



Corpse-metic surgery

Undertakers are reporting an increase in last requests for plastic surgery and botox. Even death is no longer an excuse to let yourself go.



'Obama' the adjective
As in "OMG, that is SO Obama!"

Professional book group facilitators

Are being brought on board to keep book group bossy boots in line. Only in New York.



Pop lullabies

Forget 'Rock-a-bye Baby' – today's tots are drifting off to the dulcet tones of Take That, Katy Perry and er, Guns 'n' Roses.

Evening flats

Say good riddance to killer heels and embrace this season's sweet-and-lowdown Cinderella slippers.



Champagne

The bubble has finally burst for the rich man's cava, as The Economist reports that the fizzy stuff is the latest victim of the credit crunch.

Jamie: the magazine

Is there no end to the torment?



Romcoms

Reason not to watch them #173: new research confirms that they are ruining our relationships by giving us unrealistic expectations about love.

Burger King

For giving us the gift of Eau de Whopper with its new Flame scent.



James King, Trainee Planner/Buyer, brings us up to speed on just how many swear words advertisers can get away with



If you hear the earth move, for once it's not the roadworks in Edinburgh, but the sound of Mary Whitehouse turning in her grave at the Advertising Standards Agency's decision to approve the use of the word 'feck' in advertising campaigns.

The term – made famous by the genius 90s television comedy Father Ted – has been used in posters promoting Magners cider, in which a man tells bees to "feck off". The company has already had scores of complaints from irate parents concerned that children would see the advert and become foul-mouthed hoodlums overnight.

While Magners argue that the advertisement is harmless, experts and Mr. Joe Public are adamant that the advert uses 'feck' as a euphemism for the F-word. The ASA has responded by saying that the use of the word would not offend adults, nor was it unsuitable to be seen or heard by children.

The word 'arse' is already suitable for broadcast pre-watershed on national TV and Radio. This, however, is a first for National Outdoor advertising. Only last month the ASA banned the Sun from using the word 'bloody' on an outdoor truck advertisement. The body disagreed with the newspaper's assertion that the word 'bloody' was a generally acceptable mild epithet, and noted that previous complaints about the use of the word in outdoor advertising had also been upheld.

In today's market brands are keen to stretch their campaign budgets by pushing the ASA to consider more and more risqué creative concepts.

So if 'bloody' is banned and 'feck' is OK, which expletives are next in line for the glossy ad treatment? The ASA says that other adverts containing similar swear words will be judged on a "case-by-case basis". It maintains that this is not a precedent-setting decision and warns that it should not start a 'free-for-all' on profanities.

It would seem that if the rules can't be broken, they can feckin' well be bent.

Nikki Gilmour, Communications Strategist, discusses the lost art of kindness...



I'd like to share with you what I believe to be a truly brilliant essay published in the Guardian Review earlier this month: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/jan/03/society-politics>

The article runs to some nine pages so allow me to summarise: kindness is dead.

Adam Phillips and Barbara Taylor (just Taylor, not Bradford) put it much more eloquently:

"Most people appear to believe that deep down they (and other people) are mad, bad and dangerous to know; that as a species - apparently unlike other species of animal - we are deeply and fundamentally antagonistic to each other, that our motives are utterly self-seeking and that our sympathies are forms of self-protectiveness.

Kindness - not sexuality, not violence, not money - has become our forbidden pleasure. In one sense kindness is always hazardous because it is based on a susceptibility to others, a capacity to identify with their pleasures and sufferings. Putting oneself in someone else's shoes, as the saying goes, can be very uncomfortable. But if the pleasures of kindness - like all the greatest human pleasures - are inherently perilous, they are none the less some of the most satisfying we possess."

I am convinced there is a learning herein for, believe it or not, brands. Yes, brands - the very pillars of capitalism. The economic downturn represents a great opportunity for brands to show some compassion and understanding for their consumers (and store up some goodwill while they're at it).

'Nichetributes' are a great example of how brands could achieve this. The trend-spotting gurus at www.trendwatching.com coined the term, which denotes adding features/attributes to existing products, making them more attractive to specific user groups, while at the same time signalling to those users that the brand 'gets' it, that it cares. For consumers, anything practical and useful will go down well in these leaner times, while anything that speaks their language will be reciprocated with appreciation and goodwill.

N.B. This trend is NOT about tailoring your advertising message; it IS about tailoring your product.

So, there you have it. Be kinder. If there's a better New Year's resolution out there, for individuals or for brands, I've yet to hear it.

Five ways to spend your time or money this month:

• **Apply for a job as an island-sitter!** The Australian tourist board is advertising for the post of caretaker of Hamilton island in the Great Barrier Reef. 'Duties' will involve: feeding turtles, watching whales and picking up the island's post. In return, the successful applicant will enjoy a £70k salary (for just 12 hours work per month) and a free house. Where do we sign?



• Taste the sweet taste of victory with Ben & Jerry's iced homage to Obama, the delightfully-titled '**Yes, Pecan!**'



• Do your bit for the environment and **take a navy shower this January**. Directions: turn on the water, get wet, turn off the water, lather up and scrub-a-dub-dub, then turn on the water again and rinse. This is said to cut water and energy consumption by a staggering 83%.



• **Compliment your girlfriend!** According to a recent survey, less than a quarter of men "often" tell their loved ones they look good. Tell us something we didn't know, survey boffins! Feelgood for free!

• **Mint.** This new money-managing website syncs up with your various bank accounts, loans, credit cards and investments and, based on your personal income, sets up a default budget for you. Now there's no excuse.

