



By Anthony Raissen

## Reviving Old Products: Can Lightning Strike Twice?

**F**or those of you who were fortunate enough to be at Response Expo in San Diego in May, I hope that you were enriched by all that the show offered. There were great new ideas and great ideas based on previous successes in the product arena, as well as the service arena that supports and enables the direct response industry to operate and flourish.

Far too often, I find that we get caught up in the mindset of, “Seen that product before. It will never be a hit again.” If that were truly the case, then the spirit of invention and entrepreneurialism would be dead.

How many times do we look at established brands or products that have lost their pizzazz, or been relegated to the back of the marketing department’s priority list? Is it because there are new leaders in the departments, and they believe that the products have matured? Or is it because those managers were not part of the first wave of marketing that initially launched and established the product? No matter what the reasons, during these difficult financial times, “yesterday’s” products can still be successful — even as the current recession decimates industry leaders.

It is becoming more and more difficult to give advice to companies that are so beaten down by the economy. Yet, the basic principles have not necessarily changed just because of the economy. Products need to be advertised, and consumers need to be educated and given compelling reasons to purchase those products.

The fundamentals of advertising to a targeted audience at the best CPM have not changed. What has changed is the need to do research and be more specific as to whom the target audience really is and what

vehicles are best suited to reach that audience and communicate your message. When companies stop communicating with their customers, they are in essence telling their

customers that they have nothing to say to them, and more importantly, nothing to offer them.

What we are seeing is a tendency for established brands to reconnect with direct response strategies to reach out to both existing and new target audiences — in order to maximize every available resource to improve sales and loyalty. It may be necessary to make adjustments due to the current economy by facing the reality of higher costs-per-order and lower sales volumes than before.

The silver lining in this market is that the recession is creating opportunities for marketers to re-focus and rediscover what made them successful in the first place. It is an opportunity to go back to the fundamentals that made the products successful originally.

The retail environment and the challenges facing retailers have made it even more difficult for products to live up to the expected ROI and sales volume that retailers demand in order to keep products on the shelf. This double-edged sword can work favorably for those marketers who are not frightened by this situation — for those who step up to the challenge and face this situation head-on.

The recession has almost wiped out some great products and left their marketing teams unable or afraid to pursue innovative strategies to revitalize them. Look for products that have fallen by the wayside and analyze the reasons for their demise. It may be the perfect opportunity to take advantage of the situation and revitalize the products, whether they are part of your current portfolio or not. One guarantee is that you will have to work harder and smarter than ever before. But, keep your eye on the finish line, as there will be a lot of market share for you to win.

No one knows if we are at the bottom of the hill with this recession, or how long the economy is going to take to turn around. One thing we all know is that at the end of the day, there are going to be winners and losers. The winners are most likely to be those who are able to weather the storm through innovation and the ability to continue communicating with their consumer base. Hopefully, when the dust settles, you will be in the winner’s circle. ■

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