



Energising the way folk view boring power bills

Simon Canning

ENERGY company Simply Energy has moved to shake up the energy market by giving its product away.

This week the company launched a promotion sending "Golden Bills" to selected customers who then have their bills for that quarter cancelled.

Simply Energy chief executive Domenic Capomolla said the energy retailer, owned by Power Australia, had been hunting for a way to bring the brand to the top of consumers' minds.

With more than 400,000 customers in Victoria and South Australia, the company had evolved its marketing strategy from the early days of door knocking to direct online acquisition, but having reached a critical mass, the biggest challenge was now churn. "Consumers simply don't care about the power or gas until it is off," Mr Capomolla said. "They don't want to know about you at all. They think all power companies are the same. They think you're all carp and rubbish. We decided to see if we could bust that open a little."

Simply Energy had been running with a new campaign developed by Clemenger BBDO in Melbourne that stated "reduce the badness".

"That has really become our

business philosophy," he said.

While many energy companies, including Simply, marketed themselves as green and tried to attract customers on the back of environmental concerns, Mr Capomolla said cost remained the overriding issue when it came to selecting an energy company.

"Consumers' hip pockets still talk," he said. The realisation the industry remained driven by price prompted the decision to launch the Golden Bill campaign, where glossy gold bills arrived in people's mailboxes announcing they would not be charged for the current billing period — a reward worth several hundred dollars to the selected customers.

He said even in its first week the campaign had already had an impact, creating considerable word of mouth and even prompting one customer to flourish the gold bill when a rival energy retailer turned up on their doorstep. "We have 30 per cent churn and there are a lot of offers out there," he said. "So what we're trying to do is reduce the churn."

After just its first week, with just two of a planned six golden bills delivered, he said there were plans to step up the promotion and double the number of golden bills sent to customers.

For those not lucky enough to

receive the golden bills, the company was also redesigning its bills to become more consumer friendly by removing fine print and highlighting clearly how much the bill was for and when it needed to be paid.

He said it was part of the process of making people more open to the company and its approaches. The advertising campaign had used a range of simple metaphors to promote the notion of reducing badness such as shrinking dinosaurs, ghosts and witches. It even used images of dogs humping people's legs, shrinking the dogs into insignificance. "We're the biggest challenger company in the market and we're doing it by doing things differently."

Mr Capomolla said Simply had managed to design the new campaign with the agency after having an agency employer work within the company for the first 12 months. Clemenger BBDO account director Chris Howatson said the only way to learn how to differentiate a product people had low interest in was to understand it from the inside. "Our opportunity was to outwardly express Simply Energy's internal mantra — customer value comes before everything else — in a way that connects with consumers."



Free: Simple Energy's offer