

# John Kaplan's *Fundraising Magic*™ Course

## A review by Mark Nilsen, MUM Magazine

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Readers of this column know that I write about the business side of magic. One of the topics I write about frequently is self-promotion, and by discussing bits and pieces ... everything from business cards to handling unhappy customers ... I can eventually convey a complete picture of my views of marketing.

Every few years there seems to be a new program, book, or series about marketing. In fact, over ten years ago, I even put out a tape/manual series about marketing magic. However, during the past five years or so, there seems to have been a glut of marketing programs. I've bought most of them, if for no other reason than to keep abreast of what's out there in order to keep current with this column.

I'm sorry to say that I have found many of these programs to be of very little value. As you might have guessed, I have become a bit jaded by all these programs. How much information is really legitimate, and how much is just an attempt to make a few dollars on the part of the program's creator?

That is why I was so genuinely surprised when I came across a marketing program that I thought was original, lived up to its hyperbole, and could find a useful place on the shelf of the magician who chose to apply its contents. Please understand that this is not, and was never intended to be, a review column; that's reserved for another area of M-U-M. However, since I was pretty vocal when I came across lousy programs, I thought it was only fair that I point out one of the good ones.

The program I'm referring to is by a magician named John Kaplan. John is Canadian, and he seems to be one of those guys who is so busy doing shows and making money that we magicians never hear of him; I know I hadn't. After looking through John's "Fund-raising Magic" package, I came away convinced that he really knows what he's talking about.

To start with, John's program focuses on only one aspect of marketing, and that's fund-raising. When you do one thing, you tend to get good at it. And, judging by the response he gets from his clients, John is very good at it.

The program I got from John was very complete. In fact, it arrived in a big box, and that box was full. He included a client manual which is huge; it's an inch-thick book of 8-1/2 X 11 pages, which completely guides the client through the fund-raising process. I've presented quite a few of these types of programs, and if John's missed anything I couldn't find it. In fact, this booklet is so good that he actually revised it and had it published as general guide to presenting

a fund-raising program. But, the original that he includes in the package is superior for our purposes because it directly relates to a magic show as the fund-raising vehicle.

The other main element of the package is a ring binder which guides you through the fund-raising process. This spills the beans on exactly how John makes his living. He tells how to find sponsors, how to price the shows, how to present the show, how to find profitable "add ons" ... in fact, there is so much material here that I read through it three times and I am still finding new things.

Included in this binder is a huge full-color show poster, camera-ready art that John uses to promote his show, tickets pages, fliers, handouts, ad copy, newspaper ads ... too much to mention. Depending on what version of the package you buy, John even includes a copy of the actual videotape he sends to clients to help sell the show (which includes his own promotional video) and an audiocassette of the radio spot he uses.

Finally, you'll see how John creates the feeling of professionalism. All the support materials he uses suggest a professional, quality show. This is probably the most overlooked element in self-promotion, and if you learn nothing else from this program your money will be well spent.

I must admit that I don't agree with everything in the package (I'd begin to worry if I did!). For example, I prefer to handle the payment and client risk aspects a little differently. But there is so much good stuff here that you can very easily adapt it to your own market and methods. Even if you don't know how to adapt it, I suspect you could follow John's plan exactly and come out with a highly successful program.

This is not a get-rich-quick scheme. John Kaplan has been at it so long that he's sort of on auto-pilot; past customers keep coming back. But he's earned that. You and I will have to work hard to get where he is, but thanks to this package most of the thinking has already been done for us ... and after all, isn't that the really hard part?

If you're interested in finding out more about this program, you can take a look at [www.fundraisingmagic.com](http://www.fundraisingmagic.com).

- Mark Nilsen