



**Those that know more - will SELL more...**

**How many more times does it have to be said?**

The ad on the next page, is a classic.

It first ran in 1958.

It was very successful.

I have shared this ad with delegates to my Masterclasses, Seminars and Workshops for 25 years.

I still get requests for it.

It has been called the 'Best B2B Ad of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century'.

It almost certainly was.

The ad was created by an agency called Fuller, Smith & Ross, based in Cleveland, Ohio in the 30's, 40's and 50's.

They specialised in B2B accounts.

It was created for their client McGraw Hill, to promote the practical value of corporate advertising.

But, it does much more than that.

The grumpy looking bloke in the chair was a guy called Gilbert Morris, an account executive of the agency, who actually conceived the ad.



*"I don't know who you are.  
I don't know your company.  
I don't know your company's product.  
I don't know what your company stands for.  
I don't know your company's customers.  
I don't know your company's record.  
I don't know your company's reputation.  
Now—what was it you wanted to sell me?"*

**MORAL:** Sales start **before** your salesman calls—with business publication advertising.

**McGRAW-HILL MAGAZINES**  
BUSINESS • PROFESSIONAL • TECHNICAL

It provides a simple lesson to anyone who wants to sell *anything*.

As we all know, it's incredibly hard to get a sale at any time, especially when you're running new customer acquisition campaigns.

You are talking to someone you don't know, who doesn't want to hear from you, about a product he/she doesn't really want.

It doesn't get much tougher than that.

The copy in the ad forcefully reminds the reader of this challenge.

It's brilliantly conceived and written - and says it all.

***"I don't know you.  
I don't know your company.  
I don't know your company's product.  
I don't know what your company stands for.  
I don't know your company's customers.  
I don't know your company's record.  
I don't know your company's reputation.  
Now, what was it you wanted to sell me?"***

This ad educates - in 8 short lines - what you must do - what you must put in place, before you even think about promoting your products and services out there into the marketplace.

It addresses the dreaded 'curse of assumption', that so many messages these days seem to suffer from.

The ad reminds you that you must build a solid platform and put everything in place before you start promoting your services or products.

What's more, make sure you are consistent in everything you do and say.

Clearly, when you look at how people promote themselves these days, the vital message in that ad - created over 64 years ago - has been completely disregarded.

But of course it has. It's old, isn't it? It's what happened years ago. It has no value today. We have moved on.

Ha, bloody ha.

Do you suffer from the curse of assumption? Do you do enough in your promotional strategy to address the key points made in this ad?

If you do, very many congratulations. You are a rare bird indeed and in a very small minority. Most companies today, haven't got a clue.

***I am sharing the above ad with you, as I was reminded of it, during the last week or so, when I was the target of some appalling sales approaches from a number of companies.***

How it continually gets worse out there, I find it impossible to understand.

But it does...

These examples I'm going to share with you - and there is a real gem at the end, too - are from companies that will not be with us for long.

They will not survive the next couple of years of this brutal recession that is now virtually upon us. Especially if their brainless sales approaches are anything to go by.

Listen to these - and weep.

## **Embarrassment No 1**

A cold caller to my mobile last week, talked to me as if I was an old friend.

It was, *'Andy, this, Andy that'*, in such a laid-back manner, he must have been falling over when he was dictating it. He told me he was *'reaching out to me'* (how I hate that terrible phrase.)

I didn't know him, or his company.

He suggested that a meet next week would be *'really beneficial to you, as I am in your area and there has never been a better time'*.

He didn't tell me what he was selling until over 30 seconds into the call.

Luckily for him, it went into my voicemail and I listened to it later, shaking my head more than Stevie Wonder did while playing 'Superstition'.

If I had taken the call 'live', he would have had to go home early, to get some emotional help.

Believe it or not, the guy was calling me to tell me they create and write websites.

You would have thought 'Andy Owen Copy & Creative' would have suggested to him that I wasn't an ideal target, wouldn't you? A minute or two on my website would have confirmed it.

Not to this wanker.

## **Embarrassment No 2**

The next day, I then received a glossy brochure in the post from a print company that I had never heard of.

No sales letter, just a brochure.

*Big* mistake.

An expensively produced brochure, talking about how long they have been in business and how many machines they have. Oh yes - plus 3 pages of individual profiles of everyone that appeared to be a decision maker in the company.

Including the Financial Director.

I kid you not.

What the hell has he got to do with the benefits of me potentially doing business with them? Nothing. Nothing at all.

The copy was 'telling' copy. As all brochure copy is.

Full of features and totally devoid of benefits. Polluted copy that was all about them.

Nothing about what they could do for me.

And written in a way, that suggested I knew who they were.

I'm afraid to say, it's pretty typical of printers and related operational companies. I've received thousands of similar approaches for over 30 years.

They think machines and people are more important than benefits.

Sending a brochure on its own, is not only a mistake – it's a naïve and costly mistake as well.

But, it's not a one-off. I get quite a lot of brochures in the post, as I'm sure you do.

Most of them without a sales letter.

These people must all be stupid. They must have money to burn.

And clearly, their marketing people like to burn it by the day, by sending stuff out like this. It's barmy.

Professional direct marketers proved, decades ago, that in direct mail, 'the letter *sells*, the brochure *tells*'.

A mailing, consisting of brochure with a sales letter, will always, always, **always** outperform a mailing with just a brochure only.

Of course, it will, I hear you say. Everyone knows that, don't they?

Clearly not.

I wasn't surprised, to be honest. As I have been pointing out for many years in this column, most of today's marketers have forgotten what they have been appointed to do – and that's to sell stuff.

To people.

Today, they are consumed by 'brand purpose'. They want us to have a relationship with them and their brands.

I actually wrote a Copycat on this very subject over 20 years ago. You'll find it on the [Copycat](#) page of my website.

It was advising marketers that no one wanted a relationship with their company or a brand – but an affair might be a possibility.

Well, I have updated news for them on that. Even an affair is now off the table.

I'll tell you something else, Mr Brand Manager..

In the main, we're all pretty disinterested about your brand. We don't want to have a relationship with it, talk to it, engage with it in any way - or even have a coffee with it.

So, stop wasting your money with this nonsense and start realizing that selling the benefits of your brand to us, might be a much more sensible and profitable strategy.

In his wonderful blog recently, George Tannenbaum said this:

*"To so many people around the world, advertising offers them nothing to believe. People like brands for the same reasons they like people. They like brands that act like people they like.*

*They like reliable. They like honest. They like informed and informative. They like helpful. They like being listened to. And getting help when they need it.*

*99.7 of brands and their messages are bombastic, or they talk down to people, or their messages are convoluted and deceptive.*

*In fact, the stupidity of marketing professionals seems to be increasing even faster than global temperatures".*

Ain't that the truth...

Yes, believe it or not, things are getting worse by the day.

And for old pro's like me, who have dedicated their working life to become better at what we do in the communications arena, all that is wrong with our once-great industry, hurts like hell.

That ad, created 64 years ago, delivers a message that is still as relevant as ever. Probably more so, as marketers know less about how to communicate and sell these days, than they did then.

Staggering, but true.

Yet, us old liggers in the industry and the greats before us, left them all the tools to do the job. We told them what works and what doesn't. They have ignored all of it.

Because "that's old hat", they say. "Won't work now", they say. "Times have changed", they say.

"Bollocks", I say...

For heaven's sake, stop dreaming that the world has turned upside down.

Because it hasn't.

Times change, but people don't. The key elements that influence someone to become interested in a sales message, then respond and buy, are pretty much the same as they were 100 years ago.

If today's marketers would take the trouble to study – and go back and learn the basics of communication, then they would discover rich treasures that they could use and benefit from, immediately.

It's all out there. And it's FREE.

As promised, here's a couple more examples of some of the tripe that has polluted my life recently:

### Embarrassment No 3

This was an email. It's subject line was: '*Zoom meeting on Tuesday at 2.00pm, Andy?*'

Not only a classic case of 'curse of assumption', but also a classic case of how not to write an email.

The poorly-written copy is all about them, with punctuation and grammar errors, inclusion of an ampersand (instant death), a question mark when it wasn't needed - and saying 'Cheers' at the end.

And terrible spacing and presentation.

Oh yes, I nearly forgot. They are an American company, suggesting that they could help me in the UK, get more business.

Oh dear.

Best do something else, I reckon.

8/15/22, 11:13 AM

Zoom meeting on Tuesday at 2:00 PM- Andy?

From: [REDACTED]  
To: andyowen@aol.com,  
Subject: Zoom meeting on Tuesday at 2:00 PM- Andy?  
Date: Fri, 22 Jul 2022 15:41

Andy -- Is it okay to send you a zoom meeting invite on Tuesday at 2:00 PM to discuss our services?

We provide customized lead generation & appointment setting solutions tailored for your campaign. Our industry-specific callers introduce your products/services to the right decision-makers of your target market.

We'd love to discuss a little bit more about how [REDACTED] can be of great help to your company.

If this makes sense to you?. What's the best number to reach you?

You can click [MY CALENDAR](#) to book an appointment.

Cheers,

[REDACTED]  
*Business Development Specialist*

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

## Embarrassment No 4

Bad as the above three examples are, this last one really takes the biscuit. It is simply beyond belief.

It's not related to the 'curse of assumption', but to the 'curse of stupidity'

It was a **text message** from MBNA (Bank of America).

Yes, you heard that right – a text message.

I have had two credit cards with them for nearly 20 years. I think you could say, quite reasonably, that I am a good customer of theirs.

They feel differently, it would appear.

This message shows - quite clearly - that customers mean nothing to this bank. Nothing at all.

In fact, we are something very smelly on the bottom of their shoe.

How can this copy have ever been written? And how on earth was it signed off?

***'Mr Owen credit card ending 6303. Your interest rates are changing from 20 May. We sent a letter in March showing your new rates and repayments. If you don't want this change, call 0345 982 5312 by 17 May to close your account and repay your balance on your current rates. Lines open 7am to 11pm, Mon to Sun'.***

That isn't just poor. It's disgraceful and embarrassing.

It's colder than a witch's tit – and has the same tone and warmth as a Gestapo poster in a Nazi-occupied European city in 1940.

There is no customer recognition at all. Just take it or leave it, because we don't care either way.

It shows, without doubt, that existing customers don't mean a thing to them.

But, remember this for a second. Someone who claims to understand marketing, actually wrote that text. And, someone further up the chain, signed it off.

Probably someone with 'Director' in the job title.

You couldn't make it up. No one would believe you.

If anyone knows who those two dummies are, please let me know, as I really want to talk to them.

I am interested to discover what spaceship they arrived on – and when the hell they are going back.



All hope is gone for an industry that tolerates charlatans like that.

MBNA, you should be truly ashamed of that text.

But I know you won't be, because you don't care.

The creators of the other examples I have mentioned are just simply uneducated.

I'd like to bet they think their approaches are good.

They are not.

And they won't work.

These are just four examples of the pile of drivel I receive daily and weekly. I could have shown you another twenty.

I'm sure you'll be like me and completely perplexed as to how most of these campaigns ever see the light of day.

Not only are they poor and embarrassing, they are brand-damaging.

There's absolutely no doubt in my mind, that there isn't another industry in the world right now – that's as out of touch with reality as the marketing and advertising industry.

When the McGraw Hill ad was written 64 years ago, its message was crystal clear.

*"Sales start before your salesman calls"*

In other words – 'Prepare', 'Prepare', 'Prepare'.

May I suggest that added to that, should be 'Study', 'Study', 'Study'.

There is no substitute for knowledge.

**Those that know more - will sell more...**

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 creative, copy and strategy for direct and digital marketing.

Andy has been writing selling copy for over 35 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](http://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](mailto: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.