

By Jordan Pine



PERFECT SITUP

Description: An exercise device for abs

Main Pitch: "Reinvents the situp by combining the upper ab crunch with the lower ab leg lift."

Main Offer: \$99.95 for one

Bonus: Workout guide, meal plan and storage hanger

Marketer: Perfect Fitness

Producer: N/A

Web site: www.PerfectSitup.com

S7 Score: 5 out of 7 ★★★★★☆☆

On my blog, I often talk about the "curse of the brand/line extension." Borrowing heavily from Al Ries and Jack Trout, I've concluded that putting a previously successful brand name on a new product does more harm than good. Who knows what might have happened if Silver Lightning (a 1990s hit) had been brought back with a name other than Mighty Shine, an attempt to capitalize on the success of Mighty Putty? Or if the Salsa Maker (another hit from yesteryear) had been reintroduced as the Chop It but *without* the Vidalia name, which was an attempt to capitalize on the success of the Chop Wizard?

I also take issue with the strategy here. Perfect Pushup was such an amazing and unexpected success because it broke two rules. The first rule said you couldn't do fitness in short form. BodyRev proved you can and created a new formula others have followed with great success (Iron Gym, Tower 200). The second rule said the only exception to the first rule is when you focus on abs. But BodyRev showed focusing on the upper body was also a winning approach, and launched the Perfect Pullup to reinforce the point.

So what did they do for an encore? Come full circle, back to abs. The problem is the market is already crowded with dozens of ab solutions, and even the "perfect" name is unlikely to make a difference. In fact, it's more likely to be a curse than a blessing.

AWESOME TILLER

Description: A tilling attachment for a power drill

Main Pitch: "Turns any drill into a high-power, portable rototiller."

Main Offer: \$19.99 for one, with Power Extender

Bonus: Pull & Plant attachment (plus separate S&P), power drill (plus separate S&P)

Starring: Joe Fowler

Marketer: SAS Group

Producer: N/A

Web site: www.AwesomeTiller.com

S7 Score: 5 out of 7 ★★★★★☆☆

As the commercial states, this product is "from Awesome Auger, America's No. 1 planting tool."

Not sure about the claim, but I wince at the reference because of the "curse" described in my first review. Putting that aside, I have to confess that I never understood the success of the Awesome Auger until its pitchman — the late, great Billy Mays — explained it to me. He said it was all about value, and the power drill premium is what took the campaign over the top. It was a rare example of a hit where the bonus was more valuable than the product.

As you might expect, the drill had a rather high shipping-and-handling charge attached to it, and the Internet is full of complaints about that. Will consumers fall for the same gimmick twice? I doubt it. So for this campaign to be successful, they really have to want that tiller.

On a side note: Is Joe Fowler the new Billy? He certainly has the right energy level, and I see him pitching a lot of products/brands Billy used to pitch. Only time will tell, but so far he is the only one challenging Anthony Sullivan for the crown.



SWIVEL SWEEPER CLEAN SWEEP

Description: A sweeper with a microfiber pad

Main Pitch: "The powered sweeper picks up the big stuff, while the microfiber pad grabs and holds the dirt and dust better than a broom."

Main Offer: \$19.99 for one with a microfiber pad

Bonus: Two extra microfiber pads

Starring: Anthony Sullivan

Marketer: Ontel Products

Producer: Sullivan Productions

Website: www.BuyCleanSweep.com

S7 Score: 4 out of 7 ★★★★★☆☆

In case you missed it, this column has a theme. All three products reviewed are brand and/or line extensions. This product is both, and it presents a good opportunity to explain one reason why the "curse" I've been writing about exists — confused communication. If "Swivel Sweeper" is a brand, it is a brand that stands for powered sweepers that work in *all four* directions. That "quad-brush technology" is the Swivel Sweeper's point of difference, or USP (unique selling proposition) in marketing lingo. However, this product only sweeps in *one* direction, and the same direction as other powered sweepers at that. On top of that, it's also trying to compete with P&G's Swiffer in the sweeper-with-pads category. It's one of those 'neither fish nor fowl' strategies that makes sense in the conference room (millions of units sold *plus* continuity!) but doesn't make much sense in the living room.



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