



## Ask The Experts

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An interview with Frank Cannella, President of  
Cannella Response Television, Inc., Burlington, Wisconsin

**Q:** How do I determine if the infomercial format is right for my product?

**A:** TV direct marketing is not like the commodities or futures industry. It's a gamble for immediate results, an immediate profit for every media expenditure.

This isn't general advertising, and rules for product selection are very different. Here are a few suggestions for evaluating products. The more positive responses to these questions, the better your chances for success.

- **Is it unique?** Or can you make it unique through creative presentation or simple product redesign? After all, you have 30 minutes to discuss your product.
- **Does it have a strong mark-up of at least 4:1?** With media costs escalating, this margin requirement is spreading wider. It also helps to have a backend marketing program: groupsells, cross sells, bounce backs, TV shopping clubs, outbound telemarketing, list rental income, etc.

Even though it can be expensive, I've known a few infomercial marketers who settle for a break-even situation on their front-end to make their ultimate profit through backend marketing of subsequent products and continuity programs. But be prepared for a substantial investment if this is the path you take.

- **Who does your product appeal to?** The more universal your product offering, the better your chances for success. TV is a shotgun marketing approach. The opportunities to target specific demographics are limited.
- **Is your product demonstrative?** In television, excitement is created through visual demonstration. Since TV buyers are impulse shoppers, if you excite them enough through a motivating demonstration, they'll buy.

- **What's the retail potential?** In some respects, this is part of back-end marketing, but it's important enough to mention independently. Infomercials have a relatively short life cycle. If you want to build a business, it's imperative you select products with retail potential.