



BY DAN ZIFKIN

The Measure of Success

What makes for a success in a venture? Comedian Bill Cosby once said, “I don’t know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody.” We in the direct response TV business need to understand that the measure of success in DRTV is going to be very different for everybody. And levels of satisfaction will differ, depending upon who is running a test or a full-fledged campaign.

HOW SUCCESS DIFFERS

Here’s how the definition of success might differ.

For a veteran DRTV marketer, a comparison to historic MERs, or other established benchmarks, is probably the point of reference in gauging the results of test or rollout. Knowing what to expect from tweaking the offer or message, or even just generating more message frequency can give the experienced DR advertiser plenty by which to

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determine the go or no-go—that company’s measure of success. A quick read of early results and a smart turnaround will determine how successful the venture will be.

For an inventor/entrepreneur/start-up, the barometer may be profitability or—maybe more bluntly—survivability. Awaiting and reading test results is a nail-biting experience that may determine where things go from there. Investors and bankrollers may need assurance

from early numbers, even if they are only directional and preliminary. While it’s possible to hit a home run in a test, getting this marketer to continue the campaign may more likely hinge on the test read and a candid assessment of the sense in going forward. Expect a fair amount of back-and-forth analysis to ensue in determining whether success is attainable.

For a conventional advertiser, the success gauge might just be the need to raise awareness of a new product with consumers for eventual retail purchase. Selling directly and netting some sales return on investment (ROI) may not even be an issue. However, generating leads to a call-in number or even just generating some marketplace “buzz” may be the measure of success that is sought. Those results may take weeks or even months of analysis to determine whether success was garnered.

Unlike regular TV ads you see, DRTV ads—be it short-form spots or long-form infomercials—generally aren’t given the time to find and build their audience over a period of time. They’re expected to show some real promise early on, even if they don’t hit some magic profitability number in that upfront period. But a lot of DRTV successes *do* take time to happen, and it’s the job of a savvy campaign management organization skilled in this business to see the potential, nurture the brand’s message and use both smart production techniques and solid media planning and buying talent to bring that success to bear.

Bill Cosby is right: pleasing everybody can’t happen. But delivering success to DRTV advertisers is what we in this business are all about. 

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