

Testimonials Are Essential in Making the Phones Ring — or Are They?



If you were to survey 100 of the most respected people in the direct response industry and ask them if it was really necessary to include testimonials in an infomercial, I am guessing that 98 percent of them would say something along the lines of: "Of course you need testimonials in your commercial. It is almost essential."

As a matter of fact, the *From the Lab* team even wrote an article recently about a company that can help you put a product to the test and does real life studies with people that can eventually give great testimonials about your product. While good authentic testimonials can be a very effective part of marketing a product and a useful element of many commercials, we have discovered through real-life media testing that testimonials don't necessarily get the phone to ring — and, in many cases, just adding testimonials to a spot can be the single cause for a commercial not working.

That's right — testimonials can have an adverse effect on the responsiveness of your commercial. We have no data yet on testimonial use in long-form commercials, but my gut would still say that testimonials in 30-minute commercials would be useful and help increase response in most cases. However, here is what happened with two unique products with testimonial use in a two-minute spot.

- **Product 1** — A teeth-whitening product. Using six different versions of a commercial — three with testimonials and three without (just a good strong pitch showing the product and describing its benefits), here are the results: only one of the commercials did better than a 2.5:1 media ratio — a version without testimonials. The other two versions without testimonials achieved a 1.5:1 and 1.8:1 respectively. The three versions that utilized authentic testimonials all suffered the ignominious fate of a media ratio of less than 1:1. Other than the testimonials, the scripts and offers were identical.
- **Product 2** — A kitchen gadget. Again, using three spots with testimonials and three without — but also a celebrity host to camera in one of each type, a quirky, no-name character in one of each, and a straight voice-over in the others. Amazingly, the three commercials without testimonials did better than the three versions with testimonials. At the same time, the version with the quirky new character and no testimonials greatly outperformed any other version of the spot. On the other hand, the celebrity host spot with testimonials did very poorly.

These findings are only points to ponder when you produce your next 60-second or 120-second spot. Don't just assume you need testimonials and/or a celebrity host. Those just might be the elements that keep you from creating a 2:1 winner. ■



Take 2 Direct specializes in providing uniquely creative and highly responsive commercials and campaign management. If you want to sell your product and need a company that has the creative vision to drive the call, as well as the practical experience to manage the intricate back-end process, contact Take 2 Direct at (714) 979-5555 and ask for Adam MacDonald at x202 or Kelly Burke at x203.