

Targeted

A U S West ad mailer aimed at the gay and lesbian community draws complaints from a Portland lesbian

by Inga Sorensen

Innuendo, it appears, is in the eye of the beholder. "This is the first complaint I've heard about this," says Steve Fuchs, who works for True North Advertising in New York City.

Fuchs' firm helped create an advertising mailer for U S West Communications in a marketing partnership project with *Out* magazine. The piece, which targets gay men and lesbians, was recently sent to an estimated 40,000 people nationwide. It encourages consumers to choose U S West's new "Outrageous Calling Pak," which includes a "Chatter Pak" featuring three-way calling for "three people, three locations [and] three times the fun," and a "Privacy Pak" that includes caller identification and call rejection because, says the U S West brochure, "your personal style is a private one."

Those who select a U S West "Outrageous" package receive a "free subscription to a magazine with style." In this case, *Out*, *Wired* or *Entertainment Weekly*.

"Your Style Makes a Statement," continues the mailing. "Say Something with Your Phone Service. After all, your phone service is what keeps you plugged in—to friends, your lover, your family."

Nowhere in the piece are the words "gay" or "lesbian" mentioned.

"We think it was a very tasteful campaign," says Fuchs. "It was not designed to offend anyone."

Perhaps not, but it certainly got the ire up of Portland resident Theresa Tucker, who is associated with a handful of lesbian and gay-related organizations, including Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and Portland's Lesbian Community Project.

"I got this in the mail and I was shocked," says Tucker. "The marketing is so insidious and subtle. Nowhere do they mention 'gay' or 'lesbian' or 'support' or anything like that."

"At first I was concerned that a mega-corporation like U S West had somehow learned of my sexual orientation and had this information stored somewhere," she continues. "But then I thought about it further. I decided it wouldn't have bothered me so much if they had just been honest about what they were doing. If they had said: 'U S West supports the gay and lesbian community' that would have been OK. This was just so sleazy."

Tucker says she was so upset by the mailing that she contacted U S West to lodge a complaint. "I was told by a U S West supervisor named Yaw Uwusu that the gay and lesbian community had not specifically been targeted," she says. "He said this mailing was also sent to members of the 'Hispanic community' even though there were no Spanish words in it. He also said there was no 'list' that my name was on. Well, if I received a mailing there obviously was a mailing list."

Tucker sent letters outlining her concerns to the Portland Utilities Commission and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, a media watchdog group.

In addition to using words like "lover," "style" and "Privacy Pak," the mailing includes photos of six different types of telephones, including one that is high tech, another which is ostentatiously ornate, and one bound in leather.

"What we were trying to do is acknowledge that there are many different styles that exist in the gay community," says U S West Communications spokesman Dan Sherlock, who told *Just Out* the gay and lesbian community had specifically been targeted for this mailing.

He further says representatives from both U S West and *Out* magazine reviewed—and ultimately approved—the marketing piece before it was sent to members of the public.

Out's advertising staff did confirm that they approved the mailer, and say they have received no negative responses. (One staffer even told us that two people called to inquire about where they could order one of those leather-bound phones, which, by the way, were created specifically for the campaign and are not for sale.)

Sherlock says he too has received positive feedback from several people, including U S West employees. "The only people who don't seem to like it are those who are right wing," he says.

"The whole point of this campaign is to sell calling packages. Our research has shown that gay people spend more dollars on average than most callers for a variety of services, including long distance, caller ID and call waiting. We feel we came up with a very creative campaign," says Fuchs.

As with many marketing campaigns, he says, names of targeted recipients were taken from a rented mailing list—lists that people may wind up on if they, for example, are a member of an organization, attend public events, or receive a subscription to a magazine, catalog or newspaper.

"It's standard practice" says Fuchs, adding that it's unusual in this day and age to find someone who isn't on such a list.

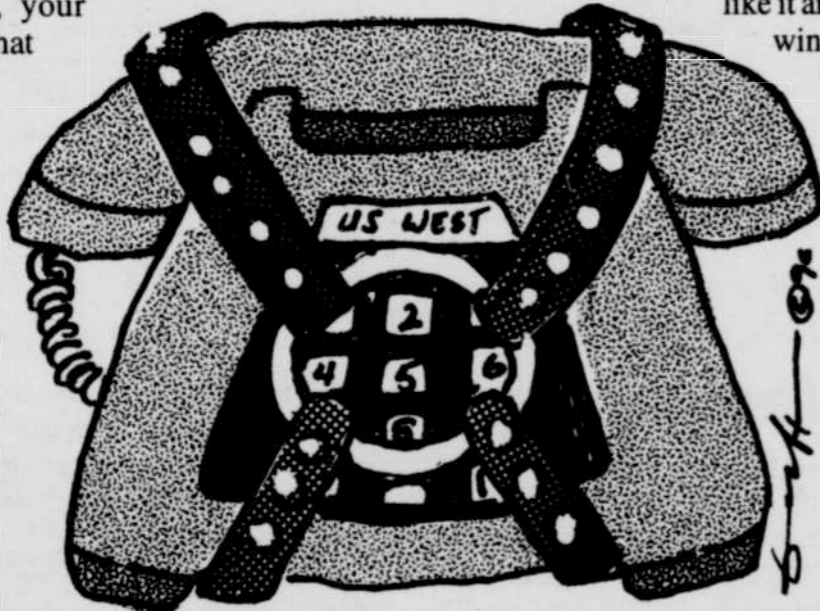
According to Sherlock, U S West began aggressively courting distinctive communities for advertising purposes about a year ago. He says senior citizens, Latino/as, college students, African Americans, Asian Americans and rural residents have all been targeted.

"For example, if we're testing the college market, we may offer *Spin* magazine, because that's the number one magazine for the college market," he says. "The gay and lesbian community is just one group we're targeting."

Adds Fuchs: "Everyone seems pleased that we have acknowledged the gay and lesbian community."

"That perhaps bothers me the most," says Tucker. "I've told some friends about this and they seem to think it's 'cool' that we're finally being recognized as a potential market. But I don't think it's 'cool' that an advertising campaign is targeting our community for profit but can't even address us by name."

She asks: "Are we so starved for attention that we will accept exploitation for profit as a form of social recognition, even when we are not socially recognized by the profiteers?"



THE PANTHEON, LTD.

"Luxury Rides for the Un-Narrow"

Go in style with the comfort of knowing your driver is Gay too !!

Special Introductory Rates

3 Hrs (Contiguous) \$99.00

3 Hrs (Split) \$129.00

All Night \$200.00

(some restrictions may apply)

5 0 3 - 2 4 8 - 9 6 4 6

I simply do it better!

Whether it's listening to your wants and needs, developing a presentation of properties, or negotiating your transaction, be assured that your satisfaction is my ultimate objective.

Call me at Bridgetown Realty—because there is a difference.



Donald Falk
Million Dollar Producer



Bridgetown Realty
(503) 287-9370
(503) 655-8015



Sound Financial Planning For Who You Are

For lesbians and gay men, we know that responsible financial planning requires an understanding of the legal and social realities that affect them, whether they are single or in a relationship.



American Express Financial Advisors is dedicated to understanding these issues and addressing them in innovative ways that help our clients achieve their personal and financial goals.



For more information, please call

David Woosley or Jay Saufli

7931 NE Halsey, Suite 100

Portland, Oregon 97213

Call for a free guide
503.255.4900

Financial
Advisors

DON'T YOU JUST HATE PAYING RETAIL?



Whether they need a fleet of one or one hundred vehicles, more people buy from Damerow than from any other fleet source in the entire Northwest.

- No Broker's Fees
- Below Market Finance Rates
- Largest Ford Inventory in the Northwest
- Prompt, Courteous Service
- High Trade-In Allowances
- The Northwest's Lowest Fleet Pricing

For an appointment or phone quote call

Roger Shelby
Direct Line: 627-9555

Shelley Shelby
Direct Line: 627-9552



Ford
Damerow
BEAVERTON FORD
Fleet Sales

4070 S.W. Hall Blvd. • (503) 643-5555 • (800) 871-3673