

## **9 Lessons for Building DRTV Brands**

### **\*DRTV = Direct Response Television Advertising**

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Successful branding is alive, vital, and engaging. It is focused on how consumers live and how our products are meaningful in their lives.

But too often talk about DRTV branding becomes dead language — the language of established, bureaucratic brands like Budweiser, Nike, or McDonalds.

In DRTV, nearly everything we touch is new — whether products or brands. In our world, the arcane language of brand textbooks often hurts more than it helps.

So, I offer the following lessons for building DRTV brands. These lessons lead to stronger, more profitable brands. And, they start at the beginning: the consumer.

#### **1. Consumers benefit from brands.**

Consumers make hundreds of decisions each week. Trusting a brand helps them make those decisions more quickly and more confidently.

So market the brand like a product. Many DRTV companies build USP's (unique selling propositions) for products. What is the USP for your brand? Once you know, challenge your USP. Does it *really* make a difference?

#### **2. Consumers must trust your brand.**

Consumers accept a brand when they trust it to deliver a specific product experience. But trust is a tricky thing. It has to be built.

How? By making a promise, then delivering — every time. In a sales campaign, the product must exceed

expectations. In a lead generation program, build trust with clear, useful information.

#### **3. Know your promise & stick with it.**

Ginzu promised a great set of knives for \$25. George Foreman promises quick & easy meat with less fat. ProActiv promises acne treatment that works.

Then, never lose your promise through brand extension. Smart fitness companies rarely even mix aerobics and strength training in the same brand.

#### **4. Plan how you'll profit from your brand.**

When a consumer trusts your brand, they'll buy future product with less marketing effort. Or, they'll pay higher prices. Or you'll get better retail buy-in. Or all three.

#### **5. Expand your vision of a brand.**

Many of my biz-school students arrive thinking a name is a brand. But a brand name is merely a label. The true brand is the sum of each consumer's experience with the product, company, and category.

This suggests, for example, that we should use telemarketing for better branding. Consumers won't trust the brand if they have a bad experience during their 3-minutes with your telemarketer.

#### **6. Be patient & use small steps.**

Plan for 3 to 5 years of brand effort before you see dramatic profitability from branding.

During this time, don't waste money on expensive "branding" spots. Add brand consistency to your everyday advertising so consumers learn your promise and product together. Then over-deliver — day-in and day-out. When you least expect it,

you'll discover that you've built a brand powerhouse.

7. **Develop a consistent creative strategy for your brand.** Consumers need years of consistency in order to learn about a brand. What consistent elements build the brand? A look? A feel? A sound?

Don't trust DRTV producers to manage creative strategy. Guthy-Renker usually does smart brand work. But the producer for the Pilates show has projected four different Daisy Fuente personalities. And their new order slate looks like Popeil's pocket fisherman.

8. **Develop your brand with consumer research.** Marketers often decide what we want, then try to force the consumer to accept those ideas. This "inside out" approach to branding will only succeed by accident. To plan for success, learn what your consumers need and deliver it.

9. **Celebrities may be bad choices for branding.** The first question from many DRTV marketers is "who's the celebrity?" A celebrity *might* make it easier to start a brand. They can also quickly overshadow the product.

It can be more effective to use actors with great personalities that reflect the brand promise.

Branding is treated with nearly religious reverence in most advertising agencies — a reverence that too often wastes money on irrelevant advertising.

By contrast, DRTV creates highly informed consumers through tens of millions of dollars spent on 30-minute shows — informed consumers that quickly become brand advocates.

Claude Hopkins wrote Scientific Advertising in 1924. In his chapter on naming, he lists 17 successful brands. Eighty years later, eleven remain top consumer brands including Vaseline and Kodak. Will your brand be on the list in 2084?

### **About the author:**

Doug Garnett is president of Atomic Direct — a boutique DRTV agency with a unique vision of how brand-name products can be advanced through DRTV. Doug's clients include Rubbermaid, Alberto-Culver, the Drill Doctor and White's Electronics. He also teaches advertising in the School of Business Administration at Portland State University.