

# Direct Marketing

week

WRITTEN FOR THE INDUSTRY BY THE INDUSTRY

£2.00

## Our Man in Europe



**SMS Messaging.** It seems that the UK is the leader in SMS messaging in Europe and if the percentage of messages sent and received was taken into account, ahead of the USA in the number of communications per head. In the US it is the subscribers who pay for both outgoing and incoming messages which has probably dampened the SMS bonanza that is sweeping the rest of the world.

France is miles behind the UK, probably because it is pretty difficult to be philosophical in only 160 characters and the Germans could hardly spell a past participle with that number of characters. So it's left to the Brits to show the way with ever more ingenious wheezes being played every day. The latest has been to send a message reading "Please call me on 09022500065. Urgent." The number is a premium rate number which charges 60p a minute.

The Dutch who have to make a living from a much smaller market than the UK have reverted to the "Hi, call me back, Ingrid." Text message. By pressing the recall selection the hapless recipient is connected to Ingrid's number only to find that this is more of an SMS message rather than message.

Women online. Findings recently published on Internet News which were compiled from a survey of 2,222 females between the ages of 18 and 54 show that 60% of women online click on banner ads to get more information on the product. One third go back to an advertiser's site after viewing the ad online and 80% of female internet users employ the tool to research products before making a purchase. The really amazing statistic, and here is the best part for those males who hate being dragged out shopping, 32% of new mothers surveyed, preferred to shop online.

So while the men surf aimlessly across the Web, the women are focusing on their requirements and becoming loyal buyers. There might be nothing new in this as it is mainly women who buy from catalogues while their spouses peer through Classic Car magazine dreaming of that must have item. Advertisers might now be well advised to slant their approach to online selling to females to achieve the maximum returns.

## Our Man in Europe



By Rupert Suren.

**Eigenface.** You should wear a paper bag over your head! Well, if Visage Technology have anything to do with it you should take my advice seriously. They are now using software that translates the characteristics of a face into a unique set of numbers which is referred to as Eigenface.

You're probably ahead of me now, having realised that if these characteristics are translated into a unique set of numbers they can form a part of a database. Who needs URNs

with this technology?

Early adopters in the States are using the face recognition for customer verification at ATMs and for e-commerce. We are now moving from a new crime fighting tool to what must be the latest invasion of privacy. You could find yourself in a digital line up just by going shopping. The system has also been installed at the Tampa Super Bowl and casinos like the Trump Marina and Foxwoods Resort.

Visage is now in talks to install this new technology in malls and retail shops and accordingly will be able to capture your image as you walk down the street, automatically determine your location and identity and call you on your mobile saying, "Mr Sap, we see that you're in Jermyn Street. Are you interested in our offer on tailor made shirts today?"

Quick, get me a paper bag before I get Egg-on-Face.

## Our Man in Europe



**Spam, Spam, Spam and Spam!** Although websites in Europe have tighter privacy laws than the US, they are no better at informing their visitors how they intend to use their data. The UK based advocacy group Consumers International found that the majority of European sites examined gave users no choice about being included on mailing lists or having their names passed on to third parties.

I have just been offered a CD with over 20 million email addresses with their named individuals for US\$140 for unlimited use and without any restrictions.

International "guidelines" are completely ignored by the majority of the 751 sites examined in the survey. The study also found that 67% of the sites collect at least some personal information, such as email and name, and almost all asked for detailed information on the individual. Despite our Euro laws being far tighter than the US, it is more likely that you will have a choice about being on a mailing list in the States than in the EU.

**Big Brother.** No, not that nauseating program about a house full of social misfits that seems to grip the attention of amphibians amongst us, this is BIG BROTHER. Interactive TV has taken off in America and is starting to make an impact on this side of the Atlantic. There is a growing concern that there is a massive collation of viewer information, including parental status and income range.

Some of the companies developing these intrusive applications in the US, like AT&T, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation and Proctor & Gamble are also over here. "Through the development of hardware and software these companies are creating a new TV infrastructure that will engage in unprecedented data collection, along with new and potentially deceptive marketing practices," said Jeff Chester at the CDD.

So, are we going to have another toothless voluntary code to control iTV or will the Brussels juggernaut lumber in and create a stealth censorship law. Luckily I have neither the time nor the inclination to watch the rubbish being pumped into our houses. What wavelength is the Home Service?

## Our Man in Europe



**The Untouchables.** Colleagues of mine have just had to be reminded that it is usually better to forget the Indians and stick with the Cowboys. How do you like this one? A company supplies the UK office of an Indian call centre with over a million records about which it receives no complaints, and they just nick it. Simple, they are a multi national corporation based in Mumbai, and if you want your money, you take them to court over here, get judgement, go to the Foreign Office who will then send the documents to our Embassy who will then serve them over there. If you're lucky you will see your money in one to four years. These guys know that the British courts effectively protect them by making the process of debt retrieval slow and expensive and as a large multinational they can simply ignore all ethics and moral codes and steal your data.

Several large companies are innocently allowing access to their data to these crooks. Oh, and another point, the UK office which handles a considerable amount of UK consumer data is not even registered with the Data Protection Registrar.

**Au Naturel Telesales.** My first distasteful piece on how a call centre can take the shirt off your back is somewhat compensated for by the Dutch who have perfected the art. Having worked in Holland I was able to appreciate the liberal office atmosphere, the revealing dress down code on Fridays and the cool laid back approach to life. A call centre in Rotterdam has been trying a new recruiting pitch for staff. The company is allowing staff to work in the nude as a spokesman commented, "it doesn't matter what you wear because the client does not see you and it is just a small step from there to working naked."

The company which operates a separate business unit as Au Naturel Telesales, has been bombarded with applicants. We place a fair amount of work with call centres and usually nobody wants to go and audit the facilities. As you might guess, there is a queue of volunteers and somehow I get the impression that price and facilities won't even cross their minds!

## Our Man In Europe



Rupert Suren

**Poles apart.** While the Poles wait anxiously to join the EU they have blindly and wholeheartedly taken some of the routes to naive extremes. In a country where privacy meant nothing a few years ago with the state apparatus virtually watching your every move, Poland has now become so ridiculously politically correct that it is becoming virtually

**Mine's a large one.** Last week I attended an excellent seminar given by an Australian by the name of Malcolm Auld and organised by Drayton Bird. I didn't recognise anyone there from the world of Direct Marketing. You missed a lot, not least the lovely Natasha from Calor Gas who was urgently looking for a number of lists.

I found it fascinating just how far ahead of the Brits the Aussies are with eMarketing. Their levels of service and entrepreneurship again demonstrate the hardworking, innovative and imaginative work ethos that has made their country so refreshing. What publican in the UK would have the idea of having a website where people can put money behind the bar for their relations touring Australia using PayPal?