Editorial

Our first piece this quarter is a tripartite effort on the issues of privacy and data protection, which are of universal concern in direct marketing circles — and indeed in government. The approach to these matters, in government and industry, is somewhat different in the USA and in Europe, as Europe, historically, has not always been of one mind on the subject. We thought that a little cross-fertilisation might be in order; hence our choice of three authors.

So far, we have carried five papers on customer relationship management. In this issue we carry one by John Seddon which deals with the central place of call centres in CRM, and considers why so many of them do such a poor job. Most of Seddon's analysis and recommendations are equally applicable to both in-house and out-house call-centre operations, which tend, for all of the same reasons, to be equally mismanaged. But we were left at the end of this excellent paper with one question that the author does not, explicitly, address: if learning and meeting the needs, wishes, expectations and desires of the customer are, as CRM proponents maintain, central to the continued health of a business, and if the call centre is, as Seddon maintains, central to CRM, then how can any company contemplate outsourcing to a peripheral third party the primary (often only) point of contact with its central concern — its customers? Outsource by all means your production, your purchasing, your accounting, your marketing — but your customer relations? Are you mad? Or must we just assume that those companies that do this, while still talking of CRM, are not convinced of the centrality of customer relations at all, but merely mouthing the latest fashionable nostrums which they lack either the wit or the intention to implement? This latter view would be consistent with the appalling service we all regularly suffer from call centres (other people's, of course).

It can be no surprise that in this first issue of our second year we carry yet another paper dealing with CRM — this one by Berry, Pompa and Reid. In their view CRM is a tool for applying 'share of wallet' strategies in the financial services sector — although what they have to say about share of wallet has application well beyond financial services.

Charlotte Price provides this quarter's Legal and Regulatory Update — on the ITC's consultative paper on interactive services. Philip Moreland provides a New Technology Briefing on digital printing, on which he casts a cool, if not a cold, appraising eye. Interestingly, the *Goldfish Guide* case study that we also carry has found digital printing a necessary feature of its initial success, which is to be swiftly followed by an Internet launch.

As indicated above, this issue is the first of our second year with our present respected publisher, and under our present banner. So we thought we would like to hear from all of you, what you think of our efforts so far, and how you would like us to change. Hence the enclosed questionnaire. We know it is a nuisance, but honestly, with one or two exceptions you have not been the most forthcoming of readers this last year. Perhaps we are already giving you everything you ever wanted? We doubt it; but whether or not, do please just pick up your pen and let us have some feedback. We will publish the results — anonymously of course, to protect your privacy.

Derek Holder and Robin Fairlie
May 2000