

Every picture tells a (dodgy) story

You have to admit that Edi FitzGerald, the Konica Kid, is a trier. As marketing and sales manager of Konishiroku UK, he called the photographic press and hangers-on like me to a reception last week at the offices of his PR agency, Carl Byoir, for 'news of yet another world first'.

Of course, there were all sorts of goodies like champagne and canapés, and Glynis and Sarah in leotards to be leered at through camera viewfinders—and even films to put in those same cameras, for those who wanted to make use of them.

The occasion for these jollities was the launch of a new Konica camera, which, FitzGerald boldly claimed, would 'sound the death knell of the disc camera,' developed by Kodak and launched internationally at enormous expense in 1982. He excused the lack of similar extravagance on his part by saying that this news needed no dressing up—it stood on its own two legs.

So what is this amazing new camera, designated the AA35? Well, it looks rather like a disc camera, but, at £89, it is in the same price bracket as the fast



FitzGerald: Leg to stand on?

growing 'compacts'.

Like the best of them, it has auto everything—auto wind, auto focus and so on. And, like them, it uses 35mm film.

The major difference is that it uses a half-frame format, producing 72 pictures from a 36-frame cassette. But that's not necessarily an advantage when the processors charge so much per exposure anyway.

Disc cameras have been criticised because the negative is so small that the enlarged photographs tend to be 'grainy'. And the same is likely to be true of Konica's new half-frame format. So it's not so much a question of the news standing on its own two legs, as whose leg Edi is trying to pull.

MARKETER'S DIARY

Profile: Reed's temporary troubles



Reed: Marketer by instinct

Accountants being, in many people's minds, the opposite of marketers, it is rare for one to be featured in this column. However, Alec Reed—whose company, Reed Employment, will report its results this week, on his 50th birthday—is different.

Reed is a marketer by instinct, and owes his financial training to a mum who packed him off to evening classes four nights a week to learn to be a company secretary. What set him off on his own was signing cheques in favour of Brook Street Bureau, while working as an accountant for Gillette.

'I thought that perhaps this was the kind of business I could run,' he says. 'I didn't necessarily want to make a lot of money. I just wanted to be self-employed.'

Like rivals Brook Street and Alfred Marks, he is strongly represented in the high street, and for his pains has suffered a couple of bad years as the recession depressed demand, leaving him saddled with high fixed costs.

Nevertheless, trade is now improving again, and Reed is bouncing back with some new marketing ideas. For a start, he's trying to reposition Reed Employment as a particularly quality conscious agency. This means a double interview system to weed out 'grotty' temps, plus a new team

of quality controllers whose job will be to ensure that both clients and temps are happy. 'Ombudsmen' are also being appointed to resolve disputes with clients.

'We have really tried to rethink the quality question, and I think the rest of the industry will follow our lead,' says Reed. 'Unlike manufacturing, it is very difficult to get quality control in a service industry.'

Reed prides himself on his sometimes outrageous or eccentric ideas. For instance, he's spent much of the past year revitalising another part of the group, the 31-store Medicare retail chain, and seems to have succeeded, in part by introducing some fairly wild sales promotion schemes.

The first of these was a 'Big Foot' sale, an intriguing way of promoting foot care. Last month, instead of competing head-on with other stores' January sales, he arranged in-store birthday parties for the chain's mascot, Medi-Bear.

'Before these promotions began, we had tried to be another Superdrug,' Reed says. 'We decided we needed a personality of our own. When I proposed the Big Foot sale, the staff thought I'd finally gone round twist, but when it increased store traffic by 10% they saw what I was getting at.'

Medicare is expanding again, with five new branches planned. But while Reed was still wrestling with the chain's difficulties, he called in one day at a branch of Sainsbury.

His intention was simply to get another angle on the high street problem, but the result was that he recruited the Sainsbury manager, Tony Bourke, to be managing director of Medicare, and another Sainsbury man, Mike Trim, to be his deputy.

Getting the right man is an essential part of Reed's management philosophy. 'Staff selection and motivation are so important,' he says. 'In many ways, it's personnel skills that run a company. My theory is that company chairmen should all be personnel managers.'

Still at ABM, he followed this up with a Guinness 'Beat the Experts' game, which ran in 22,000 pubs. That particular game was devised by Don Marketing, the games specialist behind Shell's Make Money.

Chambers has now moved to Don as managing director. Thus, he can claim an involvement with the biggest multi-brand, the biggest drinks and the biggest petrol promotions. His ambition now is to wean the national newspapers off bingo...

Why Cuthbert's sales pitch is in tents

The last time I met Jim Cuthbert, he was wrestling with a diet that recommended eating like a king in the morning and a pauper in the evening. None too successfully, either; his natural inclination is to eat like a king at all times.

Now, it seems that whenever I tune in to Channel 4 it's screening a Canvas Holidays commercial, with his soft Scots burr behind it. He's another of those businessmen forced by the IPA/Equity dispute to try DIY advertising.

Even though it took him a dozen takes to get the voice-over right, he insists that 'there's a lot to be said for the chap who is involved with the business coming across as part of the character of the company'.

Cuthbert's entry into the travel trade came late in a career which included spells with the Independent Television Authority (forerunner of the IBA), ATV, Rank and GEC.

He and his wife Margaret were



Cuthberts: Enthusiastic campers

enthusiastic campers on the Continent, and eventually, as a part-time business venture, put up some tents of their own in Normandy and Brittany.

It started slowly. Their first ad brought in three replies, of which two were converted into sales. But 18 years on, Canvas Holidays claims market leadership and a reputation for pioneering luxury features like real refrigerators and loos in tents.

Cuthbert has aimed very much at the professional and management market, and charges accordingly. Still, he claims that 60% of bookings are repeat business, and three quarters of the rest are made on the recommendation of friends. In fact, his one worry about the Channel 4 campaign is that it may be casting the net too wide, by bringing in lots of requests for brochures, but not enough conversions.

Diary by Ken Gofton

Fast flowing Don

Shell's current Make Money game, which has set off a price cutting war among the petrol giants, completes a hat trick of 'biggest ever' promotions in the UK for John Chambers.

Three years ago, as sales promotion boss at Allen Brady and Marsh, he put together a massive British Rail multi-brand promotion, involving nine different companies, including Procter and Gamble and Unilever.