Lessons learned from successful television commercials

By Carl Davidson

According to the most recent figures from Nielsen Media Research Inc., the average American watches television for 4 hours and 35 minutes per day—that’s like having a part-time job. According to answers.com, you could earn a degree every three months if you spent that time studying. If you look closely, however, your time in front of the television can teach you to sell more water equipment.

Remember that the television ads you see have been tested for results. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent on research to know what works and what doesn’t. Take advantage of this market research and put it to use in your sales.

Customize Your Presentation

One factor that is noticeable is that the commercials are different for different audiences. Commercials on CNN are usually about financial products and services. Commercials during NHL hockey are about fixing gray hair and drinking beer. Advertisers have learned to customize ads for a specific audience. Do you do this, or is your presentation about the same for young families with babies as it is for retired seniors?

Use Emotions, Not Logic

Notice that virtually all commercials use emotions and not logic. There are very few commercials that actually show you how a product works. In the early days of television, commercials showed graphs and animations that showed why pills dissolved faster in the stomach and how transmissions worked. Now, it’s all about image, emotion and feelings. Notice that fast food commercials don’t talk about the food. They show a young couple enjoying it or a grandfather whose grandkids love him for buying a meal. Are you stuck where television was 50 years ago, trying to explain how softeners work instead of selling the benefits and emotions?

Never Say What You Can Demo

Notice that television never says what can be demonstrated. If they can show you a truck pulling a ton of bricks, they do. They don’t say, “Our truck can pull 2,000 pounds.” Do you use demonstrations, or do you tell people things you don’t prove? Remember that political scandals, news scandals and much more have made your audience the most skeptical in history. When you say it, you may think they believe you; but if you show them, they will believe more.

Give Stuff Away

Another common factor in modern television commercials is they don’t try to sell before they give away something. They offer a “free report” or an “information package.” This can be especially effective in our industry when canvassing door to door or calling on neighbors. It is also very effective on your website. Visitors may not be sold enough to book a water test, but may be happy to receive your “white paper” on water and the home. How many people ask for a water test from your website? If it’s less than you would like, try giving away information and then asking to do a water test.

Test Your Enthusiasm

Sales is a transference of enthusiasm from the salesperson to the customer. Are you enthusiastic enough about your product, your company and yourself? As you watch commercials, turn off the sound and look at the faces in the commercial. You will notice how expressive their faces are and how their expressions are focused on the joy the product brings. If you could record your presentation and turn off the sound, would you see the same level of enthusiasm? They wouldn’t have it in so many commercials if it wasn’t proven to sell more. Try ratcheting up your enthusiasm and your sales will increase.

Feel Their Pain

You may have noticed that most commercials spend time on the pain of the customer who does not have the product being sold. It could be a man whose dandruff makes him unpopular and lonely; it could be wasting money on food. It could be anything. After they establish the pain, they show how happy the customer is with the product and how it changes the life of the user. Do you take time to get the customer to feel their pain as part of your presentation?

Whether you agree with this article or not, watch television with a new perspective and it will teach you a lot about people and a lot about sales. Even commercials we don’t like sell. If a commercial is on the air for a few weeks, it is selling. Use some of your hours in front of the tube to see what techniques they use and ask yourself how you can adapt them to selling more of your products and services. Best of all, if someone tells you to stop watching and do household chores, you can tell them you are doing research for work. wqp

For more information on this subject write in 1009 on the reader service card or visit www.wqpmag.com or call 716.580.3384.
At last My love has come along My lonely days are over And life is like a song. Oh yeah yeah At last The skies above are blue My heart was wrapped up in clovers The night I looked at you. I found a dream, that I could speak to, A dream that I could call my own. I found a thrill to press my cheek to, A thrill that I have never known. Oh yeah yeah You smiled, you smiled Oh and the angel's spell was cast And here we are in heaven For you are mine At last. "At Last" is a song written by Mack Gordon and Harry Warren for the musical film Sun Valley Serenade (1941). Glenn Miller and his orchestra recorded the tune several times, with a 1942 version reaching number two on the US Billboard pop music chart. In 1960, rhythm and blues singer Etta James recorded an arrangement by Riley Hampton that improvised on Warren's melody. James' version was the title track on her debut album At Last! (1960) and was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1999. Celine