



10 marketing commandments that might help you from going broke...

But first, discover why they are so badly needed today...

After being such a good boy with loads of FREE tips and advice in the last couple of Copycats, I thought it was about time I reverted to type.

It's time for a rant.

I've just seen a post on the irritating and ever-increasing waste of time known as LinkedIn, that was presented as being rather startling.

In fact, the author suggested it was bordering on *ground-breaking*.

Somebody had found that if you put the price of a product you are promoting, under the product in an ad or image, you will sell more than if you put it above the product.

Well, whaddya know?

Amazing, huh?

No. It's not.

Savvy marketers found that fact out, over 75 years ago.

They found - through testing print ads amongst other things - that a headline under an image or picture, *always* delivered better results than a headline over an image or picture.

People look at the image, read the description and then consider the headline. Then, if the headline is relevant and offers them something of benefit, they read the body copy.

Sequential and logical - just how a good sales person should deliver a pitch.

Read any book from one of the old masters, or a number of my Copycats over the years - and you'll see this key fact stated loud and clear, many, many times.

Anyone that takes marketing seriously would know that. Or should do.

But suddenly, it's big news!

I also read recently about another new exciting *discovery*. It's called 'big data'.

OMG they said! How brilliant it is and so important. Data is king...

Discovery?

Really?

Well, tickle my arse with a feather...

Direct marketing as an industry, 'exploded' because of data, over 50 years ago.

Ever heard of 'database marketing'? We damn well invented it.

And what's more, we used it considerably more effectively than 'big data' is being used today.

Some of us still do.

We knew how to build a database and segment it effectively. We didn't send the same message to a whole database, like so many of the lazy bastards do these days.

We sent different messages to the different individuals, based on key facts that we knew about them.

We profiled databases to learn more about who our customers were. And we then used that profile to find more like them.

'Birds of a feather' and all that jazz. And it worked. Gangbusters.

We recognised the power of the individual. It is a sermon we preached then.

Some of us still do.

Customers are NOT born equal. As I mentioned in my last Copycat, smart marketers know that marketing to people on their *differences*, not their *similarities*, can deliver big dividends.

Common sense, isn't it? Apparently not, to today's dummies...

Sending the same basic offer to someone who spends ten times more than the next person, is not only lazy, it's simply incredibly poor marketing.

As the wonderful Jerry Reitman once said:

"Customers have different names, ages, addresses, dialects, education, incomes, ethnic backgrounds, experiences, aspirations, circumstances, family structure, motivations, behaviour patterns, personalities, character traits, physical features, emotional make-ups and personal priorities. Consumers are individuals, as unique as snowflakes"

It's a magnificent quote that should be on every marketer's office wall. But we all know it won't be.

Segmenting databases and keeping them in a fit state to use effectively, takes hard work and knowledge.

Today's marketers don't like the former and they have none of the latter.

And a great example of this, just happened to land in my letterbox as I am writing this latest *Copycat*.

Look at these two examples.

Especially the addresses...



It's the same booklet that was sent to me twice. This has happened from this company, pretty much every quarter for as long as I can remember.

I subscribe to this book club. Have done for years.

I buy a fair amount of stuff from them, too. Their products and offers are good.

But it's abundantly clear that their knowledge about how to keep a database clean, deduped and maintained correctly, is sadly lacking.

You would have thought that this would be a key component for a mail order company, wouldn't you?

I would like to bet that they use a computerised dedupe programme to eliminate costly dupes. But, as these two records are structured differently, a computer would class them as different.

But they are not different. They are the same person.

At the same address. Me...

We found out decades ago with databases, that a computer can only do so much. A human being HAS to be involved. Just a simple sort by postcode and a visual check would have identified these records as being the same.

Yes, it will take time and patience. But it is essential.

If this has happened with my address, you can lay short odds that there will be many others like this on their database, which means it's costing the company a lot of valuable budget on unnecessary print and postage costs.

Stupid...

And that's a word that also applies to the almost complete absence of testing these days. We were *always* testing. How else do you learn what works and what doesn't?

We tested everything, because that knowledge enabled us to spend our client's money much more effectively. These days, testing is a dinosaur word in marketing.

Virtually no one does it today. That why they know very little - and discover things they think are new, but, in fact, have been around forever.

Testing gave us knowledge. Oodles of it. And we used it to make our client loads of money. We shared that knowledge.

Some of us still do.

I recently sent out a new business email and tested two subject lines. One pulled 82% more responses than the other. Same email, different subject line, that is all. Numbers that matter...

Here's something else. I have mentioned many times in previous Copycats, the vital importance of starting well with your copy and getting people 'in' to the letter, email, ad or whatever you are writing.

This means using words that link seamlessly with a subject line or headline, but above all, are delivered *effectively* – and that means short paragraphs, not long rambling ones.

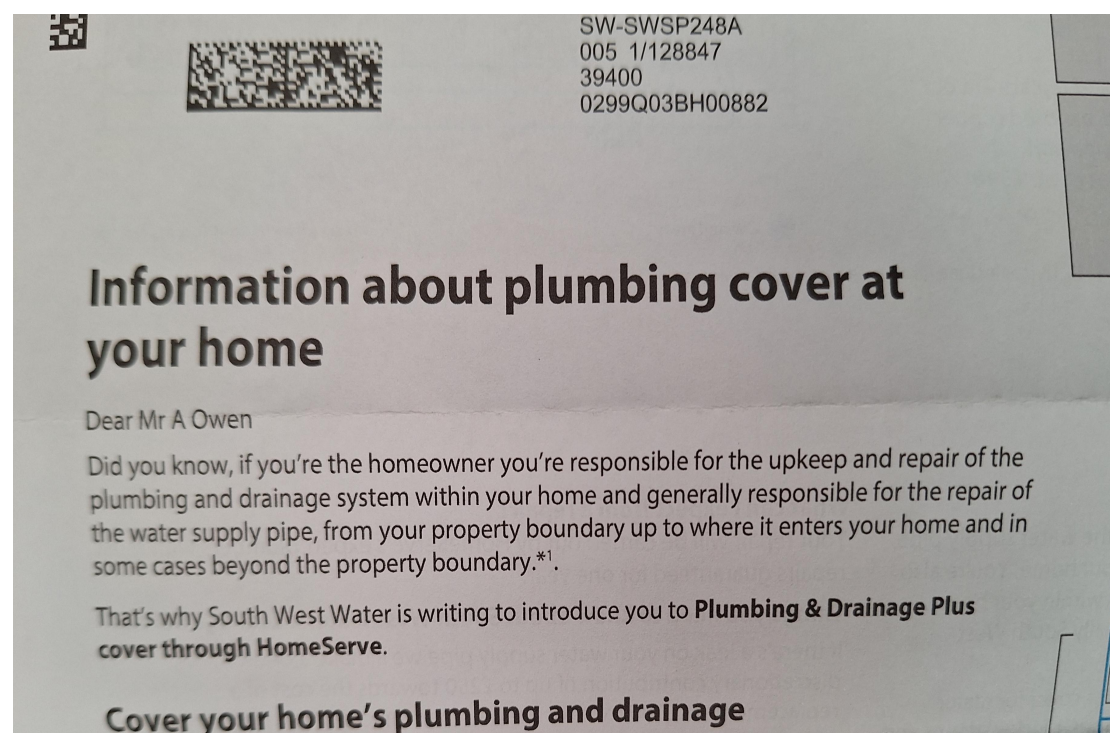
The object of the first line of copy, is to get the reader to read the second – and so on. Long blocks of copy are always instant death.

The reader will look at it and won't bother. It's too daunting. So, they will leave right there. And never come back.

Look at this – and you will see what I mean.

This bunch used to be clients of mine over 25 years ago. Their direct mail was top class then - every time - and made them millions. And I'm not exaggerating...

Now, they produce garbage like this:



The opening paragraph is four lines long, has fifty-three words and two commas. Just read it out loud at normal speed. You will have to stop to take a breath.

It asks a question without a question mark at the end. And the copy contains a dreaded asterisk. The headline is flaccid and weak. The salutation is a joke.

A mailing pack written and created by charlatans.

It's disgraceful and embarrassing work, from a company that were taught how to do it correctly, over two and a half decades ago.

Now you know why I despair so much. No one has learnt anything and no one cares anymore...

In the halcyon days, this would not even have seen the light of day as we were passionate about trying to do things right.

We loved what we were doing and always wanted to pass on what we had learnt, to anyone who also wanted to get better and grow.

Some of us still do.

For close on 20 years, as well as running two busy agencies – one here and one in Dubai, I travelled 100,000 miles a year sharing my knowledge and passion, delivering Full-Day Masterclasses, Workshops and Seminars on all aspects of direct marketing.

I presented in over 30 countries and enjoyed every second of it.

And do you want to know something about those events?

Putting a headline under a picture in an ad, the power of the individual and how to build and maintain effective databases, were discussed and presented as part of those Masterclasses.

As well as a thousand other vital and proven creative and copy tips and techniques. Things that *work* – and will always work...

A great number of the delegates that attended my shows around the world, still write to me today. We share loads of things. They will be reading this *Copycat*.

Some of them became clients and I still help many of them with their marketing challenges. Others contact me for advice. A lot of them have become good friends.

I am proud of that. *Very* proud.

These lovely people were part of a *magical* time. When marketers knew stuff. And shared stuff - but were always wanting to learn and share more.

Today's marketers are a different breed altogether, running around like headless chickens. Most haven't got a clue what they are doing.

We all see this every day, in our inboxes, letterboxes, newspapers, magazines, social media posts, tv and radio ads and much more.

These days, I get more irrelevant and badly presented offers from companies than ever before. It will be the same for you, I'm sure.

I have said this many times, but I'll say it again, because it's true:

'Times have changed - but the key elements of what really works and what doesn't in marketing and selling, have hardly changed at all - and they never will'.

Yes, the things that make people sit up, take notice and respond to a particular promotional message rather than the thousands around it, are pretty much the same as they were many generations ago.

It is because the creator of that message knows what works and what doesn't - and applies that knowledge to make the marketing communication more effective.

So much money could have been saved by marketers just by studying past marketing and communication examples and techniques.

They would have found out years ago, that headlines under pictures in ads work better than headlines above ads. They would also have discovered how to build and maintain databases and harness the extraordinary power of segmented data.

Plus, how to write copy that *sells*...

How many of you out there have read the works of people like *John Caples, James Webb Young, David Ogilvy, Bill Jayme, Drayton Bird, Murray Raphael* and *Herschell Gordon Lewis*, to name but seven?

Very few, if my experience is anything to go by.

A lot of people I have spoken to over the last few years, have never read any of them. A top agency boss I met recently, admitted to have never heard of Caples, Young or Jayme.

An agency boss! Working in the communication business. You couldn't make it up.

As I get older, I have to say, I find it very sad. These people were - and still are - GIANTS in our business. So much can be learned from them and people like them.

There are only a handful of old DM liggers still around sharing their valuable knowledge these days. Most have left the business and are pruning their roses in Dorset or Sussex.

Some, sadly, have left us for the agency bar in the sky.

I can imagine many of them – a lot of them were my friends - all looking down and howling with laughter at what goes on now.

I have to tell you, that when I receive the latest bit of garbage in my inbox or letterbox, or watch another poor ad on TV, sometimes I can't wait to get up there and join them.

Until then, I will continue to be appalled at the lack of knowledge in our industry today – and in my own way, I'll keep on trying to educate anyone that might see the benefit of top-quality knowledge and experience.

OK. Rant over. My chest is now lighter.

I'll leave you with some more FREE advice...

Besides giving serious consideration to what I've shared with you above, here are the promised 10 commandments that might help you from going broke. (*I have hundreds more...*)

- 1. Accept you're not in control anymore. The customer is.**
- 2. DM specialists that have a few miles on the clock will know more than you. Use them.**
- 3. Look back. There are great treasures to uncover.**
- 4. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are essential. Get them right.**
- 5. Copy is now king in contemporary communication. Accept it and give it the respect it deserves.**
- 6. Spend more on existing customers, than new customers.**
- 7. Test, test and test again.**
- 8. Don't be a gullible marketer and follow the latest fashion.**
- 9. Respect your customers and stay close to them.**
- 10. Be brave and use your imagination.**

Don't read them and forget them. *Apply* them. Go on, do it.

You can use some of them straight away – and you'll see very quickly, the enormous difference they will make to what you are doing.

Then use the rest and you'll find your campaigns will rise above the dross and start making you a lot of money.

Keep the faith



ABOUT YOUR AUTHOR

Andy Owen is MD of **Andy Owen Copy & Creative Ltd**, one of the most respected and experienced International direct marketing consultancies, specialising in all aspects of copy, creative and strategy for direct and digital marketing.

Andy has been writing selling copy for over 38 years.

He writes traditional and digital marketing campaigns, including direct mail, sales letters, emails, SMS's, PPC and FB ads, media ads, websites, landing pages, brochures, radio scripts and much more.

He works with clients in three continents and was inducted into the **Direct Marketing Hall of Fame** in February 2015, one of only two copywriters in Europe with that honour.

Visit **www.andyowencopyandcreative.com**

Andy launched an innovative new copywriting service late in 2019, called **Copy Chief** - which guarantees professionally written copy every time - for a fraction of the normal rate card cost.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of copywriting and creative for direct marketing, please contact Andy personally at **andyowen@aol.com**

All Andy's **previous Copycat articles** are available to download and enjoy

Don't forget to visit Andy's **personal website** where you will find many interesting tales, amazing yarns and wonderful stories - completely devoid of any corporate claptrap.