



**"You wouldn't know a diamond if you held  
it in your hand..."**

**The things you think are precious I can't understand"**

*Reelin' in the Years  
Walter Becker & Donald Fagan*

Well, who'd have thought it?

Just when you think the clueless marketers of today can't surprise us with their stupidity anymore, they come up with 4 more gems.

These have surfaced in my pond in the last couple of weeks...

- 1. Marketers have suddenly recognised that data is important.**
- 2. Marketers now realise that existing customers offer great value**
- 3. Marketers feel 'About Us' pages on websites are useless**
- 4. Marketers believe business cards are 'old hat' and have no value.**

Yes, these are four of the latest bits of so-called intelligence coming from the marketing 'professionals' of 2019.

I was going to make the above four points the central focus of this Copycat, but something else much more important has come up.

Instead, I'll comment on a couple of them later in this article.

The 'something else much more important' has the same underlying subject matter - clueless people masquerading as professionals.

So, given this context, I would like to talk for a minute or two about The DMA and The IDM. For the uninitiated, these are:

The Direct Marketing Association and The Institute Of Direct Marketing.

Well, in actual fact, that's what they *were*. They aren't that anymore.

Their names have changed.

The Direct Marketing Association has been re-branded as *The Data & Marketing Association*. The IDM has renamed itself *The Institute of Data & Marketing*.

As I'm sure you will have noticed, two rather important words - 'direct marketing' - have been dropped from their new names.

Direct marketing is officially dead then, is it? The industry we all helped to build for the last 4 decades and more, has now gone to the grave.

It's not only absurd, it's ridiculous.

But, more important than that, it's totally untrue.

Once upon a time, these two organisations were pretty good. Never great, but pretty good.

They helped to promote direct marketing in the right way. Having their badges on your letterhead meant something.

But, that was at a time when the direct marketing 'family' was a joy to be a part of. It was an industry with a heartbeat that was so strong, it could be heard in every corner of the world.

All marketing was direct marketing. Still is, in my book.

It was a *very* special time. I felt privileged to work in an industry populated with so many wonderfully talented people.

Because of the skills and expertise of these great people - from the States initially and then from here and further afield - we educated marketers to an extremely high level, for the first time ever.

That's because in those days in DM, we tested everything - and then we freely shared our knowledge with them in seminars, workshops, articles, Masterclasses and books.

They learned about stuff.

Stuff they didn't know. Important stuff.

Like how to write to a customer or prospect correctly and effectively. How to create a DM pack that connected, engaged and influenced people.

How to write and create an ad that 'stopped people' and got them reading and buying.

How to use images correctly, what colour envelopes worked best, why headlines should always contain a benefit. The power of a P.S.

We showed them that '*completely interest free*' would always outpull '*0% interest*' '*zero interest*' and '*no interest charges*' in selling copy - and hundreds more vitally important things like that.

Later on, we taught them how to write emails that cut through the inbox minefield and how to write web pages that engaged with visitors.

All this was vital stuff that made them - and saved them - loads of money.

And stuff that turned certain DM individuals into industry legends.

But, now of course, the two flagship organisations that once flew the flag so proudly for us, have now distanced themselves from direct marketing completely.

You couldn't make this up, could you? No one would believe you.

Derek Holder for one, will be rolling in his grave. What's happened to the IDM since Derek departed, is sad to see.

Many other great people involved in the DMA during all those great years and those from the groundbreaking BDMA before them, will also be shaking their heads in disbelief.

And rightly so. It's a bloody disgrace

Of course, this move is not altogether surprising, as the American DMA made the first move in 2016, by re-branding as The Data & Marketing Association.

Back then, we were told that the US move was seen as an attempt to move away from negative perceptions around the term "direct marketing"

(WTF is THAT supposed to mean?)

Actually, it was nothing of the sort. The US DMA had become less than useless for a number of years and had lost its membership base.

It meant nothing to anyone anymore.

So, no one bothered with it.

The result was, it ended up potless and went tits up.

In an attempt to justify the UK decision, the Chief Executive of the DMA UK, reckons that his *"integrated approach will empower member organisations, IDM professionals and the broad array of talent coming into our industry to responsibly produce more value for customers through intelligent marketing, creativity and accountability."*

Well, Chris, I wish you luck with your 'empowering', as I think you're going to need it. But, let me tell you this...

Direct marketing WAS and still IS the epitome of intelligent marketing.

It WAS and still IS accountable. You know how every penny spent has performed. Well, you should anyway, if you do it right.

And, it was once INCREDIBLY creative and effective - in the days when it was written and created by people who knew what they were doing.

But, as there are only a handful of those technicians around now, we only see an occasional good example, with wall-to-wall tripe, the order of the day.

The vast majority of it is digital of course, the rest is mixed up between direct mail, print ads, door drops, TV ads, Pop Up's and the smoke and mirrors of Google Adwords and all that related bullshit.

I can't remember the last time I received a direct mail pack, either at home or at work, that has impressed me.

But, in the last hour alone while editing this article, I have received six desperately poor emails and seen two dreadful TV ads.

Oh - and I nearly forgot - The Sunday Times magazine this weekend, has three full-page ads clearly written by kindergarten kids.

Added to this, I have had to endure an increasing wave of garbage in the cesspit that is social media.

And now, sadly, LinkedIn seems to be going the same way.

Standards have dropped so far, they're not standards anymore. I have to tell you that I don't despair anymore. I have now pretty much given up.

I suppose I will be told in the weeks to come, that 'times have changed, Andy'.

Being in this business since the 70's, I would reply to that, by saying, "too bloody right they have", but not for the better, that's a certainty.

A lot of my peers saw this coming and got out. The peerless Roger Millington told me 5 years ago, *"Andy, this business is fucked. Go and do something else"*.

The wine must have clouded my thoughts, because I didn't believe the great man. I really believed the industry would see the light.

But he was right. As were a number of other chums who told me the same thing.

I fought on, because, I believed that knowing how to communicate correctly, is a timeless quality that will always be in demand in this business.

How wrong I was. I feel both sad and angry about that.

Clearly, very few these days, are interested in presenting themselves and their company's products and services in the right way anymore.

We are all drowning in crap.

And no one cares.

Companies don't want the best. They want the cheapest.

The wonderful [Bob Hoffman](#) commented timely on this, in his latest blog that I received this morning...

### ***The Price Of Cutting Costs***

*If you're wondering how advertising has gotten so shitty, there's a lesson to be learned from the horrifying story of the Boeing 737 Max.*

*It was revealed this week that in cost-cutting moves to design the planes software, Boeing had been "laying off experienced engineers and replacing them with temporary workers making as little as \$9 per hour, according to Bloomberg."*

*We have a similar situation in the ad business.*

*For years, Sorrell and his pals in the holding companies have been cutting experienced staff and hiring much less expensive young people.*

*The result is the current lousy state of advertising.*

*Experienced creative people have been laid off in favor of cheap "digital natives" who know how to create "Fuckwadian Digital Knick Knacks" but seem to be having all kinds of trouble creating a decent campaign.*

*Fortunately, when agencies go cheap, people don't die. Only brands do.*

Bob is right on the money, of course. As usual.

We have known all of our business lives - 'When you buy cheap - you buy twice'. But, in today's sad marketplace, it makes no difference.

The quality this industry once had, has gone forever.

Because no one cares.

What makes all this so difficult to understand, is the key knowledge that direct marketers discovered and shared all those years ago, **is still highly relevant to today's marketing challenges.**

I have lost count of the amount of times I have said that.

But no one listens. Because no one is interested.

As I mentioned earlier, I was going to leave those 4 bits of nonsense at the start of this article to a future Copycat. But, as a couple of them are relevant to where I am with this article, I will comment on two of them now, to maintain the flow.

All of a sudden, the word on the street is data.

Data, apparently, is the new kid in town. It is THE most important thing EVER.

Well, playmates, let me tell you this. There is nothing new about data.

Nothing new at all.

Forty years ago, we knew how to harness the value and importance of data. We knew how to create, maintain - and above all - use a marketing database effectively.

Without databases, there would have been no direct marketing.

Data drove the industry.

In those blue-sky days in the UK, the only DM magazine that mattered was Direct Response.

Paul Rowney's yellow Direct Response Guide, which was a 'who's who' of the DM industry, was included in his magazine twice a year.

You had sections for mailing houses, envelope suppliers, printers, agencies, data capture bureaus and many, many more, including database marketing companies.

If I recall, there were over 30 top companies in the UK, whose sole function was 'Database Marketing'.

It was a sub-industry all on its own.

And these were pretty big organisations. Because data was BIG business.

As Harvey MacKay observed in '*How to Swim with the Sharks without being Eaten Alive*', something you know about your customer, is much more important than anything you know about your product.

We knew then, as we know now, that marketing messages that reflect the differences of people, not their similarities, will always produce better results.

Databases gave us the power to do this, by effectively segmenting our audiences, so we were able to send different messages to different groups of people.

It was classic direct marketing.

And we found that the more we segmented, the better results we got.

So, a 100,000 mailing might have consisted of over 20 different mailing packs, all containing different offers, all having various tests going on within them.

The results were often stunning - and the knowledge generated became extraordinarily powerful. We then used what we had learned for the next campaign and the next and the next...

And more success followed. It was an inspirational time.

We quickly recognised in those days, that customers were not born equal. Knowing as much as you could about each one was vital to success.

But this wasn't new. Small shopkeepers, publicans and restaurateurs have known this for generations. It's still the best way to make money, whether the information is held on a computer database or in a barman's head.

But, of course, in these troubled times, most companies can't be bothered embracing stuff like that. It's too much like hard work.

Marketers are lazy. As we all know.

So, they take the easy route and email everyone on their database with pretty much the same offer.

We all know this is happening, as we are all recipients of it.

It's a massive mistake and they are losing so much business because of it.

But, they don't care. After all, it's cheap...

What's so surprising, is there's very little testing going on at all. Only a handful of companies test anything these days.

That's why today's marketers know less than jack diddley.

So it all becomes personal opinions. But when you know very little about anything meaningful in marketing to start with, you become a very dangerous person to have around.

So, if you want to know about data and how to use it - it might not be a bad idea to ask those who were there when database marketing was being used more effectively than it is now.

That is, if you can find any that haven't got so pissed off with what's happening these days, they have either left for the agency bar in the sky, or gone fishing.

When it comes to the second item on the list at the start of this article - the value of existing customers - I'm sorry to burst your bubble once again, but this is not new either.

I was presenting Seminars and full-day Masterclasses that included whole sessions on this very subject, over 20 years ago.

*" It is far far more profitable to service an existing customer than it is to find a new one",* was one of my leading slides.

I told audiences from Cape Town to Moscow, from Dubai to Madrid and virtually every country in Europe, that every person in the room would lose at least 25% of their customers in the following twelve months.

They initially looked surprised. They lost that look when I told them why. It was very simple...

They would lose them because they wouldn't tell their customers anywhere near enough, how much they were appreciated. What's more, they wouldn't give them genuinely exclusive deals that oozed benefit and value.

So, those customers would leave and give their business to another company that looked after them better.

I reminded delegates that customers are like hearts. They go where they are appreciated.

*(That will never change, by the way).*

In those days, companies were spending 7 times more on getting a new customer than on retaining the ones they already had.

It was pure lunacy.

I suspect that calculation today, has at least doubled.

That's pure lunacy on steroids.

*(By the way, don't think you are looking after your existing customers, by sending them an email, which is clearly part of a bulk email campaign).*

Your customers are not an amorphous mass of people. They are individuals. Treat them like it.

Many years ago, my good friend Jerry Reitman, a former Executive VP at Leo Burnett and then The Chairman of International Data Response Corporation, gave a speech to a group of several hundred retailers at a marketing convention in Baltimore.

He made a truly dramatic statement at that show, which really shook a few people up.

He said, *"Mass marketing was a myth. It not only does not exist today, but probably never did"*. Jerry produced this evidence to prove this theory;

*"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"*.

His point was absolutely spot-on. People have always been - and will always be - individuals. Every one of us is unique, different, separate and apart from anyone else.

That's why direct marketing will NEVER die.

If you recognise and harness that individuality - you will get very rich.

So, there you have it. If the people that run today's trade organisations think that direct marketing is dead, let them live in their fantasy world.

But, I can tell you this. Smart and effective DM is still very much alive.

And delivering *gangbuster* results.

If you really want to learn more about how DM can help your company going forward - or discover how to build and utilise an effective marketing database to look after your valued customers better - [email me](#) or give me a call.

I would be pleased to share my knowledge with you.

Finally, for anyone interested, here's a list of some of the best minds the industry has ever produced - and the classic books they wrote.

## [Classic Books You Should Read](#)

I recommend you buy as many of them as you can, read them and use the knowledge within them. You will become better at what you do.

What's more, your marketing campaigns will deliver more sales.

I guarantee it.

Here's some other great stuff that might help. A lot of it is FREE, too.

## [Marketing Advice](#)

## [Marketing Superstore](#)

Keep the faith

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andy". The signature is stylized and cursive.

### **ABOUT YOUR AUTHOR**

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Andy has been writing copy for over 32 years. He writes traditional and digital marketing campaigns, including direct mail, sales letters, emails, SMS's, PPC ads, media ads, websites, landing pages, brochures, radio scripts and much, much more.

He works with top clients in three continents and was inducted into the [Direct Marketing Hall of Fame](#) in February 2015, one of only two individuals in Europe with that honour.

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Andy runs [in-house copywriting training](#) for companies of all types and also presents direct marketing Masterclasses, Workshops and Seminars all over the world. (Including Direct Mail.)

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All Andy's [previous Copycat articles](#) are available to download and enjoy.