



BACKGROUND

Many people know the legacy of PT Barnum, particularly the creation of the circus as we know it today. His accomplishments as an entertainment marketer are legendary. Barnum also enjoyed some success as a politician. He served several terms as a State legislator in Connecticut and is credited with casting the deciding vote for abolishing slavery after the Civil War.

Perhaps the most interesting accomplishment of Barnum's legacy, however, is the impact he had on the English language. It could be argued that he introduced more terms to our language than any other individual in modern history.

For Example:

- Barnum would refer to the actions of prominent people who would sit in the best seats at the circus for the sole purpose of being noticed as "grandstanding."
- After a local politician threw his hat into a circus ring at a Barnum show to declare his candidacy, the phrase "throwing your hat in the ring" was born.
- When the time came to load all the circus animals on the train for departure for the next city, Barnum would declare that it was "time to get the show on the road."
- Because his shows were always under the famous big top canopy, there would always be a performance, regardless of weather conditions. Barnum would proclaim that his shows would go on "rain or shine".
- Barnum's proclamation that his show was "the greatest show on earth" is a catch phrase associated with the circus to this day.
- Ironically, the phrase he is perhaps most often credited with coining ("a sucker is born every minute") was never uttered by PT Barnum.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you think PT Barnum's impact as a marketing pioneer has any affect on today's sports and entertainment industry executives? Why or why not?
2. Do you think Barnum's introduction of the phrases identified in this case study are an indication of his ability to effectively market his product? Why or why not?