

By Jordan Pine

I thought I'd start the year off with a look back at 2012. Here are seven bona-fide DRTV hits from the past 12 months that exemplify and reinforce **The SciMark Seven**.

1. NEEDED

Explanation: *The product should be needed enough to generate the impulse to buy. For example, it should solve a problem.*

Example: TELEBrands' **Olde Brooklyn Lantern**

TELEBrands must have a crystal ball because they timed this one perfectly. Storm season always brings increased demand for emergency items. Attempting to capitalize on this annual trend, this vintage LED lantern launched at the beginning of storm season — and hit full swing right when "Super Storm" Sandy was hitting the Northeast. The best part of this story is that it truly met a need by providing inexpensive lighting to families without electricity for days or weeks.

2. TARGETED

Explanation: *The product should be designed for a big enough buying group that is known to be DR responsive.*

Example: Allstar Products Group's **Forever Comfy**

The best products for DRTV are ones that can be used by every household in America. The Holy Grail of products is the one that can be used by every person in America. Forever Comfy sails past the first bar and very nearly hits the second one. After all, who couldn't use a more comfortable cushion for his or her derrière? As for buying groups that are DR-responsive, there is none richer or larger than America's Baby Boomer generation, and this is the perfect sort of product to meet their increasing need for comfort.

3. DIFFERENT

Explanation: *The product should be different enough to get people's attention.*

Example: Hampton Direct's **Insta Hang**

Completely original concepts are rare these days, but the Hampton team brought one to America's attention. Borrowing a thought from above, this product also solves a problem experienced in every American house-

hold. Borrowing a thought from below, it's hard to believe no one has improved on the hammer and nail for hanging pictures until now.

WHAT MAKES UP THE SCIMARK SEVEN (S7)?

The **PRODUCT** should be:

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

The **CATEGORY** should be: (4) uncrowded.

The **COMMERCIAL** should be: (5) engaging;

(6) motivating; and (7) clear.

4. UNCROWDED

Explanation: *The category should be relatively free of competition.*

Example: Lenfest's **Wax Vac**

Visit your local store in search of a way to clean your ears, and you'll find one solution that has been on shelves for almost a century: the cotton swab. Incredibly, no one has ever improved on this manual solution to a common problem. I once believed this was because the lowly Q-tip is a "good enough" solution, but I was clearly wrong. People are desperate for a better way, and until Wax Vac there was nothing new in the category for them to try.

5. ENGAGING

Explanation: *The commercial should grab your attention and hold it throughout.*

Example: The Schwartz Group's **Perfect Tortilla**

On at least two occasions, I have witnessed the Schwartz team take a mediocre product that I was "on the fence" about and make it into something spectacular. Perfect Tortilla is one such example. The product is a monochrome pan that bakes white discs of dough. How interesting could that possibly be? But watch the spot. Not only does the spot make traditional tortilla dishes fun and engaging, but it also progressively reveals great baking ideas that raise interest levels as the commercial goes on.

6. MOTIVATING

Explanation: *The commercial should feature an offer that will motivate people off the couch.*

Example: Marc Gill's **Grout Bully**

Marc Gill, the ubiquitous pitchman who is quickly becoming the new Billy Mays, clearly believes in the idea that an offer must be motivating — so much so that he uses a signature catchphrase to reinforce it. Right when the viewer thinks a Marc Gill deal can't get any better, he booms: "But I'm not stoppin' there!" What follows may feel like a typical DRTV punchline to jaded industry veterans, but credit Gill for calling the viewer's attention to a key part of the close of any good pitch. There hasn't been much innovation in offers (language or structure) since TELEBrands popularized the \$10 BOGO, and that's a shame. This is one of the few areas where a small change can vastly improve a CPO.

7. CLEAR

Explanation: *The commercial should communicate clearly and not leave the viewer with unanswered questions or objections.*

Example: Hutton-Miller's **Fast Brite**

Most DRTV producers with experience get this right, so it's really the negative examples that prove the rule. I chose the Hutton-Miller team as my positive example because they are at the top of their game in this regard. For instance, they have a special knack for repeating and reinforcing key selling messages without seeming redundant — a key clarity-boosting technique. They've also perfected the science of overcoming questions and objections with a blend of credible testimonials and 'right before your eyes' magical demonstrations. The Fast Brite commercial is a case study in all of these methods.

