



Look Back - There are Rich Treasures to Discover...

There are two kinds of fool.

The first says, *"this is old and therefore good"*, the second says *"this is new and therefore better"*.

I must be a fool then.

Because I see very little new work these days relating to copywriting, that hasn't been done much better in the past...

We've not learned a lot in this crazy business, it seems to me. And they call it progress...

So this month, I'm going to take you back. To the good old days. To the days of yore...

...when copywriting for response was recognised as a specialist art. People used to study it. They used to discuss it. They used to marvel at great examples of it.

Yes, I know. I can hear those heads shaking. Some of you are going to find that hard to believe. But they did. Trust me.

Here are a couple of people whose work will stimulate the open-minded forever...

The first is James Webb Young. It's impossible to list all of James Webb Young's major achievements.

He was a great man of this business and an advertising 'hall of famer' who truly changed the way the advertising "business" worked.

James Webb Young joined J. Walter Thompson Cincinnati in 1911 as a copywriter. His previous knowledge of copy had come from his experience in New York, where he wrote mail-order advertising for a local book publisher.

After only a few years, Young became head of the Cincinnati office. It was at this office that he created some of his most memorable work.

Odorono is a great example.

It is difficult to imagine a world without something as simple as deodorant.

In fact, the first underarm deodorant product did not come into the marketplace until 1907. It was invented by a surgeon in Cincinnati. He called it Odorono. By 1919, advertising for Odorono was already well established.

In that same year, Jim Young wrote an ad for the brand that has become a classic.

The headline read, *"Within the Curve of a Woman's Arm."*

The headline for the Odorono ad, cleverly avoided mentioning the armpit. The ad itself also drew women in with copy stating that, "persons troubled with perspiration odour seldom can detect it themselves."

Here is the original copy Young wrote:

Within the curve of a woman's arm.

A frank discussion of a subject too often avoided.

A woman's arm! Poets have sung its grace; artists have painted its beauty. It should be the daintiest, sweetest thing in the world. And yet, unfortunately, it isn't, always. There's an old offender in this quest for perfect daintiness - an offender of which we ourselves may be ever so unconscious, but which is just as truly present.

Shall we discuss it frankly?

Many a woman who says, "No, I am never annoyed by perspiration," does not know the facts...

Of course, we aren't to blame because nature has made us so that the perspiration glands under the arms are more active than anywhere else. Nor are we to blame because... have made normal evaporation there impossible.

Would you be absolutely sure of your daintiness? It's the chemicals of the body, not uncleanliness, that cause odour. And even though there is no active perspiration - no apparent moisture - there may be under the arms an odour...

Fastidious women who want to be absolutely sure of their daintiness have found that they could not trust to their own consciousness; they have felt the need of a toilet water which would insure them against any of this kind of underarm unpleasantness, either moisture or odour.

To meet this need, a physician formulated Odorono - a perfectly harmless and delightful toilet water...

The Odorono campaign ran originally in the Ladies Home Journal.

During that time the Journal and the American Medical Association warned that Odorono could be dangerous. Women, who saw the product and its advertising as being offensive and disgusting, cancelled their subscriptions to the Ladies Home Journal.

Yet amazingly, even with over 200 cancellations, Odorono sales went up by an incredible 112% in that year.

He took a taboo subject and created advertising that was cutting edge - by simply using the right words. And, by being brave too...

Don't see much of that around now either...especially from the client side - but that's a subject for a future article.

"Nothing is said now that has not been said before" - Terence (161 BC)

How true that is. Drayton told me years ago that *"there is nothing new in this business"*. I thought he was nuts at the time. Now I know he was right.

Most "original" ideas are reworks of what has gone before.

Writer George Polt reckoned that there are only 36 dramatic situations. Any plot, old or new, fits into one of the 36.

Shakespeare's Hamlet can be traced back to a 12th century tale by a Danish writer called Saxo Grammaticus. Which in turn, can be traced to a story called Amlothi in the 1100s.

And that was 'nicked' from a story called Amleth in 917.

What this all means is this. There is nothing new in our business, only new ways of looking at old ideas.

My good pal Murray Raphel summed it up in his usual flamboyant style in an article a few years ago.

"In those very rare times when a "new and original" idea does appear, it is often rejected. Because there are dangers in making changes."

Example: When you change your advertising copy for an established product or service, nine out of ten times nothing happens to sales.

There is a legendary story of the CEO of a soft drinks company whose advertising was a popular jingle that was running for several years.

He called in his advertising agency and asked, *"How many of your people work on my account?"*

"Forty five," said the advertising executive. *"What do they all do?"* asked the CEO. *"Well,"* he was told, *"one of them is working on new ideas for future advertising."*

The other 44 have the job of keeping you from changing what's working."

Someone who really knew what worked in advertising was Claude Hopkins.

He was the outstanding copywriter and strategist of his time. His time was the 20's and 30's. The place, predictably, the USA.

Hopkins wrote two books, the first of which was *Scientific Advertising*, published in 1923. If you read only one book on the art of communication, make it this one. I normally read it twice a year and have done so for over 10 years. I still find gems in its pages.

David Ogilvy said after reading this book, *"Nobody should be allowed to have anything to do with advertising until they have read this book seven times. It changed the course of my life"*.

****Want to own a copy of this wonderful book?
Please see my note at the foot of this article****

Hopkins believed that *"advertising is salesmanship"* and as such, it should be measurable and justify the results that it produces. He was a strong believer in *"reason why copy"* and the principles that he discovered and documented are as valid today, as they were then.

Whatever medium you use, from print advertising to the Internet, the fundamentals taught by this great man are universal and timeless.

Back in 1919, Schlitz beer approached Claude Hopkins. Their beer sales were in 15th place. They asked Hopkins if he could help them sell more beer. He agreed to meet with Schlitz and toured the brewery. He was fascinated with what he discovered. He then returned two months later with an ad campaign.

His ads told of the *"crystal clear water from a special artesian well"*. They told of the one "mother" yeast cell that produced all the yeast for fermenting the beer. It was the result of over *"1,500 experiments and produced a very distinct fresh, crisp taste"*. He told of how the bottles were *"sterilized 12 times to ensure purity, so that nothing would interfere with the clean taste of the beer"*.

The Schlitz people hated it. They explained to Hopkins that this would never work. They told him, "All beer is made the same way." Hopkins calmly assured them that people would be fascinated with the "behind the scenes" look and, that no other beer maker had ever told the story.

After much discussion, Schlitz relented and let the ads roll out. Six months later, Schlitz beer was the Number 1 selling beer in the nation.

From 15th place to 1st in half a year – absolutely astonishing...

In actual fact, Schlitz were right. All beers are made pretty much the same way.

But, what Claude Hopkins had done was to turn the features that went into making beer, into the **benefits people gained when they cracked one open and drank it - clean, crisp and, distinctive.**

The work of a master.

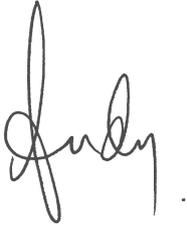
How some booze ads could do with his touch today...

For all those of you interested in getting better at the art of communication, you can do much, much worse than look back. There are some masterpieces out there, just waiting for you.

Some of these guys were geniuses in our business. In the most part, their approaches are still as relevant today as they were all those years ago.

More so, in a lot of cases.

Keep the faith...

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

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.

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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/buy-online.html>