

## From the Lab

### Myths and Realities About Media Buying Seasons

**H**ave you ever wondered what quarters are best for response? Are January and February really the best months for infomercials? Does April really slump because of tax season, or is it something else? Why does everyone think June, July and August are bad months for direct response, but my media ratios seem to be better than ever? Is "Red October" really as bloody as media companies would have us believe, or is it just another DRTV myth? And why don't I spend more money in the fourth quarter on media when all the major retailers are cashing in on the holiday buying frenzy?

Media buyers love the first quarter. Obviously, the weather is bad, so HUT (Households Using Televisions) levels are up. Additionally, media prices are reasonable, and consumers are spending — a formula for great results. But what about the rest of the year. Following are some findings from a survey of leading media buyers and marketers.

#### April Showers? Red October? Are they really the worst months, or do they just have a bad rap?

Media buyers and marketers alike confirm that April and October have earned their infamy. Why? Both are the first months of their respective quarters, so stations are hiking prices, while buyers are trying to negotiate rates according to response. In April, marketers and media buyers also compete with warmer weather, Easter and tax day. In October, as Stacy Durand of Mercury Media says, "We're paying for snow that does not fall until November."

During both April and October, results are down by an average of 30 percent. Experienced marketers know it. Jon Nokes, owner and CEO of Smart Inventions, tells us he backs off of his media spending schedule in both April and October by about 30 percent to compensate for poor performance.

#### An Annual Media Ratio "Heartbeat"



#### A Year in DR Media

Our media experts rated each month on media rates and response — No. 1 being the best and No. 12 being the worst month for DRTV.

Rating	Month	Reasoning
1	January	Efficient media pricing, poor weather, new year's resolutions
2	February	Poor weather across the country. Viewership and response up.
3	November	Giftng means higher media rates, but spending supports it.
4	December	High media rates, great first two weeks, but response falls off.
5	June	Inventory opens up and rates are dropping, but people are outside.
6	July	Rates at rock bottom to accommodate low response.
7	August	Rates and response still down, but people focus on "back to school."
8	September	Rates start to go up, but people are still outside.
9	March	Weather still generally poor, but rates are going up.
10	May	Rates drop a bit, but response is sliding.
11	April	First month of high-rate quarter, tax day, Easter slow sales
12	October	First month of highest rate quarter, with no response to support rates.

#### Summer isn't as bad as some people think

Many tend to view summer as a down season. HUT levels are down, but many experts think that it's a great opportunity — lower HUT levels create lower media rates, and results can be maintained. This is an example of the best in media buying — everything works for the right rate.

TEST extends a very hearty thank you to its panel of media experts: Danette Dickerman, media director, and Tonya Walshe, senior media buyer, Tyee Euro RSCG; Nancy Lazkani, president, Icon Media Direct; Stacy Durand, senior vice president, client services, Mercury Media; Peter Koeppel, president, and Christena Garduno, COO, Koeppel Direct; and Jon Nokes, owner and CEO, Smart Inventions Inc.

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Founded by Adam MacDonald, TEST Marketing Group operates a "Test Laboratory," where campaigns are developed by experts in a controlled environment. The TEST Laboratory is a specialized inbound/outbound phone center. The center is staffed with a group of specially trained marketing agents working on a state-of-the-art platform designed specifically to develop and measure the most profitable sales strategies for DR campaigns. Once determined, the strategy is "rolled-out" through the primary inbound and outbound telemarketer. The preferred result of this process: massive increases in net profit. TEST can be reached at (714) 546-5555. For Adam MacDonald, TEST CEO, dial ext. 202. For Chris Walshe, TEST president, dial ext. 201.