

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Charm Offensive CEO Reaches Out To Director of Communications of Sony Music UK.

London, England – January 16, 2017 - In an unexpected move, Jon Buchan, CEO, Charm Offensive is believed to have sent a completely unsolicited letter to Indy Vee, Director of Communications, Sony Music UK. It is understood that Mr Buchan is offering advice, support and a “priceless” gift - a sticker containing an amusing picture of a dog wearing a top hat and a monocle.

Ms Vee had been finalising "an extremely innovative campaign" when the news broke.

"I'm not sure exactly what is going on at this point," said Ms Vee. "Until today, I'd never even heard of Mr Buchan or his brilliant agency."

In recent months, Mr Buchan has "been shouting from the rooftops that his agency's “Content Stunt” offering is a valuable addition to the toolkit of any modern PR or marketing professional." At press time, he had safely returned to his desk, deciding it would be a better use of this time to write directly to potential clients.

Ms Vee has not yet decided whether to take the baffling but kind hearted approach seriously.

"I'm a little suspicious this whole affair is just a stunt to drum up business for Mr Buchan's agency."

At the time of reading, it is unknown whether Ms Vee will respond to Mr Buchan or just throw this piece of paper in the trash before getting on with actual work.

About

Charm Offensive is a daring agency filled with creative individuals far more talented than Mr Buchan. Our capacity to build spectacular, interactive, animated and sentient* content could be a useful weapon to add to your arsenal.

*We have not as yet been able to develop content capable of thoughts and feelings.

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Line-by-line Analysis

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London, England – January 16, 2017 -

This follows the format press releases use. I had [to search Google Images for “press release template”](#) to know what this format was. Even though I did tons of outreach for link building and PR purposes for our clients, I never once sent a press release.

[The press release format I copied](#) had the contact information at the bottom of the email, rather than the top, which many of the other templates used.

In an unexpected move, Jon Buchan, CEO, Charm Offensive is believed to have sent a completely unsolicited letter to Indy Vee, Director of Communications, Sony Music UK.

The copy begins and is immediately self-referential. This is a press release about a ‘press release.’

The recipient will immediately sense some cheeky shenanigans are at play. This should keep them reading. If I were to redo this copy, I’d remove the word “completely”. It’s not needed. I may have added it for comic effect - trying to add some form of exaggeration. However, more likely, it’s because everything I wrote back then was a first draft. I didn’t edit anything. This has served me well to this day as I’ve gotten damn good at writing first drafts at speed that work.

It is understood that Mr Buchan is offering advice, support and a “priceless” gift - a sticker containing an amusing picture of a dog wearing a top hat and a monocle.

Let’s break this down into more easily digestible chunks.

It is understood that Mr Buchan

Note the use of formal language. It’s these details that make it possible for you to masquerade as the type of media you’re trying to parody. Without these bits, the funny bits don’t work. You need the serious elements to play it straight, so the funny bits are surprising and deliver the payoff for the reader that you desire; smirks, smiles, and audible chortles.

I should note that this style of writing is less like a press release and more like a satirical article from [The Onion](#). Or maybe a lesser satirical site, as the writers at The Onion are more talented than me.

If you want to get better at writing this kind of stuff, I highly recommend gorging on as many articles from The Onion as possible. You should check out some of their videos on their YouTube channel from around 2010-2014. I haven’t watched any more recent ones - so I’m not sure if the quality is still there, but I imagine it is.

I could perhaps create a list of articles and videos for that I personally enjoy. If you’d like this, let me know in an email to jon@charm-offensive.co.uk. If I get enough folks requesting it, I’ll write it.

... is offering advice, support and a “priceless” gift - a sticker containing an amusing picture of a dog wearing a top hat and a monocle.

This uses the Comic Triple format.

advice

Nothing funny about that.

support

Again, nothing funny about that.

and a “priceless” gift - a sticker containing an amusing picture of a dog wearing a top hat and a monocle.

OK, that was unexpected. A sudden detour from the boring formality that came before it.

In the physical letters I sent, I had made stickers of the cute animal I had decided to include in whatever campaign I was running.

When sending on email, I'd include them as attachments and change the copy appropriately.

I've pasted an explanation of the Comic Triple I wrote for the Charm Offensive Facebook Group back in 2017 below.

Structure: [SENSIBLE] - [SENSIBLE] - [SILLY]

“The rule of three, law of three, or power of three is a writing principle that suggests that things that come in threes are funnier, more satisfying, or more effective than other numbers of things. The reader or audience of this form of text is also thereby more likely to remember the information. This is because having three entities combines both brevity and rhythm with having the smallest amount of information to create a pattern. It makes the author or speaker appear knowledgeable while being both simple and catchy.”

The key to using the power of three for humour purposes is to disrupt the pattern on the 3rd and final word. This creates a “Comic Triple.” It's one of the most basic joke formulas in comedy and helpfully, it works exceptionally well.

Example:

“You can reach me on the phone, through email, or by deploying carrier pigeons.”

1. Phone - Normal/Expected

2. Normal - Normal/Expected

3. What?!

This formula is probably the easiest of all the joke formulas. Don't use it more than once or twice in a particular email or letter, as the reader will pick up what you're doing - and it will no longer be a surprise or funny. Being able to hide your punchlines is one of the most critical, if not the most critical aspects of writing anything funny.

Here's the image I posted with the explanation of The Comic Triple when I originally posted it in my Facebook Group. Enjoy! :D

1 2



Ms Vee had been finalising "an extremely innovative campaign" when the news broke.

To fit with the format, I referred to people in formal terms. I was able to do this as I was buying data at the time, and this came with full addresses and formal titles.

I made sure to make the prospect's imaginary quote something positive or complimentary. Something the prospect wouldn't mind coming out of their mouths. It was also suitably vague, so it could fit any of the prospects I was targeting.

"I'm not sure exactly what is going on at this point," said Ms Vee. "Until today, I'd never even heard of Mr Buchan or his brilliant agency."

BOOOM! This is one of the three funniest bits.

This is what I call the "Words in their mouth" technique. I deployed this earlier but used it to say something serious. That was the setup. They've already a quote attributed to them, but it was a mundane quote.

Then they get presented with a second quote attributed to them.

"I'm not sure exactly what is going on at this point," said Ms Vee.

The first line mentions their confusion. Notice, again, the use of the formal title when attributing the imaginary quote.

This first line is exaggerated, as the prospect will have almost certainly realised this is a crafty cold pitch at this point.

However, there is a degree of truth to it. They're reading this and thinking, *"This isn't like the other crap cold pitches I get..."*

"Until today, I'd never even heard of Mr Buchan or his brilliant agency."

Then they're hit with this. Once again, I use a formal title when mentioning me. I don't put "Jon" as that would detour too much from the format I'm trying to parody.

Then the payoff comes right at the end:

or his brilliant agency.

Suddenly, they've found they're now inexplicably complimenting my company. This should raise a smirk at worst and an audible chortle at best. Now we've got that, they're more than likely going to keep reading the rest of the pitch. Better than that, they're reading it while under the intoxicating influence of humour.

As a general note, when writing funny lines, you should seek to make the payoff as close to the end of the sentence as possible.

I believe it was Scottish comedian Frankie Boyle who once said, *"I get to make a living from ending sentences in a weird way."*

That's not the exact quote, but you get the idea.

In recent months, Mr Buchan has "been shouting from the rooftops that his agency's "Content Stunt" offering is a valuable addition to the toolkit of any modern PR or marketing professional." At press time, he had safely returned to his desk, deciding it would be a better use of this time to write directly to potential clients.

This is my favourite bit of the entire pitch.

In recent months, Mr Buchan has

Again, I must point out the use of formal titles to fit with the format.

"been shouting from the rooftops that his agency's "Content Stunt" offering is a valuable addition to the toolkit of any modern PR or marketing professional." At press time, he had safely returned to his desk, deciding it would be a better use of this time to write directly to potential clients.

I remember coming up with this bit. I'd already written "*been shouting from the rooftops that his agency's "Content Stunt" offering is a valuable addition to the toolkit of any modern PR or marketing professional.*"

For those of you whom English is not your mother tongue, I feel I should mention that "shouting from the rooftops" is an idiom well known to my prospects. I knew my prospects were mostly native English speakers or fluent in the English language and all of its nuances.

For the sake of completeness, I've included a definition of idiom.



idiom

/ˈɪdɪəm/

noun

1. a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words (e.g. *over the moon*, *see the light*).

Collins Dictionary explains the definition of this idiom:

Definition of 'shout from the rooftops'

shout from the rooftops

in British English

to proclaim (something) publicly

Notice that this is the first mention of what I'm pitching. This is the first sales line. It's deliberately delivered after I've attempted to make the prospect laugh, with the *"brilliant agency"* bit.

At press time, he had safely returned to his desk, deciding it would be a better use of this time to write directly to potential clients.

I then realised I could add humour to this by reframing the idiom as if I meant it literally.

This provides an amusing visual image from the reader. They're imagining me shouting from the rooftops of my offices, before realising this absurd promotional tactic was inefficient. I then made the wise decision to climb down from the roof, head to my desk, and begin writing the cold pitch they are in the process of reading.

The word "safely" is added to make this visual image more amusing. As most of us aren't parkour specialists, climbing up to the roof of an office is a dangerous, precarious exercise. You can imagine me gingerly trying to return to safety.

Ms Vee has not yet decided whether to take the baffling but kind hearted approach seriously.

Once again, a formal title is used.

baffling but kind hearted approach seriously.

I always try to reference what the prospect might be thinking as they read my cold pitch.

They might indeed be quite baffled by the approach, as it's unorthodox and irreverent, and unlike all of the other tame, boring unsolicited messages they get every day.

I then temper this by saying, *"but kind hearted."* If I were to write this pitch again, I'd change it to "light-hearted", which is more accurate. Poor word selection on my part. If I'd taken 10 minutes to edit my copy, I'd have fixed this at the time.

"I'm a little suspicious this whole affair is just a stunt to drum up business for Mr Buchan's agency."

This exaggerates the truth. The prospect will be fully aware at this point that this is a cheeky cold pitch.

Again, I use the formal title to stick within the structure of the format I'm trying to parody.

At the time of reading, it is unknown whether Ms Vee will respond to Mr Buchan or just throw this piece of paper in the trash before getting on with actual work.

This copy is taken from the "direct mail" version of this pitch. If I were to send this on email, I'd change the copy to something like, *"At the time of reading, it is unknown whether Ms Vee will respond to Mr Buchan or just delete this email without a second thought before getting on with actual work."*

This makes the cold pitch almost "real-time."

I'm pointing out a thought the prospect will genuinely have at this point and then make a joke out of it.

This comes back to one of the key principles of writing charming copy: When you can call out the elephant in the room, do it.

The first line of my original drunk cold email does the same:

Greetings Susan,

You've never heard of me. (Hi, I'm Jon). I got your details from a list *gasp*. But hey - at least you're list-worthy, that's gotta be something, right :-)

Whereas everyone else would not admit the fact I've not relentlessly researched the prospect, and instead of merely bought a list from a supplier of such data, I mention it in the very first line.

Such refreshing honesty is disarming. I then try to turn this into a compliment by suggesting that belonging on such lists shows they're of the professional stature necessary to be included on such lists.

About

Charm Offensive is a daring agency filled with creative individuals far more talented than Mr Buchan. Our capacity to build spectacular, interactive, animated and sentient* content could be a useful weapon to add to your arsenal.

*We have not as yet been able to develop content capable of thoughts and feelings.

This element is again taken from the [press release structure](#) I was seeking to replicate.

This includes a pitch for my agency. If I were to write it again, I'd mention some of the benefits of content marketing. I'd need to be succinct, as these "About" sections are generally short. Again, with a quick edit, I would have noticed this and made this amendment.

sentient*

*We have not as yet been able to develop content capable of thoughts and feelings.

*Asterisk humour is something I use a lot. This is where I make a statement, and then retract it immediately afterwards. In effect, it's the small print saying I was well... stretching the truth.

I made sure to make my white lie something so absurd that nobody would think I was serious. The small print then delivers an honest admission, as if the prospect needed it. :D

Contact

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I end how I started, adopting the structure of the format I was seeking to parody. I wanted the piece to appear, on a half a second glance, like it could be a genuine press release.

And with that, we are done, folks!

Message from Jon

Charmers,

I hope you enjoyed this guide. :-)

Send any feedback, questions, or declarations of love to jon@charm-offensive.co.uk. (Notice The Comic Triple here? Of course you did!)

If you liked it, you should check out [Charm Offensive Professional](#). This contains a wealth of material covering loads of my templates with analysis just like this. Some of it is in ebook format, some of it is in video format.

You'll also get access to every single Charming Copy Template I've ever made. And access to all of my courses, training videos, webinar recordings, ebooks, and every other product I've ever made.

I'm kind of glad the original Google Doc didn't work. I've been able to go into a lot more detail.

Have an absolutely wonderful day,

Jon