentioned earlier, members of the magic community care deeply about intellectual property. If you're manufacturing an item you didn't invent, you can guarantee magicians will care. If they feel you've wronged someone they respect, you can expect them to be very vocal in their disapproval. This is how the community regulates the magic market. It's a very healthy process, but, trust me, you don't want to be on the receiving end.

Knock-offs

If you make a mistake and release an item that is too similar to an existing item, the magic community will call it a "knock-off".

You do not want this to happen. It's bad for your reputation, and terrible for business.

Early in my career, I got on the wrong side of this issue. I want to tell you the story so you can understand how important it is to bring your items to market "the right way".

Lets define our terms.

In magic, a "knock-off" is any item that is substantially similar to another item, but fails to improve it. Put another way, a knock-off is any item that is not original, and not a classic.

Outside the magic market, there is a category of items called "house brands" or "generics". These are items that are manufactured for the sole purpose of competing with a name brand product. Same product category. As similar a formulation and design as legally permissible.

This category doesn't exist in the magic market. In the magic market, an item is either original, a classic, or a knock-off. When I first got into the magic business, I didn't know this. I thought magic was just like any other product.

The idea of copying another person's item doesn't excite me at all. But, when we first started Penguin, there were several suppliers offering their own versions of popular items. I was new to magic, and these items weren't "knock-offs" by my definition. They weren't "counterfeits" like a fake Rolex or a fake Gucci purse. These were honest, legal, competitively manufactured items with their own unique product name and brand name.

We'd see these items in many of our competitors' catalogs. They were often a lot less expensive than the "original" version. Sometimes they were better quality. What to do?

It was my belief we should carry everything and let the customers decide what they wanted to buy. I thought we should put the “original” item on the “shelf” right next to the generic item, just like Walmart and Target.

I wasn’t ashamed of this belief. I even went on The Magic Cafe and talked about it. I thought it was the right thing to do, and I was proud to be open and honest about it.

I knew a lot of people in the magic community didn’t agree with my position, but I was sure I could convince the community we were doing the right thing. Boy was I wrong!

The knock-off issue took on a life of its own. Discussion forums lit up in anger. Competitors started discontinuing these controversial items. But I stuck to my policy. I still believed we were doing the right thing for the customer—offering a choice, helping people save a buck.

All of a sudden, we were the biggest shop carrying “knock-offs”. The spotlight was on us. I kept believing—and trying to convince magicians—we were doing the right thing. It wasn’t working.

People started boycotting Penguin. Our own discussion forum was in revolt. Magicians who had previously agreed to do projects with us stopped wanting to work together. Overnight, the good reputation we’d spent years building, was in the toilet.

After months of this damaging controversy, we discontinued the items that were causing the uproar. It was only a handful of items. The sales were insignificant. I had done enormous damage to our brand because I didn’t understand the magic market is different than other markets. The magic market serves the magic community, not the other way around. Hyper-aggressive business tactics

aren’t good for the community, and so the community rejects them.

It’s Mostly Gray Area

Despite your best efforts to bring your item to market “the right way”, there’s still a chance you’ll end up stepping on somebody’s toes.

In participating in and observing countless intellectual property disputes in magic, I’ve come to the following conclusion:

It’s mostly gray area.

Sure, there are some cases where it’s cut and dried. _____ ripped off _____. Everybody agrees. End of story.

But most of the time it’s not that simple. Most of the time both sides have a pretty reasonable position.

In the end, there’s no judge or jury who decides these things. Members of the magic community come to their own conclusions, and reputations are adjusted accordingly. The facts of the situation matter, but what matters more is your history and your relationships.

If you find yourself in a dispute, don’t build a wall of facts around yourself. Reach out and connect with the people who are upset.

If people know you, if they like you, if they see your approach is gentle and full of respect for the art, you will be just fine.

The magic community is about people, not facts. Go out of your way to treat people right, and the magic community will be on your side.

More than Money

As a magician, it can feel a little weird to cross over and start selling magic items. You're used to keeping secrets. Now you're selling them? And so cheap! \$5 for a Color Vision Box. That's the most beautiful secret ever. How can it only cost \$5?

Keep in mind, magic costs more than money. When you develop an item, you're almost certainly going to put in more time and effort than you're going to get paid for. Most of the time, you'd make more money working at a minimum wage job.

And the customer is going to have to spend more than just the price of the item in order to perform your effect. He's going to have to put the time in to studying and practice.

It would be a mistake to think of marketing a magic item only in terms of the money. There's a tremendous joy in putting everything you can into an item, knowing the customer is going to put everything he can into the item too. As I write these words, I know you're going to create products that will inspire magicians for hundreds of years to come, and that makes me want to stay up all night pouring as much knowledge as I can into these pages. It's what you will do with this book that gets me excited, not the money you will pay for it.

In the past, some of the great old brick and mortar magic shops used to enforce a "more than money" policy. If a kid was trying to buy an item he wasn't ready for, the shopkeeper would tell him so.

"Sorry, can't sell it to you. You're not ready."

The shopkeeper would make him prove he was ready by mastering

another item first. This created a "more than money" dynamic.

Being told you're "not ready" for something you want is an extremely powerful motivator. The pride felt when you've earned the right to get to a new level in your magic does not wear off quickly.

This dynamic inspired many of today's greatest magicians to start a deep and lifelong interest in magic.

How can you incorporate this "more than money" dynamic into your products? How can you incorporate it into the way your products are sold? What can you give to your customers? What can you inspire them to strive for?

Mentalist Nakul Shenoy has one product for sale on Penguin that can only be seen by professional mentalists. Most visitors to Penguin will never even know it exists. It can't be found in the search engine, and can't be viewed without a special password. Nakul performs with the item professionally, and he would rather only a small circle of serious performers know his secret. This isn't the only product on Penguin that's exclusively available to members of the inner-circle.

If hearing about Nakul's item inspired you, I think you'll really enjoy Michael's Idea. This is a glimpse of where I think the magic market is headed in the next 100 years.

Michael's Idea

I was talking with Michael Weber in the hallway at Luke Jermy's Mentalism Workshop. He stopped me on my way back into the room, and said he had an idea for me.

“What if, when people went to Penguin, they didn’t see any products for sale. All they could see was videos of great magic performances... The greatest performances of all time?”

“And people could learn one trick for free, something simple and beautiful.”

“If they wanted to learn another trick, they’d have to prove they had mastered the first trick by sending in a video of them self performing it.”

“Then they’d be at Level 1. They’d have access to buy any of the tricks at Level 1.”

“To get to Level 2, they’d have to send in another video.”

Michael started back into the seminar. Then he turned with a smile and said...

“And there’s always another level!! ”

I spent the next few hours slowly realizing Michael had solved the problem I’d been struggling with for eight years—How do you market something you’re not supposed to talk about?

Hint, it’s not by talking about it.

I’d found that out the hard way.

When we told customers we were working on Penguin Magic kits to be sold in Walmart and Target, we thought they’d be excited. They groaned.

When we told our customers we were opening Penguin Magic kits to sell tricks to tourists, we thought they’d be excited. They

groaned again... Oh great, now everybody is going to know about Penguin Magic.

I finally realized, our customers don’t want us to advertise. They don’t want us getting featured in the newspaper. They don’t want their spectators to know we exist. We’re one of their most important secrets.

This put our interests as a growing business were directly at odds with the interests of our customers. We wanted to grow the magic market by convincing people to become magicians. Our customers wanted us to keep quiet so they could perform without worrying about their spectators saying, “I know that one, I saw it on Penguin!”

So how do you grow the magic market? For years I pushed magic with a megaphone. “Hey everyone, you can become a magician!”

Michael’s approach was different. Draw people in with a whisper. Better yet, put up a fence. Make it more exclusive. More secretive. More mysterious. More prestigious. Grow the magic market by making it better to be a magician.

Michael’s idea was doing a massive re-org to my mental furniture. I started dreaming...

What if, instead of the Penguin Magic logo, we put up a logo for “Penguin Scuba Company”, and made it look like the site didn’t have anything to do with magic at all—until you logged in.

We could hide in plain sight, like Butchie’s Bras and Girdles.

You’d have to know you were looking for Penguin Magic to find us. Like a secret society, a secret club. You’d have to be on the inside.

And once you were on the inside, we could show you things no public magic shop could dare reveal.

Our levels would motivate new magicians to take on bigger challenges. Imagine if you had to submit a video of yourself performing for a crowd of 50 people on the street in order to gain access to the next level in street magic. What would that challenge, that experience, do for the performer? It would take him to the next level as a performer.

We'd be asking more from our customers, and we'd have to give more too. At the advanced levels, we'd have to offer exclusive magic not available in public magic shops. And for beginners, we'd need to provide a dramatically better shop experience. More guidance. More mentorship.

But, if we pulled it off, we'd have one of the coolest sites on the internet. Totally hidden. Completely under the radar. What magician wouldn't tell his magic friends about it? What magician wouldn't recommend us to an interested young magician?

Michael had come up with one of the coolest marketing models I have ever heard of. We'd be in perfect alignment with our customers. We'd be in perfect alignment with magic.

In the old days, magic shops were obscure simply because of their physical limitations. They were usually small and located in out of the way places where rents were cheap. If a non-magician walked in the door, the magician behind the counter could steer him toward a prank, gag, or a beginner item. There was guidance. A non-magician didn't just stumble upon the great secrets of magic.

Mail order catalogs came around, and magic companies started listing hundreds or thousands of items. But, catalogs were expensive to print, and if you weren't a magician, you'd probably never see one.

Then, along came the Internet. Catalogs turned into e-commerce sites. Suddenly, every product could be seen by anyone at any time, like a giant yard sale where every product is laying out in the front yard.

For years I never questioned that model.

But, maybe it's not the best way to sell magic.

Or, as Michael would say, "Maybe it's not the best way to grow magicians."

End of Chapter 1!

There's much more to come.

To purchase the full version of Marketing Magic by Maxwell Murphy, please visit your favorite magic retailer!

About the Author



Maxwell Murphy is the co-founder of Penguin Magic. He currently lives in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. He spends his time writing, programming, inventing, and sailing. He's working on a number of projects. The one he's most excited about is Adbattl.com. It's a site where marketers compete to come up with the best marketing idea / opportunity. Check it out at <http://adbattl.com>.

Other books by Maxwell Murphy

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