



**“The lunatics are running the asylum.
I’m convinced of it now...”**

As regular readers of Copycat will know, I love the communications business. It is what I do. It is a passion, I suppose...

I try to do my simple best in advising and encouraging anyone who cares to listen, how to create and deliver sales messages in the most effective way...

But I think I’m losing the fight. The lunatics are running the asylum. I’m convinced of it now...

In these incredibly tough times for communicators, one thing is becoming clearer by the day. Words sell. Pretty pictures do not.

All you forward thinkers out there now recognise this.

But, what you will also recognise, is the combination of the right words and the correct pictures, when put together, can be very powerful indeed.

This has always been so. The famous copywriter George Lois once said:

“The verbal and visual elements of modern communication should be as indivisible as the words and music of a song”.

How many examples of promotional messages do you see these days, where this is evident? Very, very few...

Communications are not getting better. They are getting worse. Much worse.

TV ads now just beggar belief. What some of them are selling is completely beyond anyone’s comprehension. Car ads are the worst and, has anyone seen the ad running at the moment

featuring Steve Redgrave? He might be a great oarsman, but in this ad, he looks and acts like a complete buffoon.

How could the agency and the client look at the finished product and be happy with it?

And commercial radio...well... I listened to an ad whilst shaving this morning that seemed to spend 5-7 seconds on the sales pitch and the remaining 25 seconds on all the terms and conditions.

It was laughable. All I remembered were the terms and conditions. Not the selling message. What a crazy waste of money.

Emails are imploding. Such poor quality and so many tricksters. They need masses of help right now and good copywriters so badly.

Then there are the masses of poor press ads - and inserts with typos seem absolutely everywhere.

Direct mail is no better. The dimwits at BT are up to their usual nonsense, which I'm sure a lot of you have seen. A BT Business Catalogue arrived in a cheap polybag with the flaccid copy line on the front of " Realise Your Business Potential With Total Solutions From BT ". How incredibly poor is that? A selling opportunity that says absolutely nothing...

Telephone marketers are public enemy number one. (Did you know that in the USA, the number of people who have signed up for the federal .Do Not Call. list now exceeds a staggering 50 million people and is expected to reach 70 million?).

Things are getting tougher. But the message hasn't got through to some...

I placed an order with a Tour Company earlier this month and received a confirmation on a letterhead containing a typo on their address. Yes, honestly...

It's impossible for a simple boy to understand, all of this...

And this crazy situation comes at a time when things have never been more competitive. As I have mentioned before in this column, our communications do not fall on virgin soil anymore. They are being received by increasingly sceptical individuals who are advertising literate and very marketing savvy.

People are now discounting our claims more seriously than they have ever done before. Listen to this from DM legend Ray Jutkins...

"Every day in the marketplace, this is what happens: Something passes in front of our eyes 32,000 times. We are exposed to 570 advertising, marketing and promotional messages. Of these, we 'see' or .hear. only 76. And, by the end of the day, 3 of the 12 do we remember, we remember negatively".

That leaves us with 9 that made any impact on us at all. From 32,000 attempts.

Scary odds, huh? And Ray wrote that in 2001. The numbers will be worse now...

All this means we have to get better with our communications. Or we die.

Here's one that definitely didn't make the final 9. Look at this nonsense...

ALLIED IRISH BANK



I've been with this bank for close on 25 years. I have my personal and business accounts with them. When I walk in my branch, I am greeted with .Hi Andy.. When they write to me, this is the result. Very poor writing which has no relation to the actual brand experience .

Here.s another...

IDMF EARLS COURT

Subject: 26th International Direct Marketing Fair 2004
Date: 04/02/04 12:45:13 GMT Standard Time
From: gary@kimedavis.com
To: andyowen@ed.com
File: IDMFMarketing 2004102 bytes DL Time (28600 bps): < 2 minutes
Sent from the Internet (Details)



klin

2 - 4 March 2004
Earls Court 2 London

Tel: +4
Fax: +4
gpr

Dear Mr. Owen,

26th International Direct Marketing Fair is expected to be the biggest yet.

Although your company is not exhibiting at IDMF, I am sure you would not want to miss the chance of having a presence at this Europe's Largest Direct Marketing event.

By taking the proactive step of advertising in the show directory, you can rest assure Andy Owen & Associates will reach 11,000 ready-to-buy marketing professionals. Making this a smart way to contact your new customers.

Last year we had over 10,700 visitors (PDF ABC audited figures attached). To date we have sent out 15,000 tickets to individuals who have already pre-registered to attend IDMF 2004. So you can see we are in a great shape to surpass last year's figure.

The IDMF Show Catalogue format this year will be an A4 perfect bound full colour publication and will consist of approximately 104 pages with a print run of 11,000. This will only be handed out to visitors once they have completed their show registration.

The IDMF Show Directory is a your cost effective route in reaching these 11,000 key decision-makers. Who will I am sure be keen to find out more about your contemporary direct and strategic marketing solutions.

No other publication comes close to delivering such a quality readership in active buying mode.

IDMF Show Directory is an important high quality industry publication in its own right, containing a wealth of information for use at the show along with articles from industry leaders this directory will constantly referred to long after the show has ended.

I hope you will see the value to Andy Owen & Associates, in having some or of presence in this important industry reference book.

Copy deadline for the IDMF Show Catalogue is February 12th.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,

Gary Taylor

For stand availability contact Matthew Stokes on 020 8932 7113 or email to
Matthew.Stokes@reemaco.co.uk



This email plopped into my in-box last week. These people should really know better, shouldn't they? The writer is an alien. Look at the staggering layout with two font sizes. There are grammatical errors all over the place. A real embarrassment.

And just look at this little gem...

PHILIPS

How can anyone calling themselves creative, produce such a dumb ad as this? How many times do people need to be reminded that if there is no benefit to the reader in the headline, over 80% of the readers will drop out right there?

None of us care about her thoroughbred. Not in the slightest. You can't believe it, really, can you?

Let's face facts here. Quality is not an act. It is a habit. Being good is no longer good enough. In fact, I read this wonderful piece of common sense many years ago that illustrates the point superbly well.

PHILIPS
Let's make things better



"My thoroughbred needs company."

You'll find any excuse to stay at home with the new Philips Pixel Plus Flat TV, a thoroughbred amongst its class.

By increasing the number of pixels, our award winning picture processor dramatically improves the picture quality giving it an astonishing level of depth and clarity. With more pixels you see more detail and the pictures never looked more natural.

Staying home has never been better
See more at www.philips.com/flatv



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 KSA - Philips United States of America, Ltd. Tel: +966 2 400188, Oman - Philips Middle East Electronics Co. LLC, Tel: +966 7 711 111
 Pakistan - Sales, Service, Repairs & Spares, Tel: +92 41 482288, Lebanon - Philips Lebanon Electronics S.A.L., Tel: +961 1 489900, Iran - Philips Sales Trading Co. Tel: +982 6 202424

"Good is the enemy of great. And it's true when you think about it. Good is easy to like. Good makes you its friend and says .Hey, I'm not so bad am I?. And you agree. Next thing that happens is your communication is good.

And that's bad...

...in anyone's book".

Especially in these mega-tough times...

I believe it is now vital to go to extraordinary lengths to get it right. Try not to let even the smallest thing slide. If it bothers you even a little bit, work on it until it doesn't.

Remember the words of poet Paul Valery - "A poem is never finished, only abandoned".

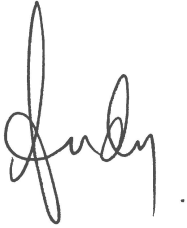
I end with a real tearjerker. Get your tissues ready.

EMAIL REQUEST

I am very conscious when writing to our very select market that I am not getting my point through, and find it difficult to know wats worth saying and wats not.

This is part of an email I received from a very nice young man last week, asking for advice. What do they teach them at University these days...? Makes you think, doesn't it?

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.

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>