

HOW SHELL CONNED UK MOTORISTS

Shell senior management at Chairman level has made pledge after pledge in recent years guaranteeing to uphold the core principles of honesty, integrity, and openness, proclaimed in Shell's "Statement of General Business Principles".

Yet in my experience, when confronted by an unexpected ethical dilemma, Shell has almost always failed to honour the principles. Two incidents of a similar character provided classic examples of Shell ditching its core principles in favour of commercial expediency.

I am in possession of irrefutable documentary evidence that Shell knew right from the launch of the Nintendo and Make Money promotions that dishonest staff could pick out winning game pieces before they reached motorists on Shell forecourts. The multimillion-pound promotional schemes in 1993 and 1994 were undermined due to the gross incompetence of Shell manager, Mr Andrew Lazenby, who still works for Shell UK.

Shell was notified on the day the Nintendo promotion was launched that the game pieces were defective because it was possible for Shell staff to identify the prizes supposedly hidden under latex patches. Shell accepted that this was the case but continued with the promotion for its full term. Shell did not care about the flagrant dishonesty in Shell advertising and promoting a seriously flawed scheme.

Shell apparently learnt nothing whatsoever from the Nintendo debacle, as it subsequently produced the flawed 1994 Make Money game. At a stroke, Shell ruined a promotional concept that had deservedly acquired a legendary status as a result of its incredible success for Shell in 1966 and 1984.

Shell senior management knew from the outset that the 1994 Make Money promotion was so seriously flawed that all of the winning envelopes could potentially be extracted by dishonest staff before they reached motorists on Shell forecourts.

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Shell representatives, including Mr Alan Williams from Shell UK's Legal Department and Mr Peter Whyte from Shell UK Retail, attended a demonstration which proved conclusively that the game was hopelessly flawed. Shell management was informed in writing about the results. Shell subsequently deliberately obstructed an investigation by the Advertising Standards Authority into the flawed promotion. A journalist writing an article for a national newspaper has recently independently verified that the game pieces were defective.

Don Marketing, the agency that brought the glaring insecurity of the Make Money game to Shell's attention, made a written offer to Shell UK General Manager, Mr David Pirret, to reveal the precise nature of the defects. A reply came from Shell's lawyers saying Shell could see no advantage in knowing. In other words, Shell management preferred to turn a blind eye - to hell with the motorists who had expected that they were participating in an honest game. Shell even took steps to keep the information from reaching its own shareholders. Evidence proves that the cover-up extended right to the very top of the company.

Shell's conduct showed a breathtaking disregard of all ethical norms and utter contempt for motorists. It is impossible to reconcile such disreputable behaviour with the so-called "core principles". Shell management had the opportunity to prove its commitment to the principles. The fact that they failed in both instances to abide by them demonstrated that the "STATEMENT" is a sham.

By way of further background information, Don Marketing, the agency founded by my son and I, brought High Court Actions against Shell in respect of the Nintendo and Make Money promotions. Both claims (and a third DM action against Shell) were resolved in DM's favour. My son, John Donovan, has now brought a fourth action against Shell, this time in respect of the SMART multi-partner loyalty scheme, once again alleging misuse of confidential information and breach of contract.

Shell has admitted its association with undercover investigators who used deception and trickery when they made a clandestine visit to Don Marketing's offices. Shell has categorically denied any connection with subsequent sinister events, including further undercover activity, witness intimidation and burglaries at the homes of a number of people closely associated with my son's SMART claim against Shell.

Circulated to motorists, Shell staff and to "Forecourt Trader" by Alfred Donovan,
St Andrews Castle, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3PH. (Tel: 0411 526 76 9).