



Why do they do THAT?

Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows that it must outrun the fastest lion, or it will be killed.

Every morning in Africa, a lion wakes up. It knows that it must run faster than the slowest gazelle, or it will starve to death.

Every morning in Marketing Land, a load of dumb marketers wake up. They couldn't give a shit either way.

Which goes a long way to explain why garbage like the stuff I am about to show you, sees the light of day.

Things have rarely been tougher for marketers than right now. To make a sale, to acquire a new customer, is harder than it has been in living memory.

You would be forgiven for thinking, therefore, that marketers are trying harder than ever, given this rather worrying situation. In such a scenario, you would think they would turn to proven skills and techniques.

Well, you would be wrong. Very few people *study* our business.

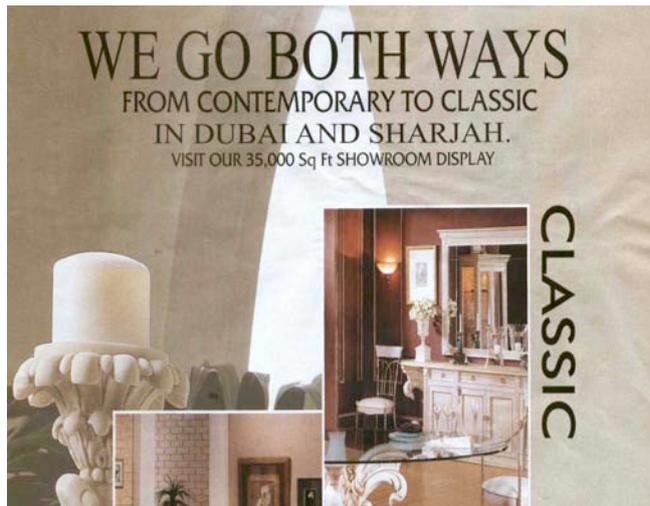
The quality of work has plummeted to an all-time low. It's surely never been as bad as it is now.

I simply can't believe it.

All hope is gone.

Just look at these – and weep...

Al Hufaiza Furniture – Magazine Ad - Dubai



This shows the headline of a breathtakingly bad full-page ad for a furniture retailer in Dubai.

I would suggest that it's never a good idea using a phrase when you have no idea of what it means.

It could seriously alter the profile of customers you attract.

John Fenton Training – Direct Mail Letter - UK



The worst opening to a sales letter by a long way, is the much used and abused...

"May I take this opportunity of introducing my company to you"?

Because the answer is, "No, you may not".

The second worst opening is the comical one shown here.

What made him do it? Truly awful.

Intercontinental Hotels – Welcome Sign – Saudi Arabia



This was how Intercontinental Hotels greeted me at Riyadh Airport a little while ago.

In the hospitality industry, getting your guest's name correct, is always something that one should strive for.

Citroen – Magazine Ad – UK

Page 24 Daily Mail, Friday, April 24, 1995

XSARA

£9995

This season, less is more.

If you're looking for a stylish little number, try the Xsara Temptation for size. At an itty-bitty, teeny-weeny £9,995 on the road, it doesn't skimp on features, with power assisted steering, driver's airbag, central locking, remote control PDS, stereo, maintenance indicator and transponder immobiliser as standard. But if you prefer a little more cover, then the Coupe VTR, or the five-door X and LX, with 3 years' free insurance, should suit you down to the ground. For more information, or to arrange a test drive, call free on 0800 262 262 and see how they measure up.

CITROËN XSARA
NOTHING MOVES YOU LIKE A CITROËN

MSR SHOWN LIMITED EDITION BEAN, L.H. TEMPTATION. £4,355 ON THE ROAD. ON THE ROAD PRICE INCLUDES VED FOR DELIVERY, NUMBER PLATE AND 15 MONTHS ROAD FUND COVER. MSR BEYOND 2000. EXCEPT FOR SUPERMAN REGISTRATION FEE PAYABLE ON ALL NEW CARS REGISTERED WITH EFFECT FROM 1.4.95. 3 YEAR FREE INSURANCE OFFER APPLIES TO RETAIL REGISTRATIONS OF NEW 2.0Litre AND 1700cc MODELS ORDERED AND REGISTERED BETWEEN 1.4.95 AND 31.3.96. INSURANCE OFFER SUBJECT TO MANUFACTURER'S AND INSURER'S TERMS AND CONDITIONS AND APPLIES TO 17-19 YEAR OLD CARS FOR VTR LIMITED EDITION MODELS SUBJECT TO ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS.

The automotive industry rarely seem to know what they are doing, when it comes to creating ads that sell.

This is a perfect example of what I mean.

'Less is more'. Oh dear. A totally useless phrase that always appears when a tired copywriter has run out of ideas.

And to even contemplate using an image like this to sell a car, is simply beyond my comprehension.

Severn Trent Water – Direct Mail Letter - UK



The image shows a direct mail letter from Severn Trent Water. At the top right, there is a red diagonal banner with the text "Join Home Service FREE on 0800 783 3344". The letterhead "Severn Trent Water" is centered at the top. The recipient's address is on the left, and the number "10471508" is on the right. The main heading reads "As a Direct Debit payer, its now even easier for you to benefit from increased plumbing and drainage protection". The letter is addressed to "Mr Owen" and discusses the benefits of Home Service, a 24-hour emergency plumbing and drainage service. It includes several sub-headings: "Plumbing emergencies are much more likely than you think", "Your home insurance is unlikely to cover you", and "Would you call an unknown plumber in an emergency?". The letter concludes with "Please read on..." and a red call-to-action box at the bottom. The box contains the phone number "0800 783 3344" and the reference number "STSP21D".

Severn Trent Water

Mr A Owen
27 Barkswell Close
SOLIHULL
West Midlands
B91 2ER

10471508

Join Home Service FREE on 0800 783 3344

As a Direct Debit payer, its now even easier for you to benefit from increased plumbing and drainage protection

Dear Mr Owen

Waking up in the middle of the night with a plumbing or drainage emergency is every homeowner's nightmare. This winter alone Severn Trent Water have been inundated with calls from people in a similar situation. Often, with a burst pipe on their hands, they don't know who to turn to. Severn Trent Water introduce Home Service, an independent provider of plumbing and drainage cover.

Don't forget that there are a great many pipes and drains inside and outside your home, that can break down, burst or even collapse. When things go wrong it is up to you, the homeowner, to sort it out. Would you know who to turn to should the worst happen? Home Service provide a 24 hour Emergency Hotline, excellent cover limits and there's no inspection of your plumbing before you join. What's more, a plumber will aim to be with you in less than 2 hours! With Home Service you can have a plumbing and drainage peace of mind all year round.

Membership is quick and simple to arrange and for customers who pay by Direct Debit there's an even easier way to join. Your name and address details have already been printed on the attached Guaranteed Acceptance Form, simply check they are correct, complete your bank details and sign. Home Service do the rest, it's as simple as that!

Plumbing emergencies are much more likely than you think

For the second year running, an independent national survey* showed that almost half of all homes (48%) have suffered a plumbing or drainage emergency at some time or another. Yet despite this 75% of homeowners still don't believe it will happen to them.

Your home insurance is unlikely to cover you

Independent research² has also confirmed that the vast majority of home insurance policies still do not provide you with cover against plumbing and drainage emergencies. Whilst they may offer a "helpline" to find you a plumber, this almost certainly won't cover the cost of call out, labour, materials and VAT. Home Service fills this gap and are so confident you're not already covered that there's a "no overlap guarantee" - your money back in full at any time if you find that you are!

Would you call an unknown plumber in an emergency?

It's well known, especially after TV programmes such as "House of Horrors" that picking a tradesman from the local directory can lead to all sorts of problems. Bad workmanship, overcharging and inventing jobs that don't really need to be done are amongst the worst problems, but when you've got an emergency there are other things to worry about as well - like is he going to turn up and how quickly. And what if you just can't get anybody at all - what would you do then?

Please read on...

*Source - ROP - June 2001. ²Source - Forry 2 Research - May 2001.

Call Home Service FREE on 0800 783 3344 to join by Direct Debit

Quoting the reference number: **STSP21D**

Lines open Monday - Friday 8.00am - 8.00pm, Saturday 8.00am - 4.00pm.

Severn Trent Water Services (Direct Debit) Office (2001) Coventry Road, Birmingham B36 9PL. Registered in England and Wales No. 2824911. Please disregard this letter if you are already a member or if your home is covered by your Local Authority or Housing Association.

This is my local water company.

These buffoons have been sending out garbage like this for years.

Just look at it. Would you bother reading it?

Opening paragraph 5 lines. Second para is 6 lines. Followed by other paragraphs of similar lengths.

Too daunting. Simply a waste of time and money.

Knowledgeable copywriters know you must keep it short, sharp and punchy.

How many times does it have to be said?

Birmingham Chamber Of Commerce – Email - UK

Page 1 of 1

Subj: **2012 Tendering Breakfast - (9 places left available)**
Date: 17/07/2008 10:04:38 GMT Daylight Time
From: e.spencer@birminghamchamber.org.uk
To: info@andyowen.co.uk

Please click on or copy this link into your browser if you cannot read this.

Tender Breakfast - Aug



What is Tendering and How do I get involved?
What is Public sector procurement?
How much business is available in the public sector?

The Birmingham Chamber of Commerce is holding a 'Welcome to Tendering Breakfast Morning' to answer questions of this type. The Morning will offer an insight into the increasingly popular public sector and what it has to your business.

One of the purposes of the morning is to challenge the myths about tendering in the public sector being only for 'big' companies and to further knowledge and understanding of public tendering.

There will be a number of expert presentations throughout the morning from leading figures in local procurement. Also, the business opportunities from the London 2012 Games will be discussed, including how your company can benefit.

As part of the morning breakfast will be provided.

Date: Tuesday, 12th August 2008
Venue: Birmingham Chamber of Commerce
Cost: £35+vat (member) / £45+vat (non-member)

For information please contact Elexis Spencer on 0121 607 1911 or e.spencer@birminghamchamber.org.uk

To book online [click here](#) or visit www.tenderbreakfast.com

Birmingham Chamber
of Commerce and Industry **British Chambers of Commerce****The Ultimate Business Network**

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18 July 2008 AOL: Andy Owen

My local Chamber of Commerce.

I've found over the years, that most of these types of organisations send out stiff and wooden communications. Probably because they are stiff and wooden people.

They are afraid of including any emotion in their copy, so it's full of clunky, intellectual drivel. I suppose they think that the croissant is an interesting creative touch.

I don't...

But, of course, if you are to be taken seriously as a Chamber of Commerce, it really does help if you can spell the word 'Breakfast' correctly.

Subaru – Magazine Ad - Czech Republic



Creative masturbation in play again. Well, it is automotive...

Can anyone tell me, what 'Think. Feel. Drive.' are supposed to be there for?

Are we supposed to look at the car, read those 3 words and go "Oh yes, I get it! Where is the nearest showroom"?

No, I didn't think so, either...

Watermelon – Promotional Literature - Dubai



Watermelon is an unusual name for an ad agency, I would agree.

But, something else is quite unusual, too.

If you can't spell 'isn't it' correctly, then I would humbly suggest you have little chance of encouraging companies to place their business with you.

Mind you, as most Marketing Directors can't spell anyway, I'm sure they didn't notice - and the agency was a roaring success.

Saga – Competition Ad – UK

SAGA

Your chance to win a 14 night holiday in Spain

To qualify for free entry into Saga's free prize draw, simply complete the details on the enclosed questionnaire, indicating the holidays that interest you, and send it back to us in the postage-paid envelope. The closing date for entries is February 20, 2004.

Terms and conditions

1. The Saga Holidays limited free prize draw is open to all UK residents over the age of 50 with a permanent UK address, except employees of Saga limited or any subsidiary, their families or anyone connected with the prize draw.
2. Only one entry per person.
3. The prize is a two-week holiday for two people at the Hotel Ponent Playa in Cala d'Or, Majorca, departing May 10, 2004. The holiday is subject to Saga Holidays limited's booking conditions.
4. No purchase is necessary. To enter, simply return a fully completed questionnaire by the closing date of February 20, 2004, ensuring you check your name and address.
5. The winner will be the first entrant randomly selected in an independently supervised draw. The draw will take place on Friday, February 27, 2004.
6. Lost, delayed or illegible entries will not be accepted, nor will telephone and e-mail entries.
7. Saga Holidays limited is the promoter and reserves the right to alter the prize, provided the substitute is of equivalent value.
8. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
9. The winner will be notified by telephone or post within 21 days of the draw taking place.
10. Saga Holidays limited reserves the right to publish the winner's photograph, name and home country in subsequent publicity.
11. The winner's name may be obtained after the draw date by sending a stamped-addressed envelope to Saga Holidays limited, Marketing Department, The Saga Building, Erbrook Park, Folkestone, Kent CT20 3SE.
12. Proof of posting is not proof of receipt.
13. Entry into the free prize draw is deemed acceptance of the rules.

We have some great offers currently available on a range of worldwide holidays, including...

- Save up to £100 off previously advertised prices on selected departures between March 8-31, 2004 at the Hotel Ponent Playa in Cala d'Or, Majorca
- Save up to £220 off previously advertised prices on selected departures and durations between March 29-October 29, 2004 at the Hotel Madeira Regency Palace in Funchal, Madeira
- Three weeks for the price of two on selected departures and durations between March 16-June 24, 2004 at the Cutty Sark Hotel in Scottburgh, South Africa
- Save up to £150 off previously advertised prices on selected departures between May 31-August 30 and October 4-November 29, 2004 at the Hilton Naples and Towers in Florida, U.S.A.

For further details of these offers or any of our holidays, call our 24-hour Brochure Request Line FREE on 0800 300 456 or return the brochure request leaflet enclosed. Terms and conditions apply. All special offers have limited availability.

holidays to dream of and experience

This appeared in a magazine. Saga's customers are 50+, with a lot of them 65+ and 75+.

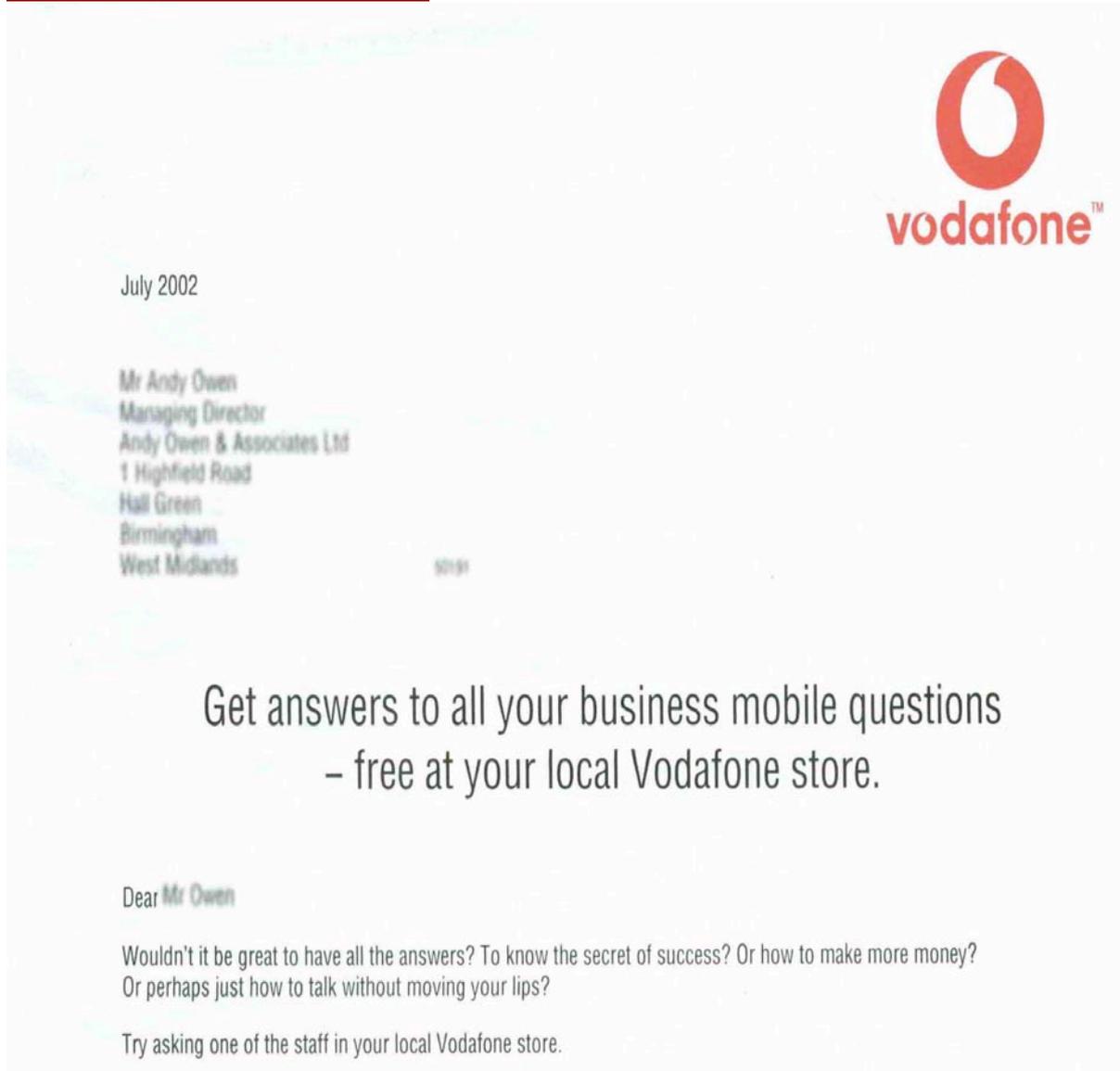
I can tell you with reasonable certainty, that most of them will wear glasses. That means their eyes aren't what they were.

So, to present them with this appalling ad - which is made worse by reversed out copy - and expect them to even contemplate reading it - is not the best use of brain matter.

Reversed-out copy reduces readership by over 70%. Poor layout reduces readership by up to 50%. I would estimate that this ad was read by 4 people in the UK.

Not great value for money...

Vodafone – Direct Mail - UK



Who writes this tosh?

It doesn't do anything. It doesn't connect. It doesn't sell. It doesn't have relevance or benefit.

And good copy must have all of those.

But, it makes you laugh. For the wrong reasons. Read the first two paras...

If you've ever been in a Vodafone store lately and spoken with the staff there, you will know that they sometimes struggle to understand what day follows Monday.

So, it's rather unlikely you will discover from them, the secrets of success, or how to make more money.

Liverpool Victoria – Direct Mail - UK



Standard Life Healthcare
Wey House
Farnham Road
Guildford
Surrey GU1 4RS

Mr Andrew E Owen
27 Berkswell Close
SOLIHULL
West Midlands
B91 2EH

9806
42121

Cutting healthcare costs,
not your cover.

Dear Mr Owen,

February 2005

It's a conundrum isn't it? You don't want to pay high premiums when you're healthy, but nobody wants to be without private healthcare when they need treatment. Standard Life Healthcare has the ideal solution – private medical insurance with a built-in No-Claims Discount.

Simple, everyday words are the most effective in copy.

Seems like this writer hasn't been made aware of this fact yet.

Third word here, is 'conundrum'. Not exactly a word you might hear down the pub tonight, is it?

You couldn't make it up...

So, my dear playmates, I hope you have had a little enjoyment and have been entertained by just a handful of the clowns and jesters that exist in our business today.

But, of course, it's not really very funny at all. Because ill-advised and badly conceived work, like the examples above, affect us all.

To start with, they just turn people off even more to our messages. Which makes it doubly hard for all of us.

Remember the 'junk mail' tag? That all came about as a direct result of the brainless financial services industry, 'raping' our letterboxes.

Everyone that used direct mail suffered as a result.

The same thing happens when the world is full of bad work.

People turn off. And that's your customers and prospects. And mine.

In addition of course, clients, when not getting what they expect from a campaign, will blame the media used or the world's troubles.

Anything but admit it was the poor delivery of their promotional messages.

Why don't marketers study? If they did, they wouldn't make mistakes like the ones I have shown you.

Why don't they look back? There are rich treasures to discover. The techniques learned in the halcyon days, are still as relevant now, as they were then.

Simply put, the tree of marketing knowledge is ripe with fruit, just ready to be plucked and enjoyed.

All anyone in marketing and communications has to do, is take off the blinkers and go looking. But somehow, I don't think many really will.

See you next month.

Keep the faith

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andy".

About the Author

Andy Owen is MD of Andy Owen & Associates, a leading International direct marketing consultancy, specialising in all aspects of creative, copy and strategy for direct marketing.

The company's corporate website is www.andyowen.co.uk The specialist copy division has its own site at www.copywritingthatsells.com Andy is personally involved in every creative and copy element that is produced by Andy Owen & Associates.

As well as his International speaking engagements, Andy runs in-house copywriting and direct marketing Masterclasses, Workshops and Seminars for companies and organisations all over the world. Check his latest gigs on the website.

<http://www.andyowen.co.uk/speaker-presenter.html>

If you feel your company could benefit from any of these, or if you would like further information on any aspect of copywriting and creative for direct marketing, please contact Andy personally at andyowen@aol.com

All Andy's previous articles are available to enjoy, read and download at www.andyowen.co.uk/articles.html