

ANATOMY OF AN INFOMERCIAL

Prescription for Head-to-Toe DRTV Success!

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The following are elements marketers should consider when embarking on a direct response television campaign.

PRE-PRODUCTION – PHASE 1

FEASIBILITY – Questions marketers must ask themselves before starting

- Is this a viable product for DRTV?
- Is there a *need* for the product...does it solve a problem?
- What is the Unique Selling Proposition (USP)
- Does the product have broad consumer appeal?
- Who is the target audience and are those people watch infomercials?
- Are the margins adequate to achieve profitability?
- What are the marketer's goals?
- Does the marketer understand the DRTV process from testing to rollout and does the marketer have realistic expectations?
- Is the marketer able to support a sound financial model?
- Does the value of the product warrant the price point offered?
- Are competitive products available and, if so, does this one offer a better, more cost-effective solution? Why should people buy this product?
- Are there budgetary limitations effecting production?
- Are there legal limitations effecting claims?
- What disclaimers will be required?

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT/SCRIPTING

- Identify key creative elements in a creative brief/outline/project overview
- Production style and tone
 - Identify format most likely to achieve the marketer's goals
 - Large multi-cam shoot on a stage in studio?
 - Small multi-cam shoot on a stage in studio?
 - Modest shoot at a home or other location?
 - Talk show format with host and product spokesperson?
 - Virtual set, with roll-in segments shot on location?
- Product demonstrations
- Testimonials – both Product Users and Experts
- Befores & Afters – still photos/video footage
- BRoll Models
- Featured segments/Lifestyle vignettes
- Product shots
- 1st time user demonstrations, if applicable (Woman-on-the-street)
- Determine if animations will be needed to demonstrate product
- How does the show OPEN?

- Is this Infomercial tightly scripted, or is it mainly bullet-pointed, which can create a more free-wheeling, naturalistic flow and feel. While this approach is more challenging to manage in editing, it can often make the show more watchable and believable. For people to *BUY* your product, first they have to *WATCH* the show.
- Identify footage to be created for OTHER MARKETIING PLATFORMS i.e., web, point of purchase, instructional DVDs, email campaigns, etc.

BUDGETING

- Once a concept has been selected by the marketer, then the final production budget can be created for approval and a production payment schedule established.
- Budget should include a 5% contingency

TIMELINE

- Identify dates for key pre-production and production activities
- Casting/location scouting/secure filming permits if required
- Delivery dates for script drafts
- Shooting dates
- Designate key post-production delivery dates for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc., show edits and FINAL master

CASTING

Every infomercial needs a powerful *VOICE – a Trusted Messenger* - to deliver an impactful message to an audience that isn't exactly holding its breath in anticipation waiting for your show to air. Determining *WHO* that messenger will be is one of the most important decisions a marketer will make.

- Whoever is the COMPANY SPOKESPERSON, he or she must inspire viewer trust, as well as being telegenic and articulate.
- Would a CELEBRITY HOST increase the product's value/credibility, or would an experienced DRTV HOST be as good or even better? Celebrities must seem "real" and believable.
- The Host must act as *proxy* for the viewer by finding out everything viewers want to know about the product and priming them to buy it.
- Does the marketer have EXPERTS [doctors, athletes, aestheticians, stylists, other respected professionals] who are ready, willing and able to appear on camera to validate the product's performance?

TESTIMONIALS are the *Heart* of an infomercial. Without these, your show is DOA.

- Can the marketer provide existing Testimonials willing to provide real user product endorsements on camera?
- Are these Testimonials local to the production, or will they require transportation and accommodation, adding to bottom line costs?
- Testimonials should be ethnically diverse, and age appropriate to the product.

- Does the Producer need to recruit potential Testimonial candidates and manage a prescribed product use protocol conducted over a predetermined interval of time, i.e., 30 – 45 – 60 - 90 days, etc.
- Identify key Testimonials who have compelling stories that could be used in featured segments or lifestyle vignettes
- Will Before & After photos/videos of Testimonials be needed?
- First-time user testimonials are frequently filmed on location, i.e., intercept people at a mall, at the beach, or other public venue.

PRODUCTION

The content and execution of your infomercial must grab viewers' attention and draw them toward a Sale. Elements of successful infomercials can include:

- Live, on-camera demonstrations are a strong persuasive technique
- Host must have a likable, engaging personality, and keep the show moving forward with quick and believable responses.
- Increase viewer identification through the use of passionate Testimonials who show real, believable emotion
- On-camera tears can either move people, or cause them to contract in embarrassment. Tears must always be used judiciously.
- People do not buy a “*thing*.” They do not buy features, they buy benefits, so the Infomercial must constantly present examples of benefits, benefits, benefits.
- People will buy your product if they believe it will increase the quality of their life, i.e., save time, save/make money, make them look smarter/more attractive/more successful/sexier, etc.
- Experts must be credible and not seem like company employees
- Product efficacy claims must be validated
- Product must offer *REAL VALUE* to viewers
- Animations must be simple, understandable and not too scientific. While science may interest *you*, science can cause many people to zone out.
- The person watching your infomercial is first a viewer, then a buyer.

THE CTA

It's time to give your audience the opportunity to purchase the product you have convinced them they cannot live without!

- Recap product USP with benefits
- BRoll Model shots and lifestyle footage
- Product demonstrations
- Product shots that enhances the curb appeal of your product in a setting germane to its use, i.e., skin care products on a bathroom counter or vanity, fitness products being used in a home setting

- **THE MIGHTY OFFER!!!** *TEST – TEST- TEST!*
 - What is the core offer?
 - Does your product lend itself to Single Payment, or will it be offered on a Multi-payment schedule? NOTE: Marketers *must* understand how various payment options impact the cash flow model and be prepared to implement changes structured to improve viewer response and conversion rates.
 - Will the viewer be offered a “Drop Payment” opportunity for responding in a special window of time, say, the next 22 minutes, among the first 500 orders, etc.
 - Will there be a 30 DAY TRIAL with no payment charged to the customer’s credit card until the 30th day?
 - Will the customer be offered 30 DAYS FREE, meaning no charge for the first 30 days worth of product. This is usually triggered by the customer signing up for a product Continuity Program (free club membership.)
 - What is the return policy? 30-Day Money-Back Guarantee less S&H? *OR* will the marketer absorb all S&H?
 - BUILD VALUE with a FREE GIFT or Premium given when the customer purchases the core offer? If so, what is the Value of it?
 - What are the Upsells?
 - Will there be a shipping upgrade option? Will FREE shipping be offered as an inducement to convert the customer to a single payment?

POST PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

- MUSIC can support or detract from emotional impact of your infomercial. It should enhance the feel and advance the momentum of the creative.
- GRAPHICS should be simple and clear...not too many words on the screen. Ask yourself, where does my eye go? If it meanders around the screen, you probably have too many graphics, or they are not presented to direct your eye to the core message.
- ANIMATIONS, if used, should be there to simplify complicated processes and should not be over-engineered.
- Beware of style over substance. Don’t get romanced by style. Romance your customer, not yourself.
- The pacing and tone of your infomercial should be orchestrated to build to the moment of sale.

POST-TEST ANALYSES

After the initial test concludes, it's back to the drawing board to analyze which media and which offer generated the best MER. At this point you will want to:

- Contact callers who DID NOT ORDER to, hopefully, find out why...offer these people a free gift for spending a few minutes with you on the phone.
- Contact callers who DID ORDER to find out the hot buttons in the show that persuaded them to order.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the offers you tested and prepare to test again, or test alternate offers, i.e., including testing lower or higher price points, premiums.
- Plan to spend an additional 1/3 of the original production budget to *tweak* the infomercial for re-testing purposes.