



How well do you treat YOUR customers?

Better, I hope, than companies like Pure Collection, Penhaligons, Wilko, Asda, IJT, Music Magpie, Beyond Retro, Secret Escapes and Expedia to name but nine...

These companies and others, 'raped' my email inbox last month. And I am a valued customer...

Is there any hope for today's marketers?

Will GDPR finally stop the email drivel?

Two vital questions that, because you are busy bee, I will answer myself to save you the trouble.

No. And yes, I think it will.

If you're like me, you'll be fed up to the back teeth of companies who claim to focus on you, the customer, but who rarely do.

Nothing should be more important to marketers, than their existing customers.

Nothing...

But, I'm afraid to say, in today's marketplace, many, many things are more important to marketers, than existing customers.

Getting new customers, for a start.

They spend hundreds of hours in unnecessary meetings, deciding which promotional routes to use, to get new business. They spend fortunes on the latest trends, most of which don't work - and ignore proven routes such as direct mail, which do.

They spend on average, around 7 times more budget on trying to get a new customer, than on the ones they already have.

It's lunacy. It should be the other way round.

It doesn't matter what industry you are in - focusing your efforts on effective customer retention, rather than acquisition, will pay you back in spades and keep you ahead of your competition.

Remember, it is far, far more profitable to sell to an existing customer, than to a prospect.

If you know what you are doing, that is...

And this is the meat and potatoes of this discussion. Because, most companies out there, haven't got a clue how to do it. Wait until you see what I have to share with you , later in this article.

Most businesses today, lose 20% of their customers every year. And do you want to know why?

It's very simple.

Customers, in the main, do not feel valued. They feel as if they are taken for granted - not given enough interesting and relevant offers - and in a lot of cases, either forgotten completely or simply abused.

Yes, *abused...*

In the month of October, I decided that I would monitor and record all the emails I received, from companies that I had previously placed business with.

Yes, I know. Email marketing these days, is a bit of a disaster. Lunatics and asylum come to mind.

That's why very few people are making email marketing work anymore.

But, even given that, these results are staggering in the extreme.

And, by the way, if you think I was going a bit over the top using the word 'abused' earlier, you will change your mind when you see what I have to share with you.

One thing I have never been able to understand with today's marketers, is why they don't ask themselves a simple question, before they throw themselves into yet another off-the-cuff strategic disaster.

The question is this:

if I were a customer of our company, how would I like to be treated and how often would I like to be communicated with. Plus, with what - and for what reason?

If they focused on that, rather than have endless meetings discussing brand values that interest no one, silver bullets that hardly ever work, relationships that no customer wants, social media that rarely delivers, content copy that doesn't sell - plus other equally useless tripe - they would be so much more successful.

You are not selling to idiots. You are selling to smart human beings who are more savvy than ever before.

They have freely chosen to do business with you once, maybe more than once, but on their terms, not yours. So, they deserve to be treated with the utmost respect.

Well, I can tell you, playmates, that because of their email strategy, all the companies mentioned in the headline of this article - and identified below, have not treated me with any respect at all in recent times.

Instead, they have seriously damaged the relationship that once existed between themselves and me. Just seeing their brand names in my inbox, now irritates me immensely.

Once I have finished this article, I am going to unsubscribe from all of their lists. And, if they bother to ask me why, I will tell them.

Anyway, let me share some details with you. Some of the stats are impossible to believe, but I can assure you they are correct. The following relate to the month of October 2017. This is how many emails these companies sent to me:

The *'How To Treat A Customer Badly' Gold Award*, goes to:

Pure Collection - 23 emails

They emailed me on 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 7th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 22nd, 23rd, 25th, 26th, 27th, 29th and 30th.

And yes, I am being serious...

The Runners-up, are:

Wilko - 17 emails
Expedia - 17 emails
Asda - 17 emails
IJT - 14 emails
Music Magpie - 14 emails
Secret Escapes - 13 emails
Beyond Retro - 13 emails
Amazon - 13 emails
Penhaligons - 10 emails
Aspinal - 10 emails
Donald Russell - 10 emails
Booking.com - 10 emails
Clifford James - 10 emails

And, trust me, there were loads more, on 9, 8 and 7 during the month.

I have to tell you, I simply don't understand it. Who would set up such a strategy, that quite obviously, is going to damage - and, in my case, has damaged - the profitable relationship they once enjoyed with me?

It costs a hell of a lot these days, to get a new customer. Treat that customer well and that investment can be repaid in spades.

But treat that customer badly and abuse the communication channel you have with them - and your investment will be toast.

Not only is the above strategy wrong, but, as we all see every single day, the creative delivery in most cases, is dreadful too.

We know today's digikids can't write, let alone structure an effective sales message, but some of the stuff I receive, is truly dreadful.

Not only flaccid and totally unattractive subject lines, but also body copy with no belief, energy or sell - and, more often than not, delivered with appalling grammar and very little punctuation.

As I have mentioned before in *Copycat*, the power of copy is now no longer appreciated by today's marketers. They are simply not interested in good copy at all. It is not even on their radar.

In his excellent recent blog, Jim O'Connor of [Stories That Sell](#), underlined this same point, very forcefully....

"Nobody cares about the messaging any more.

*Headlines, subheads, text – nobody gives a ****. All that matters is:*

a) Does it fit? b) Are the keywords in there? c) Could we have got it any cheaper?

It's a self-fulfilling attitude that produces messages that are virtually meaningless and utterly worthless. Lazy, bland and clichéd words that don't grab attention or stimulate any interest.

Words that don't create any desire for what's being offered. Words that don't differentiate the product, service or brand from that of competitors. And words that don't achieve any results whatsoever – obviously!

People sit around in endless meetings and swapping emails about why the marketing isn't working. They spend hours focusing on the medium (pop-ups/banner ads, PPC, adwords, retargeting, twitter, product placement, Instagram, affiliate programmes, SEO, video, viral, influencers, in-game, PR, mobile, MMS, push notifications, QR codes, proximity marketing....).

They write endless blog posts on the mechanics (how to do this, how to tweak that, how to hack the other, 10 top tips on the best way to...). And they bang on about the importance of the metrics (not just likes and shares metrics, but first visit metrics, online conversion metrics, click-through metrics, email engagement metrics, return on marketing investment metrics, key social metrics, subscribers' metrics...).

But what about the message?

Oh, that? Look, I don't have enough bandwidth to get my head around that stuff. Why don't you just search for some other vaguely relevant content, do a quick cut and paste job, then run it through the readability checker, the keyword density checker, the plagiarism checker, then stick it into our automated CRM system...

Gotta go, conference call in five!"

As we all know, Jim is absolutely spot on. Sadly, we all see the results of the above, every day. That's the way the vast majority of today's brainless marketers work. And I can't see it changing, either.

All customers want today, is to be recognised and treated with respect. Plus, every now and again, given relevant and interesting offers that are both exclusive and valuable, delivered in a professional way.

Relevant is a key word. Companies should be using the knowledge they possess in their databases, properly - and segmenting their customers, delivering appropriate messages to the right people at the right time.

Not emailing everyone to the point of nausea, with mindless offers, delivered with an ineffective subject line and even worse body copy.

Can you imagine a door-to-door salesman in the sixties, selling something to Mrs Smith on Monday, then coming back every day for the rest of the month, trying to sell her something else?

Not only would he have been told politely to go away, he would also have been told not to come back again.

Meaning all his previous good work on building up his client base, would be down the drain. Which is exactly what has happened here.

If companies want to be successful and distance themselves from the competition, they must pay the correct attention to existing customers.

They should also give the young geeks and nerds something else to do, instead of being involved in marketing strategy and writing copy.

Because, as we all know, most of them are crap at both.

Remember this. It is one thing to have a selling proposition and quite another, to know how to sell it. That requires a *special* talent.

Luckily, there are still a handful of us around, that have that talent. But this exclusive group reduces every year. Cottages in Cornwall beckon...

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 copy for 31 years. He writes traditional and digital marketing campaigns, including direct mail, sales letters, emails, SMS's, PPC ads, websites, landing pages, brochures 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.

Visit www.andyowencopyandcreative.com

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.)

If you would like further information on these, or indeed any aspect of copywriting and creative for direct marketing, please contact Andy personally at andyowen@aol.com

All previous **Copycat** articles are available to read and download at www.andyowencopyandcreative.com/thelegend.html

Discover **Andy's FREE marketing advice and observations** at www.andyowencopyandcreative.com/marketingadvice.html