By Jordan Pine

DROPPS

Description: Packets of pre-measured liquid laundry detergent
Main Pitch: "Just toss and go"
Main Offer: $19.95 for a three-month supply
Bonus: Cordless handy vac (just pay S&H)
Web site: *www.DroppsTV.com*

Rating: 2 out of 5 ★★☆☆☆

Visit the main site for this product (*www.Dropps.com*), and it becomes clear there is a brand strategy underway here. However, on DRTV this product is unlikely to succeed (*i.e.*, turn a profit). There are several reasons why.

First, the product isn't **different** enough or **needed** enough to stimulate an impulse purchase. "Better than" solutions seldom are. Pouring liquid detergent isn't that big of a problem. Second, this product is in a category that is anything but **uncrowded**. This particular one is dominated by big brands like Tide, and P&G has spent decades and billions of dollars convincing America their formula is the best for laundry. That level of conditioning is going to be hard to overcome, and on what basis? The liquid inside these packets looks the same as Tide and offers essentially the same benefits.

Third, people are unlikely to buy a product from TV that runs out quickly, especially if it comes from a new brand with which they have no history. The immediate objection will be: How do I get more? The best answer any DRTV marketer can provide is "wait for the mail" or "stock up now." Neither one sits well with consumers.

Many of these problems are going to limit the success of this product at retail as well. From a DRTV standpoint, it is always hard to sell a product at retail that comes with such a high-value bonus item. From what I understand, Southern Tool's Bit Shooter and SAS Group's Awesome Auger both faced difficulties at retail because obviously the "free" power drill included with the TV offer couldn't be included in the retail package. The reason that's a problem: You don't know if the product, the bonus or both is driving your TV sales, so it's very difficult to predict how many units to put into retail. This "free" cordless handy vac offer presents the same problem.

Finally, going a bit beyond my expertise here for a moment, the best-case scenario is this marketer has some success and then a big brand copies its idea. I see it all the time, and several big brands are already using this delivery method for dishwasher detergent. Hopefully, there are strong patents this marketer owns and has licensed for the laundry application, in which case a sale to a company like P&G could be a nice exit strategy.

BANJO BLADE

Description: A knife with a bow design
Main Pitch: "Tackles every job and ... stays so sharp, it actually does the cutting for you"
Main Offer: $10 for one with free ceramic peeler
Bonus: Second knife and peeler (just pay P&H)
Marketer: Allstar Products Group
Web site: *www.BanjoBlade.com*

Rating: 3 out of 5 ★★★☆☆

This is a solid commercial with excellent demos from a top marketing team. Unfortunately, it's also one of those campaigns that demonstrates why 80 percent of DRTV success is the product itself. No matter how well they pitch this item, it's going to be impossible to get past the fact it looks like a hacksaw.

If people look at your product and immediately think of some other product, you have two choices: Embrace it or forget about it. That is, try to turn a negative into a positive ("we realized a hacksaw has the perfect design for many kitchen tasks as well") or drop the project and move on. This commercial tries a third path marketers just can't resist: Trying to convince people they aren't seeing what they think they are seeing. It's not a hacksaw, see. It's "the world's only zero-resistant knife!"

I went through this with the Finishing Touch campaign in 2003. We didn't want to call it a hair trimmer because we felt women would never use a trimmer on their face, so we called it a "hair eraser" in our spot. Later, we used the even fancier term "micro-oscillation" to describe how it removes hair. However, when the campaign rolled out and the product became a big hit at retail, guess what people and the media called it? A "mini-trimmer."

CLEAN BEAM

Description: A germ-killing light wand
Main Pitch: "Kills 99% of bacteria, viruses, mold and dust mites"
Main Offer: Two payments of $19.98
Bonus: Travel-size version
Web site: *www.BuyCleanBeam.com*

Rating: 1 out of 5 ★☆☆☆☆

This one fails just about every one of the SciMark Seven. Prospects won't perceive the product as **needed** because it prevents invisible dangers. (Prevention and invisibility are a losing combo.) The **target** market is wrong for DRTV, because we know there aren't enough germaphobes to sustain a mass-market campaign. And this category is **crowded** with other disinfectants from name brands.

In addition, the commercial attempts to **engage** the viewer based on fear (a well-known losing strategy), has no real demos to speak of (see invisibility problem above), and offers a product that is $20 too expensive to **motivate** an impulse purchaser. Oh, and the product has a serious credibility problem because you have to believe its light is having an effect, which you can't see. At least liquid disinfectants leave a smell we've come to associate with cleanliness.

This is one project the marketer should never have attempted. Prediction: Bomb.

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