



BY COLLETTE LIANTONIO

'Shoot' for the Sale: DRTV Production Basics

While every DRTV marketer would love to win an artistic award for "Best Infomercial," the real goal is to create a commercial that *sells* your product. You may claim that your primary goal is to "build your brand" but without strong sales, your commercial will be abandoned at the test phase and the world will never learn about "your brand." So how does one create a compelling commercial that drives sales *and* builds your brand?

After you determine that your project is a viable DRTV project, the first decision should be regarding the length of the commercial. Unless you have very deep pockets and a three-month lead time, a half-hour infomercial can be daunting.

While higher ticket items usually sell well through the infomercial genre, they can also be effectively marketed in short-form commercials using payment plans, free trial offers and lead generation. Shows built around emotional testimonials and endorsements usually require the longer

formats to persuade the consumer to purchase. In selecting a producer, the marketer should make sure that the selection of the commercial format is based on sound marketing criteria and not the limited expertise of the potential producer. Thus, you should ask three important questions of the potential producer:

- 1 How much will it cost me?** Get a budget and a contract.
- 2 How long will it take?** Get a schedule.
- 3 What have you done successfully in this category?** Get a sample disk of successful DRTV projects and a list of referrals.

Once the length has been decided and the producer selected, the single most important production element is the script. At the end of an infomercial half hour, or a short form 120- or 60-second spot, the viewer should be compelled to reach into his or her pocket, take out a credit card and in a gigantic leap of faith, part with his or her hard earned dollars.

That calls for a crystal clear message. Any confusion whatsoever will kill the sale. Obviously every second, every syllable counts. That's why there's a formula—the problem, the solution (your product), the demonstration, the proof (testimonials, endorsements, science) and the offer...the offer...the offer!

FINE-TUNING THE OFFER

Why do I repeat the offer? The most important testing element is the offer itself. Do you get one widget or two? Do you get to try it before you buy it? Do you get a free "shoe phone" with your magazine? Do you spend \$9.95 or \$99.95? The wise entrepreneur invests his or her money in the test phase.

How much money do you spend on production? Many DRTV experts answer this question



Attention grabbing visuals are important in direct response. A memorable sumo wrestler was featured in this legendary Banzai Knife commercial.



Beau Rials and AnnMarie Howard flank producer Collette Liantonio during infomercial filming. Hosts are crucial to the success of long form.


with the metaphorical “Do you want a Mercedes or a Volkswagen?” Cheap or expensive is not the point. The secret engine that drives the sale is the script. It’s about the integrity of the spot, the message, the value of the offer...and that can be conveyed with Beta, SP, HDTV or 35mm film. It’s about the execution of a great script.

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But what about the creative tone of the spot? You don’t have to “yell and sell” but you do need to cut through the TV clutter, and you should compel the audience to stop, look and listen, not calmly and passively, but as an active participant. At the end of the minute (or so), the viewer should be driven to reach into his or her wallet, remove the credit card and call the 800 number or log on to the company’s web site and act now, or go to a store and look for the product now! Or that beautiful, award-winning commercial will be considered a very expensive mistake.

So how does one create a great script

with a spectacular offer and a compelling spot that makes the viewer “order now?” One hires an experienced expert to create a spectacular commercial with two or three different offers or endings. One hires an experienced media buyer to test the offers. One hires a great call center to cross-sell and upsell, and one prays that one’s com-

mercial will defy the odds and become the next DRTV hit. So don’t delay. Act now and call the expert. 

Collette Liantonio is president of *Concepts TV Productions Inc.* in Boonton, N.J. She can be reached at (973) 331-1500, or via e-mail at collette@conceptstv.com.

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23 years
experience in
award-winning
production!

If you want your
next product to
be a winner,
contact Collette.



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Concepts

TV Productions Inc.

328 West Main Street, Boonton, NJ 07005
T: 973-331-1500
F: 973-331-1550

West Coast Office: 310-824-8801
e-mail: Collette@conceptstv.com
www.conceptstv.com