

My biggest mistake

John Donovan, managing director, Don Marketing

John Donovan, whose lengthy dispute with Shell is set to hit the courtroom in two weeks' time, wishes he had never got entangled with the oil giant. His second biggest mistake happened back in 1979.

"It was the early days of Don Marketing and I was presenting to the American TV networks. I had a breakfast meeting with CBS, followed by a meeting with



Donovan: "buggered" it up big time

NBC's vice-president for advertising, W Watts Biggers, known universally as Buck Biggers.

"When I was ushered into a room packed with the entire NBC board, I got rather flustered and addressed Buck Biggers as Big Buggers. There was a terrible silence, he went scarlet and I could have died. It was a truly dreadful moment. The last I heard of Buck Biggers, he was running his own restaurant just off Cape Cod."

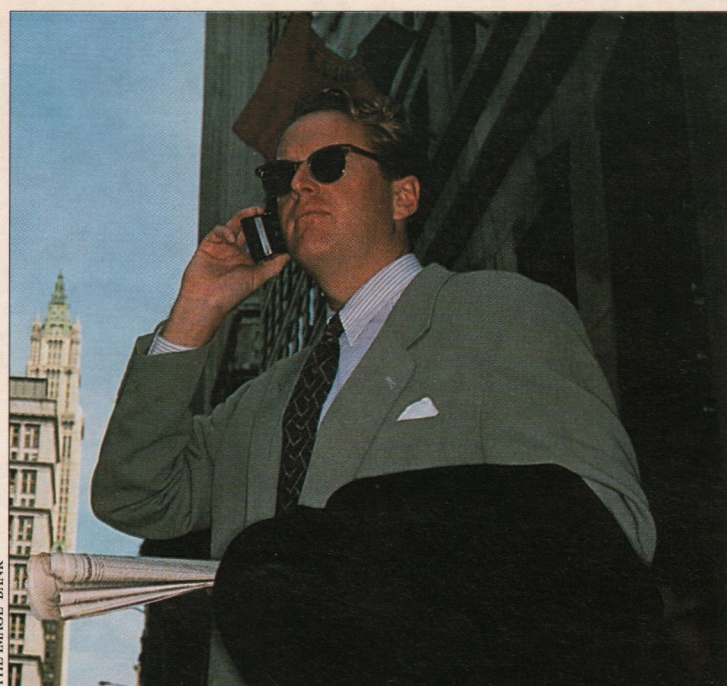
I'll name that brand in one!



This week's mystery brand was named after Harry Pickup, the man who invented it in his own kitchen. Originally a by-product of the First World War munitions industry, the product went on to pioneer a whole new market. Pickup sold his brainchild in 1933 and national advertising then turned it into a marketing triumph. The brand-leading product now claims a 19% share of its £62m market. If you recognise the pack featured here, which dates back to 1970, phone 0800 106011 and leave your name, address and the answer. The first correct answer picked out by our electronic selector will win a bottle of champagne.



The winner of last week's competition is Kate Waddell of Large Smith and Walford who correctly identified Maxwell House. Congratulations, the bubbly's on its way.



Phone marketers: not as bad as some would have us believe

LETTER OF THE WEEK

In praise of service

From Simon Cole, chief executive, the Unique Broadcasting Company, London NW1

I read Drayton Bird's piece in *Marketing* this week – "Loads of money is left dangling on the end of a line" – (March 23) with interest and find myself heartily endorsing the generality while strongly disagreeing with the specifics.

I must agree that I too find the extent to which the "service culture" has failed to touch much of the UK's service industry regrettable and frustrating.

However, if I were to compile a "service" top ten of companies with whom I have dealt as a customer, the two you mention would certainly be close to the top of it.

Having bought a phone from Carphone Warehouse three years ago and had it connected to Aztec (with Vodafone airtime), I have, on several occasions, tested both companies.

My phone has been stolen twice – on each occasion the Carphone Warehouse had a new one in my

hand and connected the same day. Two weeks ago, my phone was "cloned" (a stolen phone is given my number) – the Aztec computer spotted the illegal use after only a few "rogue" calls and shut it down.

Aztec contacted me immediately, credited my entire direct debit for that month with no questions, while the calls are investigated and have offered to replace the phone with a brand new one for free or upgrade me.

I know that both these companies use sophisticated technology to aid the customer care they offer – another concept that the UK is painfully slow to embrace.

If such efforts are not recognised where they do exist, what hope have we to encourage others out of the malaise of mediocrity that represents much of our service industry? □



Not just a pretty marketing face

From David Lubbock, account director, the Target Practice, Wimbledon, London SW19

Regarding your article of March 23, "Cosmetics Industry Gets DM Makeover", we wish to correct your view that it is a new departure.

We have been operating a highly sophisticated database for Elizabeth Arden for nearly five years now. The Personal Programme has been extremely successful and now emulated by both other Elizabeth Arden markets and competitors throughout the world.

We modestly suggest that this, rather more so than Heinz, may have influenced others in this sector. □



Make-up: Elizabeth Arden had impact

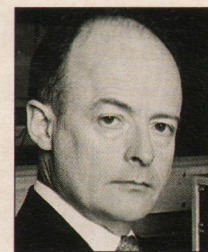
This week's prize of a bottle of award-winning Singleton malt whisky goes to Simon Cole (see above).

Please send your letters to: ● Post: Mike Hewitt, The Editor, Marketing, 30 Lancaster Gate, London W2 3LP

● Fax: 0171 413 4504; ● E-Mail: Compuserve 100433; 2576 We will need your name, company name, job title and daytime phone number. Marketing reserves the right to edit letters as necessary.

MEDIA SPEAK

Don't fire me, I'm only your auditor with the results



Alec Kenny

Imagine the scenario. You visit your doctor and ask him to look you over. Having conducted a thorough examination, he gives you a clean bill of health. You shake his hand and make an appointment to see him in six months' time for another check-up.

You next go to your media auditor and ask him for an evaluation. Like the doctor, he has a careful look and pronounces that everything is fine. Your reaction? You fire him.

The fact is, clients don't expect media auditors to say everything is OK. They want them to find something is wrong.

And as any media plan or buy can be criticised – as can any piece of creative work – it isn't hard for auditors to find something to comment on.

Cynical? Not really. Sadly, it's a reflection of the times. Twenty years of rising media costs and an expansion of media choice undoubtedly means it's far easier to get media wrong than it used to be. It is also more difficult to decide if a plan is "right" or a piece of buying the "best". Yet advertisers make judgements on advertising strategy and creative work without recourse to a third party (excluding research that is).

In an era of new media opportunities, is a media person who is being audited really going to be innovative and brave? Since, inevitably, the risk of making a mistake is greater. If

The fact is, clients don't expect media auditors to say everything is OK. They want auditors to find something, somewhere is wrong

you believe (as I do) that good relationships contribute to good work, it is questionable if such an environment is ideal. Furthermore, as the proliferation of media makes it more difficult for an advertising message to be noticed, qualitative judgements are often necessary to achieve the competitive edge. How can people who have never worked in an advertising agency, evaluate them? Without that experience, being absorbed in strategy debate and discussions about creative routes, can somebody really sit in judgement and contribute to the debate? Undoubtedly one of the areas of friction is an experienced operator having his or her work commented on by someone who has been involved for a relatively short time and who has no experience of media planning or buying.

Having said that it is the advertiser's right to appoint who he likes, how can the current situation be improved?

First, recognise that no two people will agree on a media performance any more than they will a piece of creative work. Comments are inevitable, some will be critical, so at the end of the day the advertiser may have to decide whether to believe the agency/independent or the auditor.

Second, given the increased complexity of the media, look at the qualifications of those evaluating the work. Have they had practical experience? Can they make qualitative judgements?

Third, let the auditor know they won't be fired if they find nothing to criticise.

Finally, as a believer that client involvement makes an enormous contribution to great work, get involved. This may mean employing a media specialist. Many companies do and these advertisers undoubtedly benefit from this expertise and involvement. This may mean that an auditor is not required. Either way the existence of such a person or people will enrich the relationship and lead to better work. Alec Kenny is a former sales director of Talk Radio