



The Offer

As part of his on-going series on contemporary copywriting, Andy Owen this month looks at The Offer. There is a hyperlink to each of the examples. Just click on the title to view.

As we all know, an offer is very important in direct mail. Nowhere near as important as the targeting or the letter, but important all the same.

How you deliver that offer to me is vital. If it's genuinely strong and relevant (and if it isn't you are wasting both your time and your money) sing it early and sing it loud and I'll give you my full attention.

Don't hide it. I will not search for it. I don't have the time...

And don't con me when your offer isn't an offer at all. If you do, I'm going to be angry with you. And angry people do not buy.

Here's some examples of what I mean:

The Times & Sunday Times



THE TIMES **THE SUNDAY TIMES**

Dear Mr Owen

Here's your chance for a once in a lifetime offer.

For a short time only you can enjoy subscription rates that mean you pay only £1 a week for what's important: The Times and The Sunday Times every day. That's not a lot to pay for insightful analysis on breaking news, colourful and vibrant features and more exciting sport than you could find in a month of Sundays.

Today's Times – What's Important – Every Day

By taking advantage of this offer you can subscribe to The Times and The Sunday Times for 12, 24 or 48 weeks for only £1 each week. That's a saving of £2.90 every week of your subscription – more if you usually read some other newspapers.

Call now on 0800 917 66 67 for your subscription.

Now is the time to act! We can only keep this exclusive subscription rate open for two weeks. Just call free on 0800 917 66 67 before 24th February. Have your credit or debit card handy and quote your personal reference number. Or you could fill in and return the attached order form. Remember to fill in sections 1, 2 and 3. You'll be enjoying a month of Sundays and more before you know it!

Yours sincerely



R-J Stratton
Relationship Marketing Manager

P.S. Don't miss the boat! For a month of Sundays from The Times and The Sunday Times you need to call 0800 917 66 67 by 24th February 2002

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News International is old enough to know better than this. Mind you, they've never really understood direct marketing...

The opening line states that this is going to be "a once in a lifetime offer"

Wow ! I can't wait...

When I read on I find that the offer is a breathtaking £2.90 per week. I know I have meagre tastes, but this is ridiculous. Now I feel disappointed and I feel angry. The copywriter has tried to con me and I have initially fallen for it. And, I've had my valuable time wasted. But, when I find out what the offer really is, I'm out of there. And I leave in a very sour mood. Not going to buy, sorry. Change your copywriter...

Don't try to con the reader. It never works.

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Your invitation to join a select group of decision makers.

Dear Reader,

I would like to present a tempting business proposition. One which over 700,000 of the world's most prominent business figures have already accepted. Today, the decision is yours.

You are invited to subscribe to *The Economist* and take advantage of our excellent offer for new subscribers: a one-year subscription at 55% off; two years at 60% off, or even three years at 65% off the normal cover price. In addition, when you subscribe you can also enjoy FREE unlimited access to Economist.com including the online Library at www.economist.com.

I understand that you probably receive invitations to important gatherings and vital events almost every working day. So I'd like to present five compelling reasons why you should seriously consider my invitation to subscribe.

Your competitors read *The Economist*. Just like you, they take all the important daily newspapers, watch current affairs on television, read industry publications and seek new opinions. They also read the world's most influential business publication. So they have an instant advantage over you, every week.

You'll enjoy it. Reading *The Economist* is not a chore, it is a pleasure. In fact, 89% of our subscribers take the time to read *The Economist* at home. It is written with wit and style, is unafraid of controversy and is wide ranging in its coverage.

You'll be reading a truly independent publication. Unlike many, *The Economist* has no individual owner, is not part of an international media conglomerate and holds no political bias. It presents the issues as it sees them, unrestrained by outside influence.

You'll be taking an international view. *The Economist* may be published in English, but it covers the world. Wherever the news is being made, *The Economist* provides the in-depth coverage and perceptive analysis that will help you understand the events that shape the way you work, now and in the future.

You can save up to 65% on the normal cover price. This is a special introductory offer for new subscribers. Delivery is guaranteed, direct to your door, every week for the period of your subscription. To take advantage of our offer, simply complete the attached order form and send it to us in the envelope provided, along with your payment details. If you are already a subscriber, please accept our apologies for sending you this invitation and, if appropriate, please pass this offer on to a friend or colleague.

Please turn over ...

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Here's how to deliver an offer in the right way.

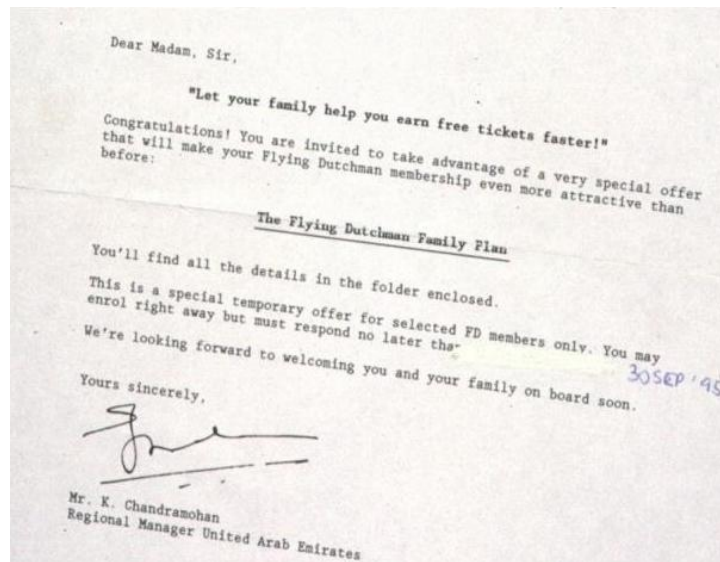
The exclusivity of the headline is a proven technique, although, in my view, the upper and lower case italics would have been much improved by the use of standard caps and underlining.

A nice two line opening, straight into the offer, presented in an indented second paragraph for maximum impact. A one-year sub at 55% off, two years at 60% and three years at 65%.

All followed by 5 more compelling reasons why I should buy. That's what I call an offer delivered in the correct way.

I would show this to your copywriter, News International...

KLM Middle East



Now this is a bloody classic. A colleague gave me it in Dubai many years ago and it is so jaw-droppingly bad, it is beyond belief.

This is the story.

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, to give them their full name, were writing to their very best customers in the Gulf, with a special family offer. They created the mailing, which was absolute pants. They knew the customers by name, obviously, yet still used the salutation Madam, Sir. Ho hum...

The offer was hidden away. The result, the mailing bombed. They decided to run it again with an extended response date.

As they had some letters left over (they litho printed the letter instead of lasering it), it was decided to utilise the remaining stock. Shame to waste paper...

So, a member of staff TIPPEXED the old date out and handwrote a new one in...if this example is anything to go by, I think the job was given to the night porter.

Hard to believe isn't it? When I show this slide at conferences I have to provide tissues first, it's so devastatingly funny.

Next Month: I will look at the vitally important area of Headlines. Do you know that on average, five times as many people will read the headline of your letter, than read the body copy? I'll be looking at a few good, bad and utterly incompetent examples.

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>