

How do I get my product on TV shopping channels?

Every year America's major shopping channels launch thousands of never-before-seen products into the market place. The biggest of all shopping channels is QVC, located in West Chester, PA. QVC is a worldwide television network and retailer with locations and TV networks in the US, the UK, Japan and China. Here's a little known fact: QVC is the second largest TV network worldwide.

The number two player in the business is HSN, or the Home Shopping Network, located in Florida, followed by Shop at Home and Shop NBC. There are a few others, but these are the majors of the business.

All of these networks have a product review process. As in the case of QVC, you go to their website www.qvcproductsearch.com and apply to have your product reviewed. Via their site you will fill out a questionnaire talking about your product, business and many other items. Once completed, your application will go to someone in vendor relations to be reviewed and considered. Typically, this process takes six or more months.

Is there a better way? Because these networks get so many products sent to them every day, it is difficult for them to really examine them as closely as they would like. For this reason, many of the networks depend on the talents or product reps and vendors to bring in new products.

This would be similar to having an agent to get into the movies. These are people who have a successful reputation of bringing the networks winning products. They know what the networks are looking for, who within the networks is the right buyer for a product and what the inventor or manufacturer needs to do to get it TV-ready.

Here is an example: we had an inventor of a diet product come to us for help. She had been chasing QVC for over a year with no luck. We took her on as a client and got her product accepted by QVC within two weeks, because we have a trusted relationship, a reputation for success and access to the right people on a daily basis. (Western Creative has had tremendous success in this arena and has conducted literally millions of dollars in business with the shopping channels.)

How do you know if your product is right for the shopping channels? Most of the shopping channels have several different product categories and operate similar

to many major retailers with a major exception: retailers want products with branding in place; the shopping channels are willing to create the brand with you.

(An interesting side note, to show the value of QVC's participation in developing a brand: a typical 8-minute primetime airing on QVC is the equivalent of \$300,000 of advertising for your product. Imagine having someone buy your product from you and throw in that level of advertising for free.)

There are several important criteria that a product must meet, and chief among them is that a product up for consideration is unique, demonstrable and not readily available to the public. Preferably, the shopping networks want to be the first to show it, if not the exclusive seller of the product.

Major areas of interest for the shopping channels are the following: collectables, fashion, cosmetics, shoes, home goods, kitchen gadgets, labor saving devices, unique food items, electronics and gift items. These preferred product areas reflect the 90%-plus female audience. However, there have been some inroads to the male market with NASCAR, the NFL, Craftsman tools and Chuck Woolery Outdoors. (The latter category is operated and managed by this firm.)

Breaking into the shopping channel business is very exciting ñ but not without risks. After you have been approved and your product has met all of the legal and quality control standards of the network, you will be issued a purchase order. However, this is not the end of this story. Every purchase order will contain a full return privilege, meaning if the product does not sell, they can send it back to you. So there is definitely a risk involved.

An experienced agency will be very helpful here. A good agent will know if your product can make it before it ever gets to the network. And, if the product is approved, the agent knows the tricks to guide it through the system, to give the product the best chance of making it.

To drive this idea home, we recently took on a client that had been on QVC and failed. As a rule, once a product fails on any shopping channel it is through. Despite this fact, we were able to reconfigure the product slightly and, with our reputation, convinced the QVC buyer to give it another chance. The second time around the product was a hit.

This was a rare case, however. As in all things, you want to make your first impression your best impression, because you can never count on getting second chance with a shopping network.



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To give your product a fighting chance, it is vital that you find an experienced agent that is willing to represent you to the shopping networks. An agent with a long-running relationship with the networks will go a long way in getting your product picked up and, just as important, giving your product a real shot at success.