



The Fabulous Five

An updated version of **The Divine Seven**, these five criteria can be used when screening products intended for short-form DRTV.

1. PROBLEM

Imagine a 10-point scale for problems. A '1' on that scale is an itch. A '10' is a heart attack. A '5' is one of those everyday annoyances people hate, but not enough to actually do anything about it. The problem your product solves should be about a '7' or higher. If the problem is below that level, only one thing can save it: Being really cool. A product that is exciting to watch in action doesn't always have to solve a problem in order to sell. Conversely, a great problem-solver that is boring will most likely fail unless you jazz it up.

2. AVAILABILITY

If the product is already widely available at retail, it won't find success on DRTV. The easiest way to determine that is to check top retailers such as Wal-Mart, Walgreens, CVS, Target and Bed Bath & Beyond. The fastest way to do these checks is online using a tool such as Google Shopping, but walking actual brick-and-mortar stores is also an excellent idea.

3. TARGET

Describe your target in media terms; that is, by gender and age. For example: "Adults 50+," "girls in their teens" or "men of all ages." Recognize that DRTV buyers tend to be Baby Boomers or older. It's possible to have success targeting younger demographics, but the odds go way down. Next, determine the size of your market. The goal is to have a product with a market size of 'every household in America.' A market smaller than that is a segment or a niche, and it better be a large segment or niche. Have a strong rationale for niche items and, more important, a valid statistic proving the niche is as large as you think it is (e.g. Census Bureau data).

4. PRICE

There's a good reason everyone thinks a DRTV product must sell for \$20 or less with a cost of goods one-fifth its price (the so-called "five-times markup" rule): Almost every product that hasn't met those parameters has failed. The 'below \$20' price is required to get consumers to buy on impulse, and the '5X' margin is required to make money from the sale. If you don't have a good eye for what things cost, just look at the current selling price and screen out products above \$30.

5. CATEGORY

Finally, it is important to recognize that there are certain product categories that have excellent odds of success based on DRTV history, and other categories that have terrible odds of success on the same basis. At the extremes are categories that deliver hits every year or two (e.g. slicer/dicers, hair removers) and categories that have never been successful on DRTV (e.g. clothing, jewelry). Do not waste time chasing items in categories with bad histories. If you don't have someone with an extensive knowledge of DRTV history at your disposal, certain blogs (scimark.blogspot.com), Web sites (asseenontv.com) and services (Jordan Whitney, IMS) can be of great help.