

# Giving New Inventions a Shot on TV Lenfest Media Group

Inventors Digest, September 2010

[Lenfest Media Group](#) is putting the invention community on notice – it wants to be the new As Seen On TV.

The direct response or infomercial firm has rebranded itself under the “Get It On TV” slogan.

“One day we hope to replace As Seen On TV,” says Andy McKinley, vice president of Strategy and Business Development at Philadelphia-based Lenfest. “We recognize they’re the leader, but we’re gunning for them.”

To achieve this lofty goal, Lenfest is looking for new products from inventors. Since late 2009, the company has courted independent product developers in hopes of launching the next Snuggies, Shake Weight or EZ Cracker.

Lenfest has received up to 200 submissions a week, although the number fluctuates, McKinley says.

Lenfest is no stranger to television. In 2000, Comcast Corp. purchased Lenfest Communications Inc., a cable television company, from AT&T and the Lenfest family for \$6.71 billion in stock and debt. Lenfest retained a station in the Philadelphia area and operates it as a 24/7 infomercial channel, focusing almost exclusively on long-form or 30-minute ads.

However, it is working on short-form direct response ads for new products it has in the pipeline.

So, what does it take to get your product on TV through Lenfest?

First off, it needs to have mass appeal – something every household could use.

It has to be demonstrable – something that can be demonstrated well on camera.

It has to solve an immediate problem – an everyday hassle, like wrinkled shirts or dusty ceiling fans.

And it has to be priced right.

For short-form commercials, the magic price typically is under \$20.

“No doubt that \$19.95 number is huge in this economic climate,” McKinley says, noting that the company – like virtually all DRTV operations – works on a 5:1 ratio. “If it costs \$20 on TV,” he says, “it has to cost us four bucks or less.”

Lenfest’s goal is to enter into a licensing agreement with the product owner. To hit that target, the company provides funding to test a product, which can entail market research, including formal and informal focus groups and pinging previous DRTV product buyers, and developing a TV spot and conducting a media test. The “test” is how well the product sells during an infomercial – the more people who act on an impulse buy, the better. A good test will generally lead to a national rollout, which also can help pave the route to getting your product sold in retail stores.

Generally speaking, only one in 20 or 25 products makes it on DRTV. McKinley uses a baseball analogy. You need to get to bat (evaluate and test enough products) enough to get your hits (successful DRTV products). Yes, the odds are long inventors will get a hit.

A .300 hitter fails 700 times out of 1,000, McKinley notes, "but is still likely to get into the hall of fame with that average."

Of the more than 1,500 products he and his team have evaluated since late last year, only about eight are on a licensing track, he says.

"If successful, we'll provide all the money to roll (the product) out," says McKinley. "We'll take the financial risk. Inventors get a royalty of 2-5 percent, depending on the product.

"It's often tough for inventors to swallow – it's hard for them to get their heads wrapped around the cost and risk involved," he adds. "But it's a risk-free proposition for inventors."

### **Long & Short**

Direct response TV ads come in two sizes, long and short

Long-form = 30 minutes (28:30 to be specific)

Short-form = 1-2 minutes

### **Lean & Mean**

Pricing is a key element to success with DRTV

For short-form, the lower the price, the better – ideally \$19.95

For long-form, prices between \$49.95 and \$295 have had the most success. Installment plans also tend to work well in long-form productions

### **Know This**

Your product should have add-on's or the ability to spin-off new, related products. One-hit wonders are rare.