



Hello everyone...

I know this month I promised to share with you, the genius of James Webb Young, but in the last few days I have come across something that is truly special...

So much so, it couldn't wait. I really wanted you to see this...

JWY will wait for a future issue. This won't...

So, this month we are going to enjoy another genius. David Ogilvy....

David comes a little later. First the preamble...

Now the election debacle is over and some of the suppressed UK economic truths are finally coming out, it seems that the UK is now firmly in a recession.

The facts are undeniable. Retailers are struggling badly, because consumers aren't interested. Shops can't buy a sale on the high street right now. It's tougher than it's been for years.

I know this first hand, as we work with a number of retail clients...

If you needed it, here are two more indicators. Car dealers can't move the metal no matter how ridiculous the deals are and Publicans can't draw the punters into their pubs from Monday to Thursday. (one I know has brought back bar tabs as the only way he can get customers in during the week).

Now how scary is *that*...!

And remember, pubs are the first barometer...if the working classes aren't going into their locals during the week, we've got some problems coming...

Add to all that, hotel leisure break deals are cheaper now than they were 5 years ago. Flights around Europe are getting cheaper, which seems a bit puzzling when you hear that Easy Jet are losing millions...

And house sales are almost at a standstill in certain parts of the country.

This all points to big trouble. For some companies at any rate.

But, I have to tell you, I have little sympathy in certain sectors. Take two of the above - retail and automotive.

In the last 5 years especially, they have been incredibly blinkered, especially when it comes to marketing. Retailers have been so lazy. On two fronts.

One, they opened their doors and simply hoped that people would come in and spend with them. Those that did, they ignored. They made no attempt whatsoever to capture their contact details. In short, they didn't know who their customers were...

Two, they ignored the obvious benefits of direct marketing techniques and applications and the people who understood them. They either created their promotional literature in-house or used their above the line agency or local designer down the road.

Two enormous commercial mistakes.

How any business can allow someone to buy from them and not get that person's name and address for future promotional opportunities is simply beyond my comprehension.

And with regards to direct marketing, why some clients place dm business with above the line agencies, design houses, sales promotion companies, et al, has been a big head-scratcher for me in the last decade.

After all, if you have toothache you don't go to your doctor do you? So why talk to design houses and above the line agencies about direct marketing, when they know sod all about it. Or, alternatively, give it to your in-house creative team who probably know even less?

But, before we really get into this, let's explode a few myths here. You may be under the illusion that most businessmen and marketers understand the basics of marketing and advertising.

Wrong. Wrong. WRONG.

It is my experience that most of the people in so called sophisticated marketing departments, in companies with household names - and even those who run their advertising agencies - are surprisingly ignorant of what works and what doesn't.

Why is this? Well, I believe there are two main reasons:

1. No one studies the subject – this is something I have mentioned many times in previous articles.
2. The objectives are totally wrong.

To explain the latter, here's some research conducted a few years ago, that I read in a previous article by Drayton ...

...here's what the great man found...

"Creative directors of major UK advertising agencies were asked what they considered their principle objective.

The overwhelming majority, you may be stunned to learn, made no reference whatsoever to sales or profits. They were simply intent upon winning awards for their work from their peers.

So although you may be advertising to improve your profits, the people you pay, may have different criteria altogether"

Incredible, huh? Not really.

Turn on your TV tonight and you will see that this is still happening. Ads that are costing obscene amounts of money are becoming increasingly obscure. Ironically enough, the worst culprits are the car manufacturers.

The people who create (and sign off) this tosh, obviously still think entertainment is better than sales...

Anyway, back to retail and automotive. Bar for a few knowledgeable companies, most have also ignored the obvious potential of building customer and prospect databases and the communication opportunities they offered.

It's lunacy to me and always has been...

Car dealers make more from service and parts than they ever do from selling cars, yet only a small fraction of them built databases and worked them hard. Impossible to fathom and myself and my fellow dm pros have told them so for so long, but in the main, we have been met with incredible arrogance...

Life was good you see... No need do anything, only open the doors and approach the challenge in the time-honoured way...

Just run a crap ad in the local free sheets, throw in a few offers, a guest appearance by some local DJ, a few balloons and a free crèche to keep the screaming kids happy and bob's your uncle...

How things have changed. Or have they? Now here's where David comes in...

David was a passionate believer in direct marketing and was never afraid to tell the creative phonies in general advertising together with their stupid clients, that their work was utter nonsense.

In 1986, nearly two decades ago, David Ogilvy delivered a speech in Paris, France to Direct Marketers about “direct marketing.” To provoke his audience, he pretended he was addressing the speech to those in “general advertising.”

Though given all that time ago, the speech is as applicable today as it was then.

In fact, more so.

Just over a fortnight ago, I found the text of this speech. It is so good and so relevant to the situation we find ourselves in today, that thought I would share it with you.

Here it is, in its entirety.

“There is a yawning chasm between you Generalists and we Directs.

We Directs belong to a different world. Your gods are not our gods. You Generalists regard us Directs as inferior citizens. You think you are the Brahmins of advertising and we are the untouchables.

You pride yourselves on being “creative” – whatever that awful word means. You cultivate the mystique of “creativity.” Some of you are pretentious poseurs. Your ambition is to win awards at the Cannes Festival.

You go there every year like Muslims going to Mecca. You are the glamour boys and girls of the advertising community. You regard advertising as an art form and expect your clients to finance expressions of your genius.

We humble people who work in Direct do not regard advertising as an art form.

Our clients don’t give a damn whether we win awards at Cannes. They pay us to sell their products.

Nothing else. We sell – or else.

When you Generalists write an advertisement or commercial, you want everybody to congratulate you on your “creativity.” When we write an advertisement or direct mail package, we want people to order the product.

You pride yourselves on your “originality.”

As Rosser Reeves used to say, “Originality is the most dangerous word in the dictionary of advertising.”

When your commercials appear on television, you have no means of knowing whether they sell anything. There are too many other factors in the marketing mix.

When sales go up, you claim the credit for it. When sales go down, you blame the product.

We in Direct Response know exactly, to a penny, how many products we sell with each of our advertisements and each exposure of our commercials.

We sell – or else!

Sometimes we envy you Generalists. You get away with murder. You are never found out. Almost never. Your favourite music is the applause of your fellow art directors and copywriters.

Our favourite music is the ring of the cash register.

We do everything differently. You Generalists use short copy. We use long copy. Experience has taught us that short copy does not sell.

You use short commercials. We use long commercials.

Why? Because short commercials do not sell – a fact which has not escaped Proctor & Gamble. In our headlines we promise the consumer a benefit. You Generalists don't think that is "creative."

As Benton and Bowles say, "If it doesn't sell, it isn't creative."

When we see your advertisements, we can always tell whether you have had any experience in Direct Response. Most of you Generalists have not and that is why your ads are so silly.

You have never had to live with the discipline of knowing the results of your advertising. Personally, I prefer the discipline of knowledge to the chaos of ignorance. You Generalists never give the consumer any information about the product.

We pack our advertisements and our letters with information about the product.

We have found that we have to – if we want to sell anything.

Most of you Generalists are too lazy to study the product.

When I see some of your advertisements and commercials for automobiles, I wonder whether you have even seen the automobile, or driven it, or looked under the bonnet.

Your work gives little information. No wonder so many Frenchmen buy German cars. It is your fault. You are frightened by research.

Perhaps it would reveal that your judgment is not infallible. Perhaps it would reveal that you are not a genius after all.

Who am I to prick your balloon?

According to Advertising Age, I am "the uncrowned creative king of the advertising world." But in the presence of Direct Professionals I am a humble amateur.

Ladies and Gentlemen, are you aware that Direct Response is growing twice as fast as general advertising? It is exploding!

Soon it will become the tail wagging the dog. Seventy-five percent of the new business presentations made by Ogilvy & Mather now include Direct Response.

We call it orchestration.

Sooner or later, and I hope sooner, some French clients are going to tell their agencies. "This is enough. Stop playing the fool. We want our advertising to be as professional as our engineering."

What are you Generalists going to do then?

Where will you turn for help? How are you going to learn what kind of advertising sells and what kind does not sell?

When that day comes, ask your Direct colleagues to educate you. I say "colleagues." Stop treating us as poor relations. Grow out of your arrogance.

Send us your copywriters and your art directors, we will teach them how to sell.

Would it surprise you to know that one ad can sell 19 times as much as another for the same product?

Would it surprise you Generalists to know that a change in the colour of a direct mail envelope recently increased sales by 30 percent?

Would it surprise you to know that some ads actually reduce the sales of a product?

Ladies and Gentlemen, you are soon going to see a revolution in French advertising.

When it comes, our Direct fraternity will emerge as the true professionals.

The sooner the better! "

Wow!

Well I don't know about you, but to me he's talking about today. Not 19 years ago.

That's why the man was a genius. He was advising people nearly two decades ago, the correct way forward, but as we know only too well, only a handful listened.

(David Ogilvy died in retirement at Poitou in 1999, at the age of 88.

Born in England, educated in Scotland and England, with a background in cooking, door-to-door sales, diplomacy and farming, and aged 38, Ogilvy started his own agency in New York in 1948 and built it into one of the largest in the world, Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide.)

Let's face it. It's now tougher than it's ever been to sell. No matter what your product or service may be. There are two main reasons:

The first, I have shared with you many times. The customer is now in total control. The second, is we are now into a recession that could last a little while...

...so, things are going to get a lot tougher.

Perhaps now this situation exists, the more knowledgeable out there will start to listen and act on the advice of the direct marketers – simply because they are so much better equipped to generate sales in this worrying scenario that everyone now faces.

Perhaps...

I'll leave the last word to David who kicked off his fantastic speech nearly two decades ago with this little gem...

"If you spend your advertising budget entertaining the consumer you're a bloody fool. Housewives don't buy a new detergent because a manufacturer told a joke on television last night.

They buy the new detergent because it promises a benefit".

See you next month

Keep the faith

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

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.

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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/buyonline.htm>