

## Excerpted article

Full article: <https://www.prweek.com/article/1524596/why-full-page-wsj-ad-featured-open-letter-random-new-jersey-man>

# PRWeek

TRENDING: Purpose Awards > PRWeek US Awards > Power List > Gen Zeitgeist > Agency Business Report

## Why a full-page 'WSJ' ad featured an open letter from a random New Jersey man

### News

Hint: Cause it was an ad from SAP.

by [Diana Bradley](#) | February 04, 2019



Did software giant SAP make a sap out of you with its ad in *The Wall Street Journal* last Thursday?

The paper's readers were baffled when they saw what looked like a full-page paid advertisement from a random guy in New Jersey in the paper on Thursday. The ad was "an open letter to anyone who will listen," and claimed to have been penned by 36-year-old Nick Vitale from Milltown, New Jersey.

Vitale wrote that he wants to share his "constructive feedback" with businesses, and listed what he generally likes and dislikes about airlines, ride-sharing services, cell phone manufacturers, cable companies, gas stations, restaurants, and subscription services.

Many Twitter users hailed him as a hero.

Vitale, however, is not a real person. The letter was part of an ad campaign from SAP. This became evident a few pages later, where the company took up another full-page ad that opens with the text, "An open letter to Nick Vitale of Milltown, NJ."

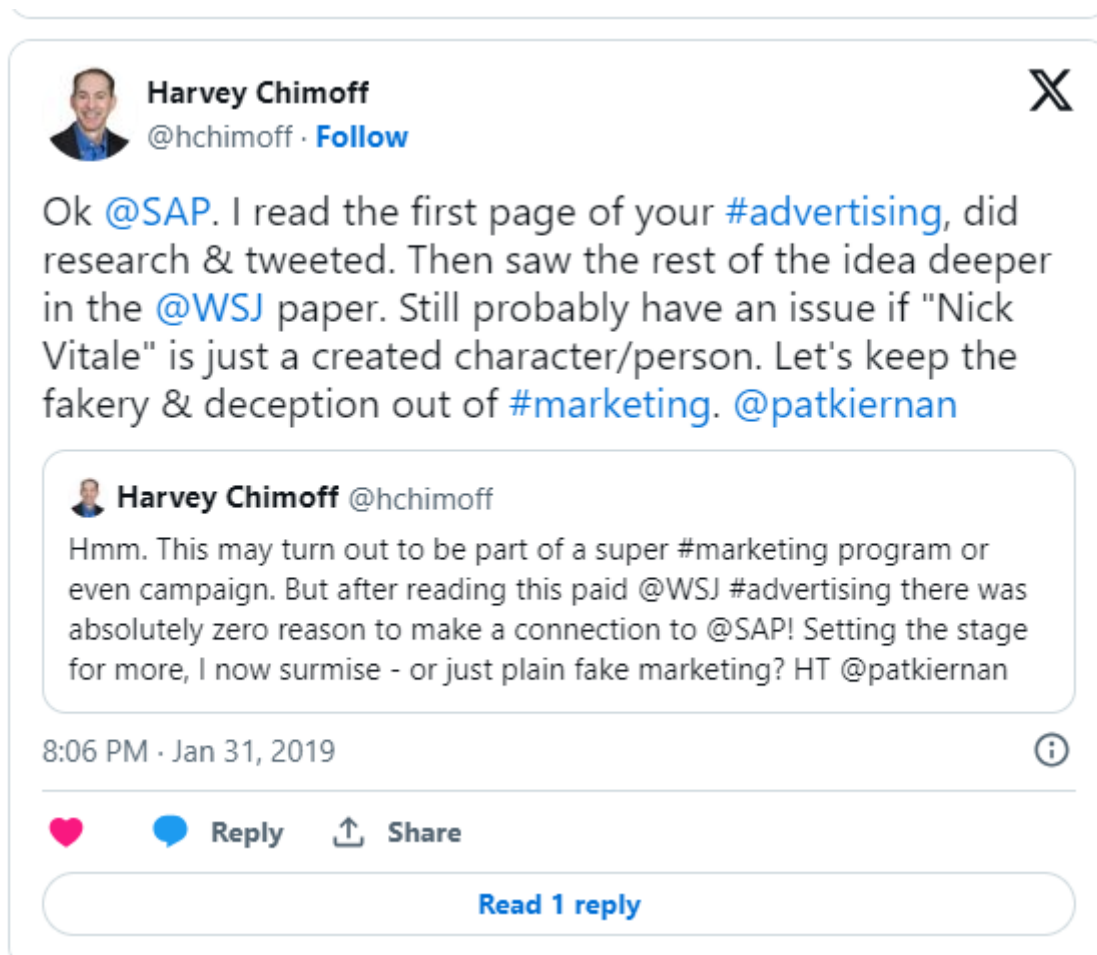
In the ad, SAP explained that they "hear" Vitale and could not agree more.

"It's not enough for a business to listen to their customers. They need to respond and react to what customers are telling them. And relate to every customer as a distinct individual, not as just another face in the crowd," the SAP letter said.

That's why the company has made Qualtrics a part of SAP, it said, so it can connect business to customers and vice versa. The "letter" was signed by SAP CEO Bill McDermott and Qualtrics CEO and cofounder Ryan Smith.

SAP CMO Alicia Tillman tweeted about the ads on Thursday, explaining that the company is introducing a new category of business called experience management.

Photos people have taken of the first ad, with the letter from Vitale, have been making the rounds on Twitter, with many not realizing it is part of SAP's campaign.



Some Twitter users were angry they were duped after finding out Vitale's letter was actually part of an ad campaign.

"[Nick Vitale] is a made up character who was created to represent consumer sentiment," Tillman told PRWeek.

The company wanted to portray why customer feedback matters by showcasing a character who talks about topics to which many people can relate.

Tillman explained that SAP expected some people to think Vitale was a real person, primarily because his views are "really relatable." However, it did not intend to mislead anyone, she said.

"Our intention was not at all to [dupe] anyone," said Tillman. "We made it clear on each page that it was an advertisement. At the same time, even reading it as an advertisement, we wanted to make it real in the sense where [Vitale] is talking about things that we experience every day as consumers ourselves and what we hear from customers."

She added that SAP decided to advertise on three full pages of The Wall Street Journal so that the message would "captivate" people. The ads have received 10,000 comments on social media, she added. Asked what agencies worked on this campaign, Tillman said it was a "massive team effort led by SAP." Budget information was not disclosed.

"We should be giving full pages to express thoughts and ideas on what people want to see changed, our response to that, and how we are going to solve it," said Tillman. "This is how you take thoughts and voices and turn them into action and progress. That deserves a lot of space."