

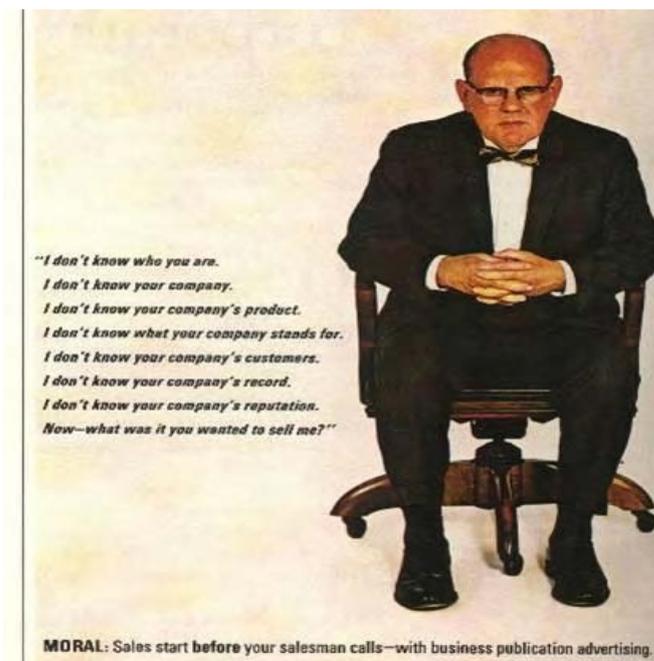


Charlatans, Crap and Junk Mail...the concern grows...

Once upon a time, when marketers and advertisers knew what they were doing, an ad created by David Ogilvy for McGraw-Hill magazines received many awards.

It is reproduced in informed advertising anthologies and talked about on the very best advertising courses. The ad is referred to as "The Angry Man Ad."

Here's the ad...



Just look at the copy here...

*"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 want to sell me?"

That's a message that's so, so, *sooooo* relevant to today's marketing challenges...

And here's why...

The person you are writing to today, with your expensively produced DM pack, cleverly written email or your costly ad or insert, has no interest in you, your products or services or your brand.

They are not waiting for your communication. Please believe it. Not in the slightest.

In actual fact - quite the opposite...

Don't think they know who you are and what you do. Because, the odds are they don't.

It appears that this fact is still not accepted out there. Companies are continuing to churn out work that takes so much for granted.

This is a disease called COA - the Curse Of Assumption.

And loads of people suffer from it.

It's an infliction that can waste everyone's time - both the originators of marketing messages that suffer from it - and the recipients who receive it.

But, it can also be very, very expensive for the originators as well. Because 99.9% of these kind of messages (or very close) get binned within TEN SECONDS...

Or probably quicker...

You will have received hundreds so far this year.

Here's one I kept for no other reason than to present it at marketing shows worldwide as a great example of how to waste money...



ANDY OWEN
ANDY OWEN & ASSOCIATES LTD
1 HIGHFIELD ROAD
HALL GREEN
BIRMINGHAM
B28 0EL

Helen Sheane Limited
Canada Close
Banbury
Oxon, OX16 2RT
Telephone: 01295 273644
Facsimile: 01295 273646
Email: info@helensheane.com
www.helensheane.com

London
Telephone: 020 7258 3700
Facsimile: 020 7706 0433

Scotland
Telephone: 0141 222 4760
Facsimile: 0141 222 4764

Ireland
Telephone: 01 661 9899
Facsimile: 01 661 9901

Dear ANDY OWEN,

Re: Concept and Branding Solutions

Vescom UK, formerly known as Helen Sheane Ltd has long been recognised as one of the most innovative suppliers of surface finishes for commercial interiors. Our traditional customers have been and continue to be architects and interior designers. It is therefore possible that Vescom is a name you will be unfamiliar with.

However, having recognised the increasing involvement of advertising/branding companies in the formulation of interior concepts and schemes for both corporate and retail clients I have taken the liberty of enclosing our latest corporate brochure.

The brochure provides a brief overview of our products, capabilities, services and information on how to obtain more detailed advice and assistance. Vescom has a proven track record of providing interior solutions to a wide variety of blue chip commercial clients spanning the corporate, hospitality, leisure and retail sectors. By the way of example our innovative Di Noc flexible laminate film was recently utilised in the first UK store opened by the Comme des Garçons chain in London. Our XL concept has provided custom imagery for House of Fraser's new in store restaurants and a selection of our standard wall coverings are creating contemporary interiors for the Marriott hotel brand in the UK.

I am sure that at least one of our products or services can play a part in helping you to deliver optimum results to your clients. We look forward to assisting you and would kindly ask that in the event of this brochure not having been addressed to the most appropriate recipient within your organisation that it is forwarded on to him or her.

Yours sincerely

Milan Cvetkovic

Milan Cvetkovic
Managing Director

There's so much wrong with this, it's hard to know where to start. Address block in caps, wrong salutation, the use of the dreaded "re" in the subject line, no benefit in the headline, typos, computer generated signature et al...

Bad as all that is, it's totally infected with COA. Just look at the first paragraph. All about the company and full of arrogance and assumption.

Nothing about what they can do for *me*...

Another big time loser.

Crap like that is all around us, of course. Has been for years, but there's more of it now than ever before...

Which brings me on to a topical point. Junk Mail.

As mentioned in the last article, I believe all of us who make our living in direct marketing should now be very concerned...

The industry - here and in the US - is currently in *big* trouble. Bigger than I thought, too...

DM is a commodity now. A numbers game. The whole industry is based on this. Lettershops, list brokers etc, - they all depend on numbers for their living.

Yet our business isn't about numbers. It isn't about carpet-bombing homes.

Our industry is all about targeting. It doesn't make sense to speak to everyone to get to someone. It never did. So why are people still doing it?

As we all know, it's no surprise that the inevitable has finally happened.

The recipients of these ever-increasing, badly created and poorly delivered messages have said "*enough is enough*"

"We don't want it anymore". "Stop sending it". "Stop emailing me". "Stop calling me".

"GO TO HELL..."

But, to make matters much, much worse, large and small media owners are now encouraging consumers to register their dissatisfaction.

One of my local free newspapers were bragging a few weeks ago, that because of a local initiative, 13,000 homes (one in ten in the region) had registered with the Mailing Preference Service. Following this success, they are pushing it again and have said that they would be disappointed if they don't get ONE THIRD OF ALL HOMES to register by Christmas.

Now the heavyweights have joined in. This was published in the Daily Mail last Thursday...

Page 20 STH Daily Mail, Thursday, September 28, 2006

Junk mail avalanche

More than 3 billion letters a year are sent out at a cost of nearly £2bn - and one in five goes straight in the bin

By Sean Poulter
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

THE astonishing waste of paper and money caused by the rising tide of junk mail has been revealed.

British households receive a total of 3.4 billion unsolicited items through the post every year, of which 750 million go straight into the bin.

Researchers found that 22 per cent of direct mail, much of it from banks and credit-card companies, is never opened.

And the figure climbs to more than 70 per cent where mailshots are sent out blind rather than to specific names.

The worst junk-mail offenders last year were the American credit card and loans giant MENA, ahead of Lloyds TSB and Capital One.

However, mail order catalogue companies and charities are also spending huge sums on pointless mailshots which irritate millions.

Names such as Direct Wines,

'Every day we are inundated'

Saga and Reader's Digest are high in the mailshot league, while Cancer Research UK and the animal welfare charity IFAW are also significant players.

The research was carried out by Marketing magazine and Nielsen Media Research, which monitored how 10,000 households dealt with direct mail.

The total value of the junk mail market last year was put at £1.87 billion for the cost of printing and sending 3.4 billion items.

Banks and finance companies accounted for 37 per cent - 1.26 billion items such as credit card offers, loans and other enticements to rack up debts.

An estimated 15 per cent of the finance junk went unopened - 180 million items which cost £104 million to produce.

Mail order business, such as clothing catalogues, accounted for 22 per cent of the market or 746 million items. Thirty per cent of these - 224 million produced at a cost of £123 million - were dumped

without being read. Charities accounted for 14.5 per cent of the total. They were responsible for just under 600 million mailshots, thirty per cent of these - 150 million put together at a cost of £64 million - went unused.

The data will doubtless encourage a consumer backlash which has recently seen a remarkable surge in the number of households signing up to a scheme designed to block junk mail.

The issue came to national attention after Royal Mail suspended a postman in Wales for putting leaflets through householders' doors advising on how they could block the junk.

It emerged this week that the postman, Roger Annies, has been taken off his round and switched to sorting office duties.

Royal Mail has recently made clear that it is hoping to increase substantially the amount of direct mail it pumps through letter boxes.

The company has changed the pay and conditions of postmen to lift a restriction on deliveries to a maximum of three items per household each week.

The company currently has around 20 per cent of the direct market. Among the other big players is Circular Distributors, a firm owned by TNT.

Many Daily Mail readers have complained about the level of junk mail flooding on to their desks. They are also angry that they have been unable to get through to the helpline which is supposed to allow householders to block it.

One, Eve Hudson, said: 'I have on numerous occasions tried to contact the opt-out services at Royal Mail, only to be informed they are not accepting calls. Every day we are inundated with rubbish mail.'

The only recourse I have at present is to return it, but this does not stop it coming through the letter box at future dates.'

Another, Debbie Kaye, said: 'I have just returned from a two-week holiday and only two items of

THE JUNK MAIL LEAGUE

	Spending	Volume
1. MENA Europe	£44.5m	99m
2. Lloyds TSB	£41m	91.2m
3. Capital One	£30.5m	67.8m
4. Direct Wines	£29.2m	56.8m
5. Saga Services	£26.7m	48m
6. NTL	£26.3m	47.3m
7. BSKyle	£23.1m	46m
8. Redcats (catalogue)	£21.8m	42.1m
9. Liverpool Victoria	£21.3m	35.2m
10. Halifax	£20.7m	34.4m
11. Bank People	£18.7m	32.2m
12. Darnart (clothing)	£18.7m	30.7m
13. BT	£16.9m	30.4m
14. JD Williams & Co (catalogue)	£14.9m	30.2m
15. Norwich Union Direct	£14.8m	26.9m
16. American Express	£13.7m	25.8m
17. Saga Holidays	£13.6m	25.9m
18. Reader's Digest	£13.4m	25.7m
19. Response Direct Publishing (catalogues)	£13m	12.3m
20. Loans.co.uk	£12.1m	24.4m
21. Shop Direct	£12m	24.1m
22. Beaconsfield Footwear	£11.9m	22.8m
23. First Direct	£11.6m	21.8m
24. Barclaycard	£11.6m	21.3m
25. Mint	£11m	21m
26. Unilever	£10.9m	19.4m
27. Littlewoods	£10.8m	19.4m
28. NatWest	£9.7m	19.2m
29. Riads (books)	£9.4m	18.3m
30. Cancer Research UK	£9.1m	18m

Source: Marketing/Nielsen Media Research

'Money I could not repay'

the 43 received were not junk mail.'

Marketing magazine insisted that many companies and organisations would be delighted to discover that around 80 per cent of unsolicited mail is at least opened.

It said: 'The type of product or service on offer is an important factor. An envelope sporting an image of a new car or a boat on a crystal-clear lagoon is more enticing than a plain appeals letter from a charity. It is widely held that letters with name or address errors are most likely to be binned at once.'

*Print out and post your coupon to stop junk mail at:
www.dailymail.co.uk/junkmail

It's a knife in the guts.

And a knife that gets twisted when you look more closely at the box in the bottom right hand corner...



See where this is headed?

I'll tell you one thing. The way we're going, both here and across the pond, it won't be long before the majority of our targets are on '*do not write*', '*do not call*', '*do not even think about contacting me*' lists like this.

I think it's bloody scary and should be worrying to all of us. So, what's gone wrong here?

There are lots of views on this. I've discussed it with many people in the last couple of months. The last *Copycat* article on the problems out there, produced the largest postbag yet. And most of you appear to share my concerns.

The direct marketing business as we know it, is fast becoming dead in the water.

Because of charlatans and crap...

People are making decisions on strategic and direct marketing issues that they're *simply not qualified to make*.

There are increasing examples of individuals having a say in creative issues, when they have no understanding at all of how creative works in direct marketing.

And, as those of you that have been with me for a while in this column know, these misguided people are now having a bash at writing COPY as well...

...because, anyone can do it, you see.

Easy peasy, lemon squeezy...

To make my point, look at this astonishingly poor example that my football club sent to me only a few weeks ago...



BM BIRMINGHAM
MIDSHIRES

PO Box 81
Pendeford Business Park
Wobaston Road
Wolverhampton WV9 5HZ

Website: www.wolvessavings.co.uk

Mr Andy Owen
Andy Owen & Associates Ltd
1 Highfield Road, Hall Green
Birmingham
W Midlands
B28 0EL

September 2006

18994

Dear Mr Owen

New Wolves savings accounts-great for you and your club

We'd like to tell you about two new savings accounts designed to reward you and Wolves- both have highly attractive rates to boost your savings return.

Wolves Fixed Rate Savings Bond

With the Wolves Fixed Rate Bond you'll receive a fixed rate of interest throughout the season. What's more if Wolves do well you'll receive an interest bonus at the end of the season. Plus if you open your account with £10,000 or more then you'll automatically receive an extra reward:

Amount Invested	Extra Reward ¹
£10,000+	1 ticket to a Wolves home game
£25,000+	2 tickets to a Wolves home game
£50,000+	3 tickets to a Wolves home game
£100,000+	Use of a Wolves box for a home game

How the Account works

- The rate on the account will be 4.70% gross (4.74% AER)
- The minimum opening balance is £10 and the maximum is £1million
- If Wolves are promoted you'll receive a bonus of 0.45%
- If Wolves reach the play-off stage and do not get promoted, you'll receive a bonus of 0.35%
- Even if Wolves don't reach the play-off stage, you'll still receive an attractive rate of 4.70%
- The account will mature on 05/06/2007
- Wolves receive a payment of 0.35% of the total savings made
- Interest will be paid at maturity

Continued/.....

Sub heads in YELLOW? I bloody ask you. It's beyond my comprehension that someone can even consider this, let alone do it and present it to the client.

But for someone at board level to then sign it off, just beggars belief...

You couldn't make it up ...

Whatever's happened to the cutting edge in direct marketing thinking? It seems to me that we're all working in a vacuum now. The robots preside...

Everyone's just going through the motions...

The worst by far, are these so-called 'key decision makers' in marketing - c21-25 years old, most of them with a big attitude and huge arrogance.

You know the type I mean. They have a job life of around 13 months in the UK currently, which, for most of us who have to deal with them, is at least a year too long.

They join companies with virtually no credentials, move on in just over a year, with even less. They know very little about f*** all - and absolutely nothing about the rest...

But they think they're savvy. They really do. They "get it". They "see it". They know "the angles..."

Bullshit. Bullshit. BULLSHIT!

When you have the misfortune to listen to them (*you can't talk, because they won't let you,*) you find out very quickly that they haven't got a clue.

They don't ask for opinions or seek advice - because they don't feel they need to...

If I find myself in front of just one more of these numpties this year, I think I'm going to explode...

This is not the way it was supposed to be...

When we were building this thing called direct marketing - yes, it had to be built - from scratch by visionaries... there was an ENERGY - a real strong passion - call it a vocation if you like, about the business...

Well, that passion is still around, but it appears to me, only in a handful of people - and most of them are old liggers. That can't be right, surely...?

What now passes for direct marketing, is, in the main, as far removed from the real thing as you could possibly imagine.

And therein, in my view, lies the reason why we're in such a mess...

Yes, the carpet bombers have got a lot to answer for. As have a lot of the industry chiefs that have sat by and continue to let this debacle happen.

But I'm convinced the real reason we've pissed everybody off, is as I said last time, there has been a consistent lack of quality in our messages. Primarily I'm talking about creative and COPY...

We've wasted people's time. Shown them no respect. We've confused them, made them angry, talked down to them, across them, up to them, but never to them - in the right way.

So, they are now jumping at the chance to cut us off at the knees...

Look at the biggest mailer on the article above - MBNA. You'd think after mailing quantities like that year on year, they would know what they're doing by now wouldn't you?

Wrong...wrong...

WRONG...

Their direct mail is abject most of the time. The copy is pedestrian and boring. Layout is kindergarten standard.

Here are two mailings I received within a fortnight of each other not too long ago:

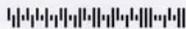




MBNA Europe Bank Limited
PO Box 1004
Chester Business Park
Chester
CH4 9WU

Mr A Owen
27 Berkswell Close
SOLIHULL
West Midlands
B91 2EH

18420



Account Number ending in: XXXX XXXX XXXX 4957

Dear Mr Owen

Love every night in...

...with the help of your MBNA Visa Credit Card

The simple things in life are a gift: that first cup of tea in the morning; a brand new pair of shoes; a day out with your family; a meal with friends. Now, when you use your MBNA Visa Credit Card for these simple pleasures, they could turn into a prize that could make every night special.

Make a card purchase with your MBNA Visa Credit Card and you could win a state-of-the-art home entertainment system

Between 1 June and 30 June 2006 every time you use your MBNA Visa Credit Card you'll automatically be entered into our fantastic free prize draw. Each card purchase counts as one entry into the draw and someone will be the lucky winner of a state-of-the-art home entertainment system. Plus, what's even better is that you get to choose your own prize.

The more card purchases you make, the more chances you have to win

If you want to increase your chance of winning, just use your MBNA Visa Credit Card more often between 1 June and 30 June 2006. There is no limit to the amount of entries you can have and it's simple to qualify, you receive one entry every single time you make a card purchase.

So if you don't want to miss out on this fantastic opportunity, start using your MBNA Visa Credit Card today.

Yours sincerely

Dana Berry
Head of Retail Marketing

Registered Office: Sunfield House, Chester Business Park, Chester CH4 9QJ. Registered in England number 2783231.
MBNA Europe Bank Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority.
To improve the quality of our service, we will monitor and/or record some telephone calls.

01-1635-MAY06-LEN

200678/24323

DM1105-0606-CLUE V2

Just give me a minute here...

Do you want me to go *away*, or do you want me to stay *in*? Because, I'm confused now. And, as I'm confused, I'm not going to buy from you...

To me, it's barmy. Plain barmy.

Forgetting if we can, the lunacy of these banal approaches within TWO weeks of each other, just look at the other problems.

Desperately poor layout. Poor, ineffectual copy. Emboldening for no reason and very limp selling propositions...*if you want me to go away, or stay in for that matter, give me a compelling reason and tell me how I'll benefit from either. But remember, the benefit has to be in the headline...*

...and you only have 2.8 seconds to sell it to me.

It would be comical if it wasn't so serious.

The end result? Another two mailings clearly unattractive to read. Another two mailings hugely unattractive to even consider. Another two mailings that will, without doubt, underperform and, piss a few more thousand people off in the process...

And another nail in our industry coffin...

What do we have to do to *convince* people that DM is a specialist culture...

...or is it too late...?

Keep the faith...

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small dot at the end.

See you next month.

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 and Middle East with Associate Offices in Europe, North Africa & 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 UK and 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.

Visit www.andyowen.co.uk/andys-events.html to check on Andy's forthcoming live shows. Email him personally at andyowen@aol.com

Don't forget to check out Andy's superb 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>