



A Guaranteed Formula for Successful Direct Marketing!

Larry Hochman was European Business Speaker of the Year in 2001 and is an interesting individual. He recently made a presentation at a marketing conference in Dubai, called "Embracing Change to Build Competitive Advantage". Amongst all the normal reworked waffle, there were a few interesting snippets.

Here's one that's quite appropriate and relevant for all of us...

"Capturing people's attention will be the biggest task for businesses in the future"

He is, without question, quite correct. But, of course, savvy direct marketers have known this for years. Especially those of us that write copy.

Pick up any book on contemporary copywriting and you will find a reference to AIDA, which means Attention, Interest, Desire & Action. This is the sequence of message delivery that is proven and any tinkering with it will prove enormously costly.

This is logical when you think about it. You have to get your reader's attention. Once that has been achieved your copy should create interest because of the relevance of the message to the recipient.

This continuing interest should then be turned into desire, if your approach and offer is delivered correctly. The final and most important act will be that the reader will respond in the way you have requested and you have a result...

Be chatty, not pompous. Use vivid words. Ensure that your sentences and paragraphs are short. And always write in first person copy.

Formulaic? Sure. But that's what works. It has been proven millions of times over the years. Anyway, what's wrong with writing to a formula? When you look at most forms of contemporary communication – you'll find they are all pretty much formula based.

A lot of people think writing to a formula is a backward step and leads to uninspiring work. Well, Mozart wrote 41 pretty useful symphonies all to much the same formula. Bach too, composed with mathematical precision.

So, don't change this sequence. If you do, your letter will underperform.

This is not an opinion by the way, it is a guarantee.

The master John Caples referred to it as – 'Stop Prospect, Hold Prospect, Create Desire, Justify, Prove & Authenticate, Make It Easy To Act'.

As I have mentioned in previous articles, you have to start strong. It is the only way. In today's ever increasing clutter, it is vital to that your message gets the recipient's attention. It must connect and connect early. You have to rise above the general noise level.

You will have read letters today that are limp and lifeless. They didn't get your attention – and, where are they now? Easy....

...in that bin by the side of your desk.

Here are a couple of such letters, produced by people who obviously like to waste their money:

Elemental-IT

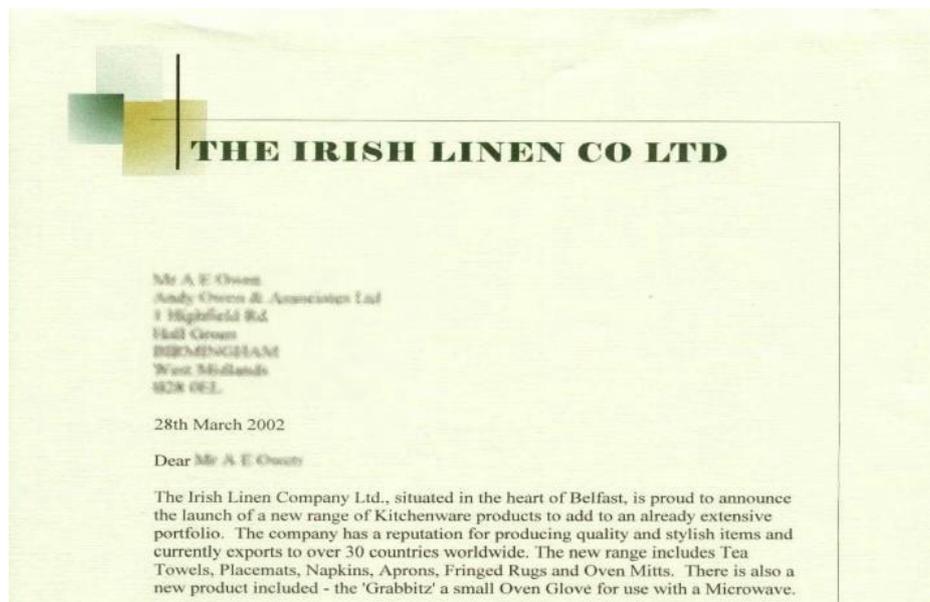


Like the time-honoured monstrosity of the "may I take this opportunity to introduce my company to you" (to which the answer is always NO) "Welcome to.." is a close second in hopeless openings.

I don't want to be welcomed and, I certainly don't want to take a few minutes to read through your brochure. Show me a benefit and give me a reason to be interested...

...but do it fast. Probably written by the MD himself. Addressing is also abysmal and no salutation either. Not a chance of working...

The Irish Linen Company



Well now, isn't this nice? The Irish Linen Company is situated in the heart of Belfast. It is also proud to announce.....

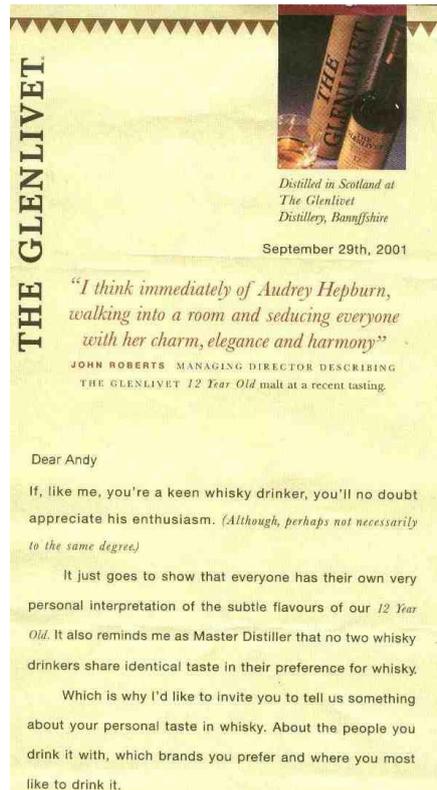
...sorry chaps, I'm gone. You've lost me...No benefit to me at all.

How many times do people want reminding?. People buy benefits not features. If this writer wants to talk about his company, then fine. Just don't expect the recipients to read it. Because they won't...

Also they don't know how to create a correct salutation...staggering really isn't it?

On the brighter side, here's an excellent example that produced a good return on investment as well as creating an extra notch in the loyalty ladder...

The Glenlivet



This is wonderful stuff. Lovely descriptive quote that is absolutely irresistible, leading you to immensely appealing and captivating opening copy.

The writer understands how to connect and capture the attention of the reader. Note the 'Dear Andy' salutation...

This mailing incidentally contained a miniature and a questionnaire, which I readily drank and completed in that order.

This mailing is very much on the lines of the superb Jack Daniels mailings of a few years ago.

At least someone out there understands...

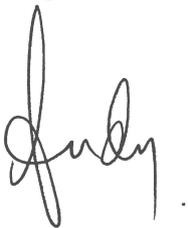
It appears clear that to unenlightened souls, the apparent triviality of a letter suggests that studying the principles and dynamics of contemporary copywriting is unimportant. Nothing is further from the truth. If you want your expensively created mailing pack to perform, or your expensive ad to attract and inspire, then it is vital to at least try and understand the process.

To remind you what Larry said earlier, "Capturing people's attention will be the biggest task for businesses in the future"

Two of the three examples above have failed miserably in that aim. Have another look at your latest efforts. Being honest, do they really do any better?

See you next month...

Keep the faith...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy', with a small dot at the end.

If anyone would like complete copies of any letters reviewed here, please contact Andy direct at andyowen@aol.com or copydeskUK@aol.com

About the Author

Andy Owen is Managing Director of Andy Owen & Associates, a leading International Strategic Marketing Consultancy specialising in all aspects of contemporary direct marketing. The company has offices in UK, Middle East & North Africa, with Associate Offices in Europe & The USA.

The company's corporate website is www.andyowen.co.uk The specialist copy division has its own site at www.copywritingthatsells.com

As well as his International speaking engagements, Andy runs in-house copywriting and direct marketing sessions and workshops for companies and organisations all over the world. If you feel your company could benefit from one of these, please contact Andy for details.

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

Don't forget to check out Andy's superb new DVD on Copywriting called *"How To Write Copy That Really Sells."* To find out more and see excerpts from the DVD, visit <http://www.andyowen.co.uk/buy-online.html>