



+25%
 Source: NSS, Galaxy Explorer, LiveSD HH AA
 Ptg. #1 - in growth 11/12 vs. 10/29/07
 among new first run programs, not all shown,
 shows available upon request



- [Home](#)
- [News](#)
- [Blogs](#)
- [Talking TV](#)
- [Special Reports](#)
- [Video](#)
- [Newsletters](#)
- [Subscribe](#)
- [Jobs](#)

News

December 9, 2007

It's Time to Talk Turkey About TV Ads

Some Brands Stand Out to Potential Consumers Through Shrewd Planning

By Mark Dominiak, Special to *TelevisionWeek*

There is a ridiculous scene in the second act of "Spamalot" when King Arthur is wandering through the forest, lamenting his bad situation. He wanders about singing that he's all alone and that it's horrible to be in the situation with no one beside him. What makes the scene ridiculous is that his trusty aide Patsy is next to him the entire time, eventually becoming irritated that Arthur is too dense to realize he's right there at hand.

I conjured the image of this scene after thinking about a few conversations I had with my wife recently about television commercials. Shortly before Thanksgiving, she asked me, "Why haven't there been any good commercials on television lately? Can you think of any?" At which point I rattled off a variety of spots that I thought were pretty good.

In my wife's opinion, the only really good commercial she had seen was the one for Jennie-O Turkey. It's an entertaining spot. There's a poor woman struggling at the sink with a truly large bird, predictably dropping it on the floor. The payoff comes when she heaves it mightily from the floor, only to have it burst through her kitchen window and knock out her unsuspecting husband in the yard. Over the next few days, my wife pointed the spot out to me during "The Oprah Winfrey Show" and her ABC soaps.

On Thanksgiving Day itself, she also proudly pointed out a couple of spots in the Macy's parade coverage, noting that advertisers had shrewdly run their commercials in the breaks following the parade appearance of their balloons or floats. The Snoopy balloon was followed by a Metropolitan Life spot and the Build a Bear Workshop float was followed by Build a Bear unit.

Poor Creative or Execution?

Her comments started me thinking: Is it really that there haven't been good commercials lately? The examples demonstrate that there are tactics brands execute as part of their placement that better help the brand to stand out to its potential consumers. Maybe the actual situation is that most brands just simply don't take this extra care in their planning and execution.

If so, that would be an abdication of media's primary mission—to provide the creative execution with the best platform possible to communicate its message. Especially in the current media environment, media planners cannot afford to simply schedule media impressions. Deliberate, thoughtful engineering of the plan must occur to give the message a quality platform.

The Thanksgiving examples provide some basic blocking and tackling for how to get that done. The three examples have a lot in common. At their core, they're all about marrying the advertising message with relevant content or mindset, honoring the principle of media doing its best to elevate the message.

Thanksgiving Examples

Jennie-O's execution strategy flows from a pretty straightforward leveraging of appropriate mindset with solid, basic programming. Jennie-O focused effort against the most likely target, women who would probably be the ones with primary responsibility for Thanksgiving turkey preparation.

They scheduled their weight in exactly the weeks that the core women target would start thinking about the

Latest News

- [CBS Mobile Promotes Seller to Senior VP](#)
- [Golden Globes Nominees React](#)
- [Penthouse Videos to be Available in HD](#)
- [DirecTV's Strategy Man](#)

MARKETPLACE

[Large DLP? HDTV's](#)

Find Out Why Big TV's are Better with HDTV Powered by DLP? Technology.

[America's Top 12 Experts Pick New Stocks for 2008](#)

Get our Free Winter 2008 Report featuring 12 picks from the top Stock Advisors i...

[Download Ringtones](#)

Download All Your Favorite Songs, Wallpapers & More. Get 10 Complimentary Ringto...

[Cruise Deals - 75% Off](#)

Great deals on last-minute cruises. All cruise lines and destinations. Best pric...

[View Edmunds Top Choices](#)

for Sporty Luxury SUV's

[Get Listed...](#)

Sign Up for our Newsletters

- **E-Daily:** Top headlines of the last 24 hours
- **Viral Video:** The most-watched clips from the most popular video sharing Web sites

holiday bird. Further, realizing core-target women would likely include a significant number who happen to be in the home during the week, they leveraged solid women demographic placements in "Oprah" and daytime dramas.

Met Life is also taking advantage of an opportune mindset. In addition to Thanksgiving being a time when families and their well-being are top of mind, the eve of Black Friday always gets people thinking about what friends and relatives really need. The Flying Ace Snoopy balloon coupled with a Met Life 30-second commercial provided a very nice reminder that insurance is also an important need for those who want to care for their families. Toss in the fact that Charles Schultz's Peanuts characters are much more visible at this time of year, appearing in television specials and touring art exhibits, and the placement stands out well.

With all of the recent reports noting that a mall is the favored destination for many holiday shoppers, it's not a surprise that Build-a-Bear Workshop took advantage of the Macy's parade placement to connect with potential shoppers the day before many of them were girding themselves for battle at the mall. Seeing the International CeleBEARation Clock Tower float and a commercial for Build-a-Bear had value 24 hours before mall-goers happened to be strolling by a Build-a-Bear Workshop store.

Thanksgiving doesn't provide the only recent examples of media doing a great job at elevating the creative message. Monster.com's recent "Lobster Lore" effort with Discovery Channel has received some coverage. If you haven't heard of it, essentially the media team utilized a trivia-type of vignette teasing viewers—for example, challenging them to guess the size of the largest lobster on record.

The effort seems to have paid dividends, with reports noting 70%-plus aided and 40%-plus unaided recall of the Monster.com spots. That's a very positive viewer response to the brand message and a placement that is very much spot on for the Monster.com brand.

Planning Implications

Where should planners start? The first best practice must be to resolve to engineer the plan to elevate creative messages. That may seem like a no-brainer, but in a sea of advertising messages it isn't very easy to identify many great examples of brands that effectively do this in their media execution, implying that plenty of media planning groups forget or fail to take this step.

A second best practice would be to build a strategic theme or premise into the foundation of the media plan. In effect, describe the best possible platform for the creative message. Once that platform is fixed and understood by the planning, account and client teams, it becomes a litmus test of sorts against which to check tactics. If a planning strategy or idea doesn't fit the platform, it shouldn't be in the plan.

How about re-engineering planning flowcharts as a best practice? Instead of laying out brand drive periods under the calendar dates at the top of the chart, try integrating consumer mindset opportunities. Another variation of this would be to lay out media components down the chart not by media type, but by the consumer mindset opportunity which they target.

As the examples suggest, marrying content to context is also a best practice. It can be as basic as making sure turkey commercials run in turkey season when turkey preparers are paying attention. But things aren't always that clean, and opportunities are not tailor-made.

Planners shouldn't be shy about taking an approach similar to that of Monster.com with Discovery. Innovatively work with vendor partners to create something that's spot-on for your brand. As the results show, well-crafted executions provide exactly the desired platform for the creative message. And don't forget, any idea doesn't have to appear within typical television paradigms. There are new frontiers of online, on mobile and in-store that are very flexible and may fit nicely into key consumer mindset opportunity windows.

Another best practice would be to stake out a bigger piece of real estate. One of the biggest contributing factors to commercial environment inertia is simply the rhythm of the advertising. Consumers are accustomed to commercial breaks at certain points in programming. It's possible that they've got a good, intuitive feel for how many spots run in a break and about when a break will end. In that light, it's no wonder many spots may go unrecognized. They become part of the rhythmic ebb and flow.

So break up the rhythm. Buy a bigger piece of the real estate. That may mean moving from a 30-second to a 60-second spot in a pod, or buying up a whole pod. Or it may mean buying a unit in each pod. You might try something sounding crazy like running the same execution in each of the pods. While it sounds crazy, it may work. In the book "The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference," author Malcolm Gladwell points out that one of the successes of "Blues Clues" came from airing the same episode Monday through Friday. By the end of the week, kids happily were discovering things about it that hadn't occurred to them when it first aired.

Don't schedule weight across a week. Find a day of the week most conducive to consumer mindset and plow all of your weight into that day. A massive presence in the day will break up the typical rhythm consumers expect and provide a platform for the creative message to communicate.

In today's dynamic media world, it's not enough to simply identify an opportunistic vehicle and place a message in it. Consumers are increasingly prone to overlook messages imbedded in the flow. Planners need to link vehicle to mindset and create a platform that enables the advertising message to truly stand out to consumers. That's media's mission and a key to creating market impact.

Mark Dominiak is principal strategist of marketing, communication and context for Insight Garden.

Tags: [Media Planner](#), [Print Edition](#)



Posted on December 9, 2007 9:00 PM | [Permalink](#)

TrackBack

Post a comment

Name:

Email Address:

URL (optional):

Remember personal info?

Comments: (you may use HTML tags for style)

• [About Us](#)
• [Contact Us](#)

