



February 2005

## **I Want My QVC: Getting Your Products Featured on TV \* Fuel \* February, 2005**

**By Kimberly L. McCall**

©2005

Who knew so many women lusted for garish sweaters with imprints of penguins decked out in scarves and hats? The brains at QVC did. In 2003, Quacker Factory, the maker of such apparel, sold about \$43 million worth of product through the mega-shopping channel. With returns like that, it's no shock that small-business product makers drool at the thought of getting their wares sold through nonpaid television placement. Here's how to get your goods in front of the masses, be it on a national morning show, an entertainment program or a shopping channel.

**Research your market before pitching.** Keep a watchful eye on your target program to ensure that it's a good fit for your product. Then develop a creative pitch for the show's producer. If the program offers prize giveaways, that could be a good way to get your foot in the door.

**Create a wish list of media.** For fashion designers, the list might include *Extra* or *Entertainment Tonight*, goodie baskets at awards shows and the PR reps for the famous and beautiful. By contrast, a gourmet food company might pitch *The Oprah Winfrey Show* for a segment on affordable luxuries or holiday gifts, while an author might pine for time on NBC's *Today*.

**Create a press kit.** The kit should contain comprehensive information about the product, fact sheets, photos and interview questions. And be sure to include a sample of your wares, whether it's a book, a toy, a gadget or a hot clothing item. "Always anticipate the needs of the media outlet," says Tiffany Morrison, president of Lane Marketing, LLC, a Los Angeles-based marketing firm.

**Make sure the placement fits your brand.** TV exposure is fabulous, but if the show isn't aimed at your demographic, it does little to further your brand equity. Marquis Jet, a New York City-based company that leases time on corporate jets, has actually turned down many television opportunities. One slot the company did embrace was the first installment of *The Apprentice*, which featured the business prominently in one episode and in three subsequent shows. According to Marquis Jet's executive vice president, Ken Austin, the experience was essentially "a 45-minute free commercial on one of the highest rated primetime television programs." Donald Trump called Marquis Jet's participation "the world's greatest infomercial," adds Austin.

**Use a product placement agency.** Bonnie Harris, president of Wax Marketing, a marketing and public relations agency in Saint Paul, Minn., claims "the right agency can get great exposure and placements if they have the right connections." To find an agency, do a Web search, interview the agency thoroughly and be sure to get references. The placement agency may work to get your product featured on a television show or in goodie bags at an awards show — a method that can up your cachet quotient and lead to future TV placements.

**Be persistent.** Keep pitching fresh segment ideas to producers, and don't be dismayed if you get ignored the first few times at bat. Keep your media list up to date, and regularly remind the producers of your wares through press releases, faxes, phone calls and personal letters.

QVC, which reaches approximately 96 percent of U.S. homes with cable, did nearly \$5 billion in sales in 2003. If you're hungry to sell through QVC specifically, consider the following tips:

- Know the channel, know its products. Marilyn Montross, QVC's director of vendor relations, advises prospective vendors to watch QVC and browse its Web site ([www.qvc.com](http://www.qvc.com)) to get familiar with the product assortment. Montross points out that quality is paramount, as each item the company considers undergoes rigorous quality assurance testing.
- Make sure your product is demonstrable. Sandy Sandler, creator of the Bowdabra bow maker, sells through QVC and says a product will sell better on television if the audience can visualize using it. Knowing that its ability to be easily demonstrated would work well on QVC, Bowdabra was still stunned when it sold 5,000 units on the first airing. The most successful airing resulted in a sale of 11,375 units in 14 minutes.
- Have the financial and production chutzpah to ship a ton of units. Sandler emphasizes the importance of having the financial wherewithal to produce ample product. "The shopping channel may require 5,000 units in stock before it airs the product," she notes. Sandler also warns that if the item doesn't sell, you may find yourself deluged with product, so make sure you have other venues for selling.
- Get in touch with the QVC product search team. Montross says the process is simple, and she encourages would-be sellers to log on to [www.qvcproductsearch.com](http://www.qvcproductsearch.com) and fill out the forms. Every year, the company runs a "Product Search Discovery Tour," and in 2005 the tour will be in four cities January 31–February 15. Visit the site for more information.