



Red October: The Seasonality of Direct Response Media

“All the leaves are brown and the sky is gray...I would rather buy media in the spring...than on a Red October day...”

One of the first questions clients ask is, “When is the best time of year to test my infomercial? Of course, there are many right answers and it all depends upon the product. October can be the right month if the product features an item that will aid in cooking that mouth-watering turkey for the holidays. Otherwise, media buyers try to avoid October like the Plague.

While media buyers and marketers look forward to fourth quarter, we cringe at the thought of low profitability reports in October. The rates take a big jump to satisfy the media outlets and the results simply do not match the increase. Needless to say, you can't avoid October. However, testing should take place in September or November if your plans call for a fourth-quarter launch.

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Since 9/11, much of our history of the good and bad months changed. Likewise, some holidays can be great and others death. The job of an agency is to stay ahead of the game and to incorporate the most recent learning curve into their campaigns.

No single vendor in the industry receives and processes as much valuable data on a daily basis as the media companies. Your media company will likely be one of your most important partners and advisors. Unlike

many vendors that receive a fee for their services, media buyers are paid on a commission—so the better you do the better they do.

Once you have the details of your product idea ironed out, it's time to approach the people in the industry who can make your DRTV campaign a reality. Even before you start manufacturing your product, consult with a media company, as media firms can accurately project the number of sales per day, week and month. They have a history of which products and offers have worked the best and understand the strength of a good telemarketing script.

Will the *advertising to sales or media ratio* (A/S or MER) continue to improve every week, month and year that the campaign continues to air? Naturally, one would like to think that the more money you spend the cumulative effect would result in an increasing MER. Actually, every client will experience a variety of results, depending upon the upsells and the ever-changing cost of goods. However, it's been my overall experience, working on thousands of campaigns, that the MER has a history of staying the same from launch through rollout and tapering off near the end of the campaign.

Yes, with the arrival of October, we witness the leaves turning and falling along with our results. Unfortunately, we see that same turn and fall in direct response when hurricanes hit, tornadoes strike and *elephants* and *donkeys* go to war. During the past 20 years, many of us have weathered these storms and one thing remains the same...Amazing things happen when you combine a good idea, an entrepreneur willing to lay it all on the line and the power of direct response television. ☒

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