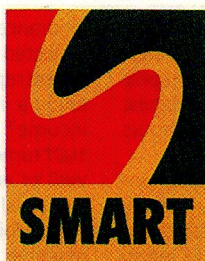


Shell action abandoned

The long-running and acrimonious dispute between Shell UK and sales promotion agency Don Marketing has ended following a statement released by both parties last month. The dispute centred on Don Marketing's claim that Shell stole its idea for the Smart loyalty scheme. John Donovan, managing director of Don Marketing, took legal action against Shell claiming breach of contract and misuse of confidential information. Shell counter-sued him for breach of confidentiality.

Mr Donovan claims that between 1989 and 1992 he had a series of meetings with Shell where he outlined plans for a card-based, multi-brand loyalty scheme. Two years



after Mr Donovan's last meeting with Shell where he was apparently assured of involvement if the scheme went ahead, Shell launched a trial of its Smart card without him.

In last month's statement it was announced that Mr Donovan had abandoned his claim against Shell and his related libel proceedings, and had acknowledged that the claims were without foundation and should not have been brought. It said he had also withdrawn all allegations of impropriety made against Shell or its employees in connection with these proceedings and has agreed not to repeat them. For its part, Shell acknowledged the proceedings were brought in good faith.

Rock 'n' roll opening

The Texaco service station in Slateford Road, Edinburgh, which has been rebuilt to incorporate a new Spar store, was relaunched last month by Elvis impersonator Jesse Garron, who is used in the Spar tele-

vision campaign. He entertained a large crowd with a selection of rock 'n' roll numbers. The site is the first in Scotland to feature imagery from the new Millennium Spar store package. It will be open 24 hours a day.



◆ Both Shell and Esso have re-introduced their '2p off a litre of fuel on a spend of £15 or more' promotions. Jet's aim is to retain its low-priced fuel brand position. The Esso deal is one of a series of 'Esso 2000' special offers.



◆ Rick Hamm (left) is the new chairman of Conoco Ltd, the UK refining and marketing subsidiary of Conoco Inc, which markets the Jet brand.



COMMENT

It's merry-go-round time again. Before the dust has settled on one merger, the newly conjoined organisation is off on another takeover jaunt. It's not even that the dust hasn't settled – in many cases the surface hasn't even been touched.

In the UK the staff of what were once Total Oil GB and Fina plc and who no longer have a future with the merged company have not even packed up their pencils and left yet. The two companies are still operating out of separate premises. The retailers are still operating under separate brands. No strategy has yet been announced for dealing with the merging of the two networks. It doesn't bear thinking about if a third company comes into the equation. It's a stressful time for everyone – both at head office and on the forecourts – wondering if they'll be the ones to get the chop after years of commitment. And there would be lots of upheaval, because the key criterion for merging in this market is to cut costs.

People have put their heart and soul into developing their businesses, and suddenly it can become meaningless – for head office staff it's the promotions, the shop formats, the network strategy, the building of relationships with retailers. And retailers could find themselves looking for an alternative, but dwindling choice of supplier.

And all at a time when everyone in our industry needs to be at their sharpest to fight the relentless competition not only in fuel but in convenience retailing. We may not like to hear the criticisms, but it's true, we still haven't got the forecourt convenience offer sewn up yet. But with the talent we have in our industry, that doesn't mean it can't be done.

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EDITOR