



As a signage and display expert to the property industry for over 20 years, Roy Chisnall has met his fair share of characters in London's property market. Here he shares a few of his favourites...

words by **Roy Chisnall**, OAD Creative Display

Confessions *of a sign fitter*

Most relaxed agent...

I visited a guy in Edmonton a few times to try and sell him some photocopying products for his window display cards. He told me he didn't have a photocopier even though it stood as large as life in the office. When I asked him what it was, he explained that it was a very large international franking machine. Not giving up on him I returned a few weeks later to try again, but this time he asked me not to disturb him as he was playing darts in the office with his secretary. I did give up at this point.

Most driven estate agent...

It's got to be a guy called Geoff Doble who owns Dexters in Surrey. I met Geoff about 15 years ago when he was working for GA Property Services. He now has 18 estate agents and is so driven it's unbelievable. I have worked for him ever since, and he is always the most pleasant and laid-back director you will ever meet. I have met many high-flying directors in my travels with many of them being a bit above themselves, but Geoff will always chat to you, is down to earth and not at all flashy. Good luck to him on his crusade for world property domination.

Most scary sign fitting...

A couple of years ago I was fitting a high positioned fascia sign on the new *Big Issue* building in Vauxhall. We decided to fit the sign in the evening when we thought things would be a little quieter. I was at the top of a 30 foot ladder when it started to violently shake with shouting coming from below. When I looked down, my fitter – who was at the bottom of the ladder – was fighting off two *Big Issue* vendors who insisted on coming up the ladder to help, complete with cans of Tennants Super and large ZZ Top beards.

Best signage scam...

I was called out to Richard Pal Freeman's Northfields office in Ealing to replace a projection sign outside his office that had broken. His face was a picture when we explained to him what we had found in his sign. The people in the flat upstairs had wired a cordless phone into the downstairs office's telephone system and hidden it inside the small projection sign. In the evening, when the sign's power came on to light it, the phone would power up and, hey presto, they could make free calls on Richard's office line. Naturally I calmed him down by pointing out that he'd no doubt made the tenant's family back home in Brazil very happy.

Most embarrassing moment...

It was when I cold-called on an agent in Tottenham in my first year of business, explaining to him how I could update his shoddy and dated window display image. He asked me to leave his office as he explained that they had only been installed two months ago.

Nicest guy in estate agency...

I met a guy called Jamie McMullen who had a Century 21 agency near Southend. He was really nice to all his staff, especially the younger ones. One of his agents had just returned to the office after passing her driving test and Jamie had a present and a new company car waiting for her. To top that, he then gave her the afternoon off to drive around and tell her friends. What a cracking guy. I wonder where he is now?

Funniest display I have ever seen...

The best display that I've ever seen was by a guy in Finsbury Park who had manufactured his own very professional window display. It was made from Frosties cereal packs, glued together in a pyramid formation, and then sprayed white. He had then blue-tacked the properties to the fronts of the packets for maximum effect. What really made me laugh was the fact that you could still see Tony the Tiger showing through his watery paint!

Funniest guy in estate agency...

A guy called Bruce Burkitt who owns T2M in Streatham who was recently on a 'boss swap' project, swapping places with a car dealer for a week. The guy is a legend and there's never a dull moment when he's around. On one occasion when meeting him at his first office, I was taking a few display shots for my portfolio, and Bruce was helping out with some cliché estate agency shots, including the double telephone answering pose, when he sprang up and insisted I checked out his new Boss suit, which I must admit was nice. He then proceeded to drop his trousers to show me his new Boss boxers – a little disturbing considering the office was fairly busy!

