

May 2004

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SALTON'S POWER PUNCHER

50M George Foreman Grills
Later, the Company Heads
Into a New Round of
Heavy-Weight Products



GEORGE FOREMAN™

**New Software
Jabs at Old Methods**

**How Can Print Enhance
Your DR Game Plan?**

Following the incredible success of the George Foreman Grill, the company is using the celebrity-endorsement uppercut and DRTV job to score points for more than 80 different brands.

By Thomas Haire

“When the current management team took over Salton in 1987, it was an \$8 million company with 10 products,” says Barbara Alonge, senior vice president of marketing for appliances, personal care and wellness for the Lake Forest, Ill.-based company. “Today, it has evolved into a nearly \$1 billion international innovator and marketer.”

Yes, the fortunes of Salton Inc. have exploded since CEO Leon Dreimann and a group of investors bought the company 17 years ago for \$2.2 million. And while Salton boasts more than 80 brands under its umbrella, it is one brand — and one celebrity relationship — that turned the company from a small player into a DR giant: the George Foreman Lean, Mean, Fat-Reducing Grilling Machine, or as most consumers call it, the “Foreman Grill.”

The grill, first introduced unsuccessfully by Salton 10 years ago, has sold nearly 50 million units since Foreman became its spokesman in 1995, and in 2002, contributed more than 45 percent of the company’s \$922 million in revenue two years ago. And while many credit the affable former heavyweight champ for the grill’s success, it is Salton’s leadership that has capitalized on the boxer’s image with a series of quality products.

Moving the Grill to DRTV

Still, though retailers were thrilled to

meet the boxing hero, retail sales remained fairly stagnant throughout 1996, until the full effects of DR were felt. “We did an infomercial with George that highlighted his boxing footage,” says Alonge, who also manages production and media buying for Salton’s infomercials. “We found that housewives



Salton has expanded its George Foreman line in recent years to include rotisseries and contact roasters, along with an ever-growing number of indoor and outdoor grills.

didn’t care about his boxing career. But when we replaced that footage with footage of George grilling burgers with his sons, what a difference that made! Our sales went through the roof!”

Salton recently added short-form DRTV to its mix of promotional options, using **Concepts TV Productions** in Boonton, N.J., for a pair of spots for the new line of color grills. “This DR ad was different from previous Foreman ads in that the grill was new and improved,” says Collette Liantonio, president of

Concepts TV. “It was our job to create a spot that made the audience aware that this new grill existed and entice them to pick up the phone to order. After we were all pleased with the script, we story-boarded with Salton so that our vision was clear. The shoot took one day, and we ended up with a killer spot.”

Alonge says **Concepts TV** came highly recommended, though Salton uses a number of production companies on its DR shoots. “Since we do so many infomercials as a company, we tend to use various production companies to do our shows — depending on their level of expertise in a category or a relationship that may have developed with a celebrity endorser and a particular production company,” she says. “We did a couple of spots with **Concepts TV** last year. It was a great experience working with Collette and her team.”

But a big question for many in the DR world — who have seen the quirks and challenges of working with a celebrity — is whether Foreman is as cuddly and enjoyable to work with as he appears on screen? “George was a down-to-earth presenter who made everyone in the room feel comfortable,” says Liantonio. “We were happy to be working with Salton and George Foreman. Their knowledge of the DRTV industry made this a pleasure to produce, since they knew what to expect from us and vice-versa.” ■



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