SCIMARK REPORT

BY JORDAN PINE

Welcome to the "comfort issue" of the SciMark Report. Due to a temporary dry spell in the number of items being tested, it's not much of an issue — delayed summer doldrums? In any case, these two projects have comfort in common, and I say that's a smart area in which to play given the demographics of DR and the fact the American population isn't getting any younger.

BACKTASTIC

Description: A gel-filled cushion

Main Pitch: "Helps relieve back pain and stress in any chair, anywhere"

Main Offer: \$19.95 for one Bonus: Second one (just pay P&H)

Starring: David Jones

Marketer: Allstar Products (current SciMark True Top Marketer)

Rating: 3 out of 5 $\star \star \star \Leftrightarrow \Leftrightarrow \Leftrightarrow$

Allstar had a surprise hit last year with **Forever Comfy**, a gel-filled cushion for the derriere. I call it a "surprise" because the item had been in catalogs for quite some time without getting so much as a second look. Clearly, no one (including me) suspected that such a basic item could become a major DRTV hit. Lesson learned. Of course, these days once you have such a big winner, the next logical step is to try brand-extending and/or line-extending the heck out of it. (For more on this, see the *SciMark Report* in *Response*'s June issue). Specifically, as Jones so cleverly puts it, Allstar is trying to do "for your back what they've already done for your bottom."

While I agree with the strategy, I'm not so sure about the product. Here's why: Everyone's rear end has experienced the pain and discomfort of sitting in a chair for too long. Indeed, most Americans spend the better part of their day sitting on their butts. That makes Forever Comfy the Holy Grail when it comes to market size — a potential one-per-bottom item. Back pain is different. Although it's the most common type of chronic pain, it's not a universal problem. In fact, many households won't have a single person who suffers from back pain, and that means a more limited market and lower odds of success. The evidence: I've reviewed seven back-relief products since 2008 — including **Happy Back**, a back cushion for chairs that was tried last summer — and not one has rolled out.



Description: A special pillow

Main Pitch: "Combines the support of memory foam with the softness of

feather down"

Main Offer: \$19.99 (queen) or \$29.99 (king)

Bonus: None

Marketer: TELEBrands

Website: www.ComfyCorePillow.com

Rating: 2 out of 5 \star \star \Leftrightarrow \Leftrightarrow \Leftrightarrow

Last year, I got so sick of looking at new pillow concepts that I actually told a client: "Uncle! Enough with the pillows!" So you can imagine how I feel about this particular project. At least TELEBrands let the category breathe a little bit. At the time of my momentary overload, there were no less than four pillows in the As Seen On TV endcaps at retail (Total Pillow, Side Sleeper Pro, Sobakawa and My Pillow). That number has surely dwindled in the ensuing months, maybe even to zero in certain chains. But it's definitely too soon to try another pillow. The fastest repeat rate I've seen for a category is two years (slicer/dicers, hair removal). If the shelves are, in fact, clear of pillows, it can't be longer than a few weeks.



WHAT MAKES UP THE SCIMARK SEVEN (S7)?

The **PRODUCT** should be: (1) needed; (2) targeted; and (3) different.

The CATEGORY should be: (4) un-crowded.

The COMMERCIAL should be: (5) engaging; (6) motivating; and (7) clear.

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