



I Don't Want To Have A Relationship With You, But An Affair Could Be Attractive!

I have just spent the best part of a train journey into London, catching up on my industry magazines which have been piling up.

I have to tell you that I am seriously unhappy. The dreaded CRM again. Unfortunately, the magazines seem to be obsessed with it. It's all over the place. The lunatics are running the asylum.

But, I can't help thinking it's our own fault ...and I'm as much to blame as anyone.

For over 20 years, I have been suggesting, to all that might have been kind enough to listen, (and this includes leading blue chips all over the world) that building a relationship with your customer, is a mentality that is absolutely vital to the long term success of your company's marketing activity.

Sorry, but it's all been a terrible mistake...

All those thousands of hours in client meetings, conferences, seminars and workshops in far flung corners of the world and, of course, endless presentations and discussions and, it appears, I have been wasting my time...

It is a classic case of course, of that was then, this is now. It was completely correct to go down the relationship road many years ago. A lot of us old direct marketing liggers have been preaching the gospel for many years before the dm bandwagon got rolling.

However, things have changed significantly in the last few years. In all areas of marketing. In relationship and loyalty marketing, that change has been dramatic and things have turned on their head, especially in the last 24 months or so...

There's a very simple reason why:

The customer is now very firmly in control. What's more, the customer is fully aware of this fact. And, that customer does not want to have a relationship with you and your company. Not now, not ever...

It's ironic really. It's been difficult in the last two decades to get some marketers to accept that it is infinitely more profitable to service an existing customer than it is to find a new one and have this marketing commandment underpin their strategy.

Now, ten years later, when customers are getting promiscuous, marketers want to go steady. The dreaded CRM is all over us like a rash.

Well, it is my humble opinion that it will all end up with tears before bedtime!

Relationships within marketing circles are fine. Makes the world go round. But relationships between retailers and their customers are now pie in the sky.

They will not happen anymore. Not a chance.

And here are a few very simple reasons why...

1.

Customers these days do not want a relationship with companies. Relationships in life are a two-way thing. Just think about it. I currently give some companies and organisations repeat business and I remain loyal to them. But, only because they give me what I want. When they stop doing that, I will go elsewhere.

This is an arrangement on my terms. It is not a relationship.

2.

CRM/Relationship marketing programmes represent a massive investment for companies. They also require enormous patience. There is no quick fix. ROI will take years in some cases. So, time and money are needed. Most companies do not have either. What's also very interesting is that the vast majority of the marketing and communications decision makers that start the programmes, just won't be there after the first year. (It is a fact right now that the average tenure of a Marketing Director in the UK is only 13 months. It's less than that in other areas of the world).

3.

CRM is direct marketing by another name. Most of the organisations that are considering it are not even doing direct marketing properly. Some, I have spoken to recently, don't even have a meaningful database and it's hard work explaining why they should.

They are far from being able to embrace CRM in its purest form. All they will do is spend a lot of money going nowhere fast. What has to happen now is to get back to basics. Recognise what the customer wants. And give it to them. Not give them what you think they need, because they'll sling it back in your face.

Customers out there are now very smart. They are fully aware of their power. They realise that a relationship will benefit the company first and them second. And, they are, quite rightly, having none of it. As all you savvy players know, people like to buy, they do not like to be sold to.

You will also know that people buy benefits not features. They are not the slightest bit interested in your history, your company philosophy, your products. They are only interested in what your products **can do for them**.

This is now a massive point, but one that seems to be forgotten or ignored by most marketers. That's why there is so much mind-numbing garbage about, especially on TV and in the Press.

It would pay some of these misguided souls to first realise the basics of the selling process: People only buy for 2 reasons. Only 2...

1. Solutions To Problems 2. Good Feelings

Give your customers either of the above as a reason to purchase from you and you will do well. They will place business with you and continue to do so. To find out what they want is easy. Ask them. If you talk to them in the right way and reward them for the information, they will give you masses of it.

These days, it is becoming very clear that a return to the basic principles of marketing is the correct approach to commercial success, especially in today's minefield. Here is a simplistic approach that will deliver much more business to your company than any CRM programmes ever will and keep your valued customers happy into the bargain.

1.

Acquire a customer at the lowest possible cost

2.

Reward that customer for doing business with you

3.

Find out more about that customer, including what that customer wants from you

4.

Reward that customer again for the information supplied

5.

Based on that information, contact the customer with relevant, impactful, reassuring and incentivised messages, influencing them to return to you to place further business

6.

Reward them again

7.

Continue the cycle based on what the customer wants, not what you want to sell and recognise that this will be a moving feast

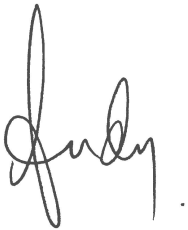
Simplistic? Sure. But proven over the years. This formula works and will continue to work. Mess with it at your peril.

Forget about trying to develop a relationship. Your customer does not want one with you. And probably never will.

An affair on the other hand, might have its attractions- as long as both parties are discreet and respect each other.

However, whether you like it or not, you will have to face the fact that the affair will strictly be on their terms, not yours.

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>