



Attention to Detail

Andy this month looks at the vital area of attention to detail and how companies continue to waste their money and damage their brand.

Whilst sifting through yet another pile of garbage masquerading as direct mail this week, I was reminded of some words of wisdom from a long, long time ago...

*"If language is not correct, then what is said is not what is meant...
...if what is said, is not what is meant, then what ought to be done, remains undone"*

This wonderful slice of common sense was supposedly written by the world's first marketing guru - our old friend Charlie Confucius.

As with most things in this crazy business of ours, it seems people never listen and never learn.

When you are sending out a promotional message, it is vital that you pay attention to detail. Of course, I hear you say. Absolutely logical...

...not so for some of you out there, I'm afraid. The lunatics are still running the asylum. Or, put another way, the naïve and unprofessional are evident in ever-greater numbers.

Typos abound. They are everywhere. And, good spellers are, in the main, intolerant. I know I am. If I spot a typo, then the message has NO CHANCE of influencing me.

What's more, I will think very poorly of the organisation that created such a bad piece of communication.

So, no response and damage to the brand in the bargain. Can you afford that?

This incidentally, applies to your choice of paper stock as well. It all adds up to overall impression. Don't go for the flimsiest stock you can. Have a day off as a penny-pincher

and try to imagine how your promotional message will be received.

Remember, your mailing is your salesman. Poor quality paper and cheap envelopes say volumes about you and your company...

Here are a few laughable examples, from literally hundreds that I have, of companies that should be ashamed of themselves...

WATERMELON

This is relatively new ad agency in Dubai. For some inexplicable reason, they decided to call themselves Watermelon.

For a new business push, they sent out actual watermelons in boxes to senior marketing individuals. Stuck to the top was this abject bit of unprofessionalism.



Unbelievably, it contains a typo. Would you commit budget and confidence to an agency that made a mistake like this?

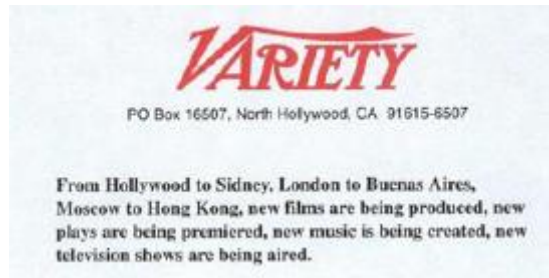
Incidentally, one staggering aside on this. They actually entered the Watermelon and offending note in to the IAA 2002 Below The Line Awards in the Gulf.

I know because I was a judge. That's where I saw it....

VARIETY

A magazine known and read all over the world in showbiz circles. It's the bible, apparently...

This mailing was searching for new subscribers and they misspelt two of the most famous cities in the world. Would they get your money?



AI PRESENTATIONS

A sound and vision company compelling you to “make sure your message is effective”. Shame they can’t even get their own name right. Unbelievable really, isn’t it?



SIR OWEN ANDY

I know a knighthood is well overdue, but this addressing is farcical. This made me laugh out loud. Unfortunately for them, this was not the reaction they wanted.



Punctuation too, is so poor these days. Whatever happened to the good old comma?

I have to tell you, I LOVE the comma. It is a significant arrow in the quiver of the contemporary copywriter. It can create that necessary pause. A pause that, in a lot of cases, is oh so important when delivering a selling message more effectively.

The comma is a pal. Don't forget it.

Here's a great example of a slight error in punctuation that radically altered the meaning of a sentence.

Here's what was said:

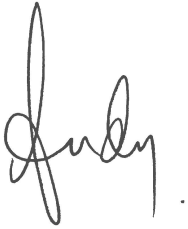
'Woman without her man has no reason for living.'

Here's what was meant:

'Woman: without her, man has no reason for living.'

Ho hum.

Keep the faith...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy'.

... and, keep safe in these worrying times...

See you next month, when I'll be offering some advice on how to write more effectively for email. Some great examples, mostly bad, to show you...

*** If you have good or bad copy examples that you would like to share with me, I would be delighted to receive them. They could then be considered for future articles. ***

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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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.

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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>