

By Jordan Pine

Happy Holidays! My gift to you this year is a list of my five favorite catchphrases. You may use them any time you like, royalty free. Try one out at your next product-review meeting: It's a lot of fun! I've even included some illustrating examples you can find on my blog at scimark.blogspot.com. Enjoy!

1. "This product is a solution in search of a problem."

Recent examples: *Fridge Locker; Clothes and Go; Heel Dock*

A safe that goes in your refrigerator and protects your food or a way to move clothes while they are still on their hangers or a special floor mat for the heel of your shoe — all of these are solutions to problems that are uncommon, infrequent or low on the pain scale. To motivate people off the couch, a DRTV product must solve a problem that immediately resonates with most people. If you have to search for people with which to resonate, you are looking to fail.



of litter liners, 50 "Scent Lock" bags, a Kitty Fresh Pouch and a grooming mitt — and then tried to explain why you need those last three items in the time allotted for a DRTV offer.

2. "This market is a segment of a segment."

Recent examples: *Go Booster; Thunder Shirt/Happy*

Wrap/Hug of Love

An inflatable booster seat for toddlers or a shirt

that alleviates canine anxiety —

all of these products target a market segment within a market segment. As my friend Bill Quarless says, "The best market size for DRTV is one per person. The second best is one per household." It's even possible to find success in a third-best scenario where your market size is less than one per household, but there are millions of households. But how many households have toddlers who travel frequently or dogs with anxiety problems?



4. "One is an outlier; three is a category."

Recent example: *Pillow Pets; Happy Nappers*

Chasing outliers is a huge trap in DRTV that everyone, even experienced marketers, falls into. No matter how absurd the hit, everyone will assume it's a new category and promptly blow their money proving it is not. No recent item better demonstrates this phenomenon at work than *Pillow Pets*. Since it became a monster hit, everyone has tried a plush toy — often two or three. It doesn't matter that no one can articulate a single reason why the first plush toy was a success. It doesn't matter

that most of these marketers had close to zero experience with toys up to that point. They all tried to replicate a completely random success and predictably failed.

Only *Happy Nappers*, a coattail rider by an actual toy company, had any success. Wait for three before deciding what categories you need to be in.

Your stakeholders and your accountant will thank you.

5. "Preparedness is the opposite of impulsiveness."

Recent examples: *Tread Ahead; ReadyBox*

A close cousin to "prevention doesn't sell" (another favorite phrase), I created this catchphrase to remind marketers about the type of people who call 800 numbers to "act now." In a word, they are impulsive — and pretty much the exact opposite of people who plan carefully for the future. So why do I see so many tests for products that solve potential future problems instead of immediate, painful ones? Like a tread you keep in your car in case you get stuck in the snow? Or an indestructible box that holds emergency supplies? The only plausible reason is a fundamental misunderstanding of the DRTV buyer.



3. "Confusion is a sales killer."

Recent examples: *Kitchen Candu/Open 7; Sift & Toss*

There are two reasons DRTV pitches end up confusing prospects instead of selling them. One reason is the product itself. To use another favorite catchphrase, "Swiss Army Knife" products that do multiple things cannot be explained adequately in a two-minute commercial. Such was the case with *Kitchen Candu* and *Open 7*, a 6-in-1 kitchen opener and a 7-in-1 kitchen opener, respectively. The second reason pitches confuse is the offer. Because marketers want to give as much value as possible (usually a good thing), they load their offers with so much stuff it bewilders the prospect at the moment of truth. That was the problem with the original version of *Sift & Toss* (since corrected). It featured a set

WHAT MAKES UP THE SCIMARK SEVEN (S7)?

The **PRODUCT** should be:

- (1) needed; (2) targeted; and
- (3) different.

The **CATEGORY** should be:

- (4) un-crowded.

The **COMMERCIAL** should be:

- (5) engaging; (6) motivating; and
- (7) clear.



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