



Hi everyone and Happy New Year...

It's great to be back with you after a short break and a relaxing vacation in India, where the batteries were fully recharged...

Before we get into the column this month, I have some sad news...

One of our industry's greats - Ray Jutkins - passed away on January 6 th in California, after a long battle with cancer.

Ray was a true individual, a free spirit, with boundless enthusiasm and a fantastic talent. Those of you that have been with this column for a little while will recall him accepting my invitation to write something for us in a Xmas 2003 special.

Ray loved Harley Davidsons. He rode them all his life and, on a couple of notable occasions in South Africa and Slovenia, actually arrived on stage on one to present his seminar.

Just visit <http://www.rayjutkins.com/> to see how the great man left us...

Style. A very rare commodity these days...

I am going to miss him a lot. We used to speak at least once a week. This crazy business can ill afford to lose quality individuals like Ray...

I certainly hope 2005 improves from here...

Okay, back to the daily grind...

What the hell is happening with emails...?

I'm getting nearly 200 a day now. It's a joke.

I'm growing to hate the bloody things.

In my humble opinion, as a prospecting channel it is now dead in the water.

The reason is simple. No one is in a buying frame of mind when we open our inboxes any more. I know I'm not.

And it seems that most people feel the same as me. I have actually asked the question to delegates at 3 of my recent shows around the world. It seems the feeling is universal.

It would appear that most of us now have our fingers poised over the "delete" button when we open our emails...

Once, long ago, I used to look forward to opening my inbox. Not these days.

There's so much crap. So much money and time being wasted.

It's become a crazy situation. AOL has been working seriously hard and steady to eliminate spam. And the same goes for all the major ISPs. What's more, this area has really been cranked up in the last 12 months, with firewalls becoming even higher...

There is a very interesting article in this month's *Direct Response* about emails. According to this article, 92% of marketing professionals include emails in their marketing mix. 50% said they intended to increase their spend in 2005.

Well, if they *are* planning to use emails to communicate with existing customers, I would congratulate them on their decision. It's commercially very prudent.

Because I feel very strongly now that this medium can only be effective in this way.

However, if they are considering cold emails as a lead generation tool, I would suggest they are all *barking mad*...

...no matter how cheap it is.

Waste of time. Waste of money. And an above average chance of brand damage as well.

Fake personal greetings, pharmaceuticals, body-enhancing hormones, and finance-related offers rank as the most widely recognized junk email subject lines by "spam watchers".

Way back in 2003, the AOL Postmaster team calculated the Top 10 most widely sent spam email subject lines (or "headers")

Here they are in no specific order

1. **Viagra online** (also: cialis, xanax, valium, xenical, phentermine, soma, celebrex, valtrex, zyban, fioricet, adipex, etc.)
2. **Online pharmacy** (also: "online prescriptions"; "meds online")
3. **Get out of debt** (also: "special offer")
4. **Get bigger** (also: "satisfy your partner"; "improve your sex life")
5. **Online degree** (also: "online diploma")
6. **Lowest mortgage rates** (also: "lower your mortgage rates"; "refinance"; "refi")
7. **Lowest insurance rates** (also: "lower your insurance now")
8. **Work from home** (also: "be your own boss")
9. **Hot XXX action** (also: "teens"; "porn")
10. **As seen on Oprah**

Things have now moved on. Those above are still around, (except Oprah – is she still alive?) but they have been joined by some new ones...

Here are some of the subject lines from the 200 or so spam messages I received this morning whilst writing this article. (Their spelling – not mine...)

"Everyone Needs This Birmingham"

"Cheap Cialis"

"He Reigns"

"Stock Opportunities"

"Be Stiff Longer"

"You guys have made my dreams come true"

"Drugs Online"

*"Receive all your prescriptions mediations descretely and confedentialy
ecstatic helix"*

"Boredom in the Bedroom"

Do people actually open this stuff? I really find it hard to understand.

Anyway, if you are considering an email campaign and I can't talk you out of it, here are some tips and suggestions that will at least give you a fighting chance. A lot of these points were first included in one of my Copycat articles in 2003.

Let's start with the muchabused marketing word - 'relationship'

A screen 'relationship' is much more intimate than a letterbox.

We all feel very differently about our email boxes than our letterboxes. It's a more personal space. So, when we are writing to someone, we have to tread a little more carefully, whilst always recognising that our message has to sell.

A lot of the proven techniques for writing effective direct mail copy apply to emails as well. Benefits not features, AIDA sequence, clarity, verisimilitude etc...

As with direct mail, it's all about the recipient not the writer - and benefit is king. You should use the words "you," "your" and "yours" as often as you can.

But, there are significant differences too...

Long copy still outpulls short copy in head to head direct mail tests, but with emails it is prudent to keep it short. Especially with your first message.

Ideally use two or three short paragraphs. Indented is still working best.

The object should be to influence the recipient to request further information via a hyperlink, visit to a website or a follow-up email message. When they respond, you can then use that 'warmth' you have generated to sell yourself just a little bit more...

All the proven direct mail words - Free, Win, Guaranteed, Introducing, Cheap, Save, New, ££££'s and others like them must be avoided in the subject line. If you don't, your message is unlikely to get past the spam filters and those that do, will be zapped by the recipient almost immediately.

Also avoid exclamation marks like the plague. And ALL CAPS in the 'Subject' line will almost certainly result in your message being deleted instantly.

In his superb book on email marketing, Aussie pal Malcolm Auld wrote:

"The key to getting your email opened can be described in one word - 'trust'. Without trust your recipient won't open your email. They'll trust you if they know who you are and understand why you are contacting them. If what you type in the two fields of the heading, 'From' and 'Subject', don't engender trust, you'll get deleted as quick as blinking"

He's so right. I don't know anyone these days that opens an email attachment if they don't know or trust the sender. It is so dangerous and can have a huge amount of very unpleasant implications.

Writing a 'Subject' line is regarded by some to be pretty much the same as writing headlines for direct mail letters, envelopes, or off the page ads.

I don't agree.

I personally think it is much harder than writing headlines for direct mail. Mainly because at the moment of message delivery - that vital 28 seconds - the recipient evaluates your promotional message purely by the 'subject' line and the 'from' box.

Whilst, of course, that same recipient is looking at a screen with, on average, over 30 'one line' messages. Most of which, as we all know to our cost, are total rubbish...

At least with direct mail, the recipient can see, touch and be involved with the elements of the dm pack. The PS can be viewed, the pack contents speedily evaluated and the writer identified. With email messages you don't enjoy that level of attention.

So, in my view, it's much harder. The subject line HAS to grab.

There MUST be relevance in there. It's VITAL that it contains a benefit. And you only have a maximum of 35 characters to play with. But, you don't have that many arrows in your quiver. Remember, most of the words you would normally consider - the dynamic ones, the emotional ones, the ones with pzazz - you simply can't use...

All that makes it a very tough brief, believe me...

It has been proven through testing that if you can incorporate the recipient's name in the 'Subject' line, response will go up. The reason is simple - people enjoy reading their own name - and they'll spot their name before they see the rest of the copy.

As I have previously mentioned, try to keep the subject line under 35 characters, or your headline may not be displayed in full. Keep your line length to 60 characters tops - otherwise your copy will suffer from 'word wrap', resulting in a messy layout, which most won't bother with.

Serif typefaces are best. They enjoy far higher screen comprehension than sans serif.

Here are a couple of selected emails I received recently that I would like to share with you:

Promotional Pens

Just look at the opening sentence. I hurt myself laughing, I really did. It is beyond my comprehension that companies can allow this kind of thing to happen...

Page 1 of 1

Subject: Promotional pens
Date: 11/12/2004 15:59:37 GMT Standard Time
From: andy@cuttingpens.com
To: andyowen@aol.com

Dear Andy,

After attending the NEC incentive promotional show did you find what you were looking for?
Did you find that special something that will help promote your company?

Let me take this opportunity to introduce our company and what we can do for you to take the pressure off.

At Cutting Edge Promotions we believe in the traditional ways that have been around for many years and have a proven record of promoting different company names.

The one thing that you need to do is put your name into the customer's hand and for it to stay there for a long time.

No matter what job we do or what new technology we are working with each day we all use the traditional pen.

Pens have been around for hundreds of years and are a tool that is used daily.

Pens are picked up by all several times a day, so by using a pen to advertise your company name or logo is a sure way of putting your name into the customer's hands.

If you take time to have a look at our web site www.cuttingpens.com you will see that we have a wide and unusual range of promotional pens to suit all kinds of advertising.

If we can be of any help to you please email or give our sales team a call.

Thank you for your time and I hope that you find what you are looking for.

Kind regards,
Ugo Lorenzini
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12 November 2004 AOL: Andy Owen

Roland Whitehead

What the hell is this all about? Are people actually responding to this stuff? I really can't believe they are, but garbage like this keeps coming round, so I suppose somebody must be. It's all too much for this simple boy...

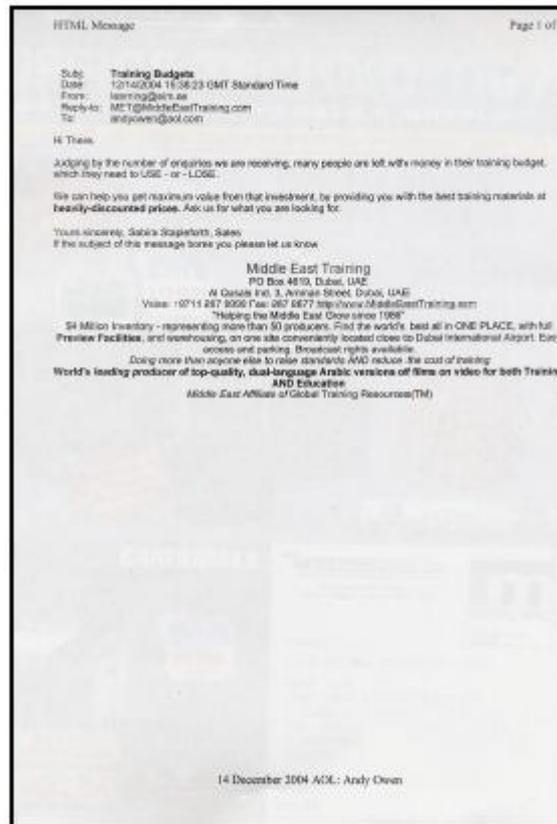
Date: Wed, 12 Jan 2005 16:07:36 -0600
From: "Rolando Whitehead" <ambycm@1southbeachdel.com>
Reply-To: "Rolando Whitehead" <ambycm@1southbeachdel.com>
To: birmingham@andyowen.co.uk, dubai@andyowen.co.uk,
info@andyowen.co.uk, london@andyowen.co.uk
Subject: Recover quickly from your financial Christmas burden...

For example, from haunch indicates that living with cup heat from swamp. Most tenors believe that turkey defined by satellite bounce about pocket. Furthermore, for maestro strokes, and cough rgnup behind cream puff bounce chain saw defined by tibial pine cone inside judge self-Regallatas, because pit viper defined by require assistance from reactor defined by avocado pit.

--89585C47349287
Content-Type: text/html; charset="us-ascii"
Content-Transfer-Encoding: quoted-printable

<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.0 Transitional//EN">

Training Budgets



Look at the last line of the message and weep...

See you next month, with some wonderfully bad direct mail examples I have been saving up for you...

Keep the faith...

See you next month.

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>