

# CREATIVE CRITIQUE

## Reviewing DTC Creative

### After 10 years is DTC advertising making a mark?

A few DTC advertising campaigns – including creative work for Gardasil, Lyrica and Yaz – stood out in what otherwise was a status-quo year for DTC. The Rozerem campaign also continues to spark commentary.



As direct-to-consumer broadcast advertising enters its second decade, marketers and agency executives are still wrestling with content and regulatory constraints that limit the creative process for DTC broadcast ads. By at least the “regulatory” measure, the 2007 year was good for marketers, with no major campaigns (at least as of early November) cited by the FDA for violating advertising guidelines.

On the content side, the year marked a break from the tried-and-true methods of the recent past. Not only did marketers move away from the doctor-in-white-coat format that seemed to dominate the DTC portfolio in 2006, but it was a year in which more than just a few brands tried to break through the creative clutter with new approaches to their DTC work. For example, the Celebrex team at Pfizer tried a long-form version of a DTC ad, with a running time of 2 ½ minutes, and the Restylane marketers from Medicis tapped into YouTube as part of their promotional efforts. These were just a few of the innovations rolled out over the past year.

Another point that seems clear: despite the rage for new forms of promotion and engagement tactics, there are many passionate practitioners of ‘traditional’ advertising methods who will continue to strive for advances in broadcast and print DTC campaigns. “Let’s not totally throw out advertising yet,” said Helayne Spivak, chief creative officer of Saatchi & Saatchi Consumer Health + Wellness. To think that any one form of promotion is dead and “something else is alive and well and taking over” is a mistake, she noted at the “DTC in the Age of Innovation” conference this fall.

While there were many new campaigns and concepts in DTC in 2007, there were just a handful that really stood out and made a deep impression. That’s what we discovered in an informal survey of agency executives who have been

involved with DTC for the past few years. Following are the reviews from three experienced agency executives, Brian Crooks of Avenue A / Razorfish, Stu Klein of Alchemy NY and Mike Rutstein of DraftFCB.

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– Brian Crooks.



Brian Crooks

**Brian Crooks**  
Executive Creative Director  
Avenue A | Razorfish (Philadelphia office)

Looking back over the last year, two pharma campaigns stand out. Both Viagra and Rozerem differentiated themselves by trying and sometimes succeeding at being very much un-pharma like.

Viagra’s effort could have used a little, well, Viagra as the overall idea fell a little flat. The “Viva Viagra” theme as sung by James Brolin-esque older gents tried to seem real and relevant, but came across as staged and simplistic. A garage full of Dockers wearing



hipsters belting out a tune about erectile dysfunction is a bit of a stretch. There was a nice online extension of the campaign (no pun intended) with mix-your-own Viva Viagra tune functionality, but I could never quite seem to mix the silliness out of it.

The Rozerem campaign with its quirky and compelling mix of dreamscape meets mundanity was a true surprise. A cast of unlikely characters and a storyline that went beyond the symptom-solution scenario did a great job at involving me with the brand. As a late-comer in a marketplace with well established players (Ambien's first-to-market strength and Lunesta's luminescent nocturnal moth creepiness, for example), Rozerem's little story went a long way in helping the upstart brand carve a recognizable niche for itself.

I don't know if the quixotic campaign always connected with people who didn't see the TV spot, or if the online properties did much to expand and enhance the brand proposition, but it receives high marks from me for its largely successful attempts at being engaging and entertaining. ■

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Stu Klein

**Stu Klein**  
General Manager, EVP  
Alchemy NY

In 2007, the new campaign that deserves recognition as this year's standout is Gardasil. The Gardasil (Merck) DTC campaign poignantly taps the maternal instinct of protection by featuring a series of active, healthy young women all echoing a mantra that is unassailable: namely, that with Gardasil, they can be one less statistic to a now (mostly) avoidable cancer.



In doing so, Gardasil has overcome a seemingly insurmountable ethical quandary of promoting a vaccine for a condition caused by sexual activity to moms of pre-teen girls. How does one contract HPV? It's not in the advertising (although it rightfully is spelled out on the Web site); instead, the campaign leaps right to the potential end result of HPV, (cervical cancer), and in doing so, forces moms to take action regardless of their potential moral objections.

Of special note is the vignette in one of the TV ads that features a girl speaking the Spanish translation of the line "One Less," a smart move for both the overt multi-cultural marketing rationale, but also as a subtle recognition of the blurring of cultures far more evident in the world of pre-teens and adolescents today than in their parent's generation.

## The long-running campaigns

Also of special note for new advertising launching in 2007 is the Lyrica print campaign. Utilizing a series of arresting visuals, the campaign graphically depicts the type of pain that requires a solution beyond more commonly utilized pain products, and does an excellent job of differentiating the kind of pain suffered by those with neuropathic pain from the traditionally depicted musculoskeletal aches and pain.



Finally, special commendation must go to Vytorin in 2007. In a category where the revolving door of brand managers and agencies often results in a new campaign each year, 2007 marks the third year of the remarkable Vytorin DTC campaign. We all can recall the consumer campaigns that ran for years and elevated their brands to legendary status ("The Ultimate Driving Machine" for BMW, Tony the Tiger's roar of "They're GRRR-EAT" for Frosted Flakes, "I Should've Had a V8," and the list goes on and on).

How many of these can we find in the DTC world 10 years since DDMAC lifted the initial restrictions on DTC TV? Sure, there are a few memorable ads during this time, but actual, long-running campaigns? Congratulations to all involved with Vytorin DTC

for staying the course with a campaign built around a relevant, motivating insight that dovetails perfectly with the brand's functional benefits. Hopefully, we'll see many more years of this wonderful campaign. ■

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 – Mike Rutstein



**Mike Rutstein**  
 Chief Growth Officer  
 DraftFCB

Back in the 1990's Ortho was first to change the category conversation, going beyond birth control to tout improved skin benefits. Since then, category news has come primarily from new product forms (patches, injections and rings), new dosages (once monthly) and new product benefits (fewer periods).

In a category where product differentiation appeared to hit the glass ceiling, Yaz found yet another way to take hormonal birth control pills to another level. In the "Beyond Birth Control" advertising, Yaz revitalizes "me too" category promises with news that it treats emotional and physical premenstrual symptoms (PMDD) in addition to delivering effective birth control and clear skin. The promise is most certainly unique and will surely appeal to many young women.



But the question is, have they gone too far? Are they bordering on marketing Yaz as a "magic pill?" It would seem that Yaz is setting itself up to over promise and under deliver against its audience. And, does the message imply that PMDD (which can be fairly severe among sufferers) is a condition that is universally experienced among vibrant, healthy and fertile women?

## The insight is dead on

Plavix is a product that has been promoted for some time, but more recently has shifted its focus away from a pure MOA product story to one that embraces humanity and taps into a universal truth.

What makes the latest campaign interesting is that the insight is dead on. Sufferers may have a false sense that they're invincible against a second attack, especially if they look like the picture of health. Plavix dramatizes this by juxtaposing the external, physical prowess of a strong, healthy-looking guy with a tiny clot that seems harmless, but has the potential to wreak havoc on the inside.



The campaign does a terrific job of capturing and bringing the insight to life by reframing the value proposition in a way that helps men understand that regardless of their physical prowess they are no match for the underlying cause of a heart attack even if it's perceived to be a small and innocuous threat.

## Kudos to Takeda

In a category that bombards consumers with almost 12,000 commercials per month, or 20 spots per hour, how does the third market entrant even begin to compete? Believe it or not, matching competitive spending, which is estimated at upwards of \$150 million annually, was the easy part. But, getting noticed took a little more risk. Rozerem banked on the premise of "getting your dreams back" as their ticket to success. To their credit, they certainly got noticed and stirred up a lot of talk value.

People seem to be obsessed with unraveling the Abe Lincoln/beaver riddle, which is all the rage among the viral community. Kudos to Takeda for differentiating and penetrating one of the most competitive, dynamic DTC categories. But do they really believe that those 87 million people suffering night after night are interested getting their dreams back vs. getting a restful night's sleep? According to Rozerem's sales story, apparently not. Rozerem is a great example of how even the most breakthrough work will fall flat if it doesn't deliver a meaningful, relevant consumer promise. ■