

COOLER WEATHER IS COMING, BUT THESE HITS ARE JUST HEATING UP



ANDY KHUBANI, CEO, IDEAVILLAGE

Imagine a brand so popular with consumers, every line extension is as big a hit as the original product. That brand is HD Vision. Every year, we introduce a new addition to this line of "high definition" sunglasses. Every year, consumers respond with the same enthusiasm that greeted the original HD Vision Aviators back in 2002. For more on our latest HD Vision success, check out the update at right. It also includes vital information on three additional hits that are set to hit store shelves.

After that, I hope you'll flip over to the back and enjoy my Q&A with the founding father of the infomercial industry, Ron Popeil. Ron has always been an inspiration to me. Even after all my years in the business, I still learn something from him every time we talk. This interview was no exception.

Enjoy the issue.

As always, I welcome your comments. To send feedback or order reprints, email Theresa@IdeaVillage.com

Andy Khubani

HD Vision Ultras

(Price: \$10)

HD Vision WrapArounds and HD Vision Readers are still flying off shelves and already there's another new hit to add to the family. A reintroduction of the original HD Vision Aviators in a



more modern design, the Ultras feature the same great glare-blocking and color-enhancing lenses that have sold more than \$100 million of HD Vision sunglasses since the introduction of the concept in 2002.

Available from IdeaVillage

[More information at HDVision.com](http://MoreinformationatHDVision.com)

Jupiter Jack

(Price: \$19.99)

Some of the most successful TV products are mass market, value-priced versions of previously unaffordable specialty items. This product, which debuted on the Discovery channel reality show Pitchmen, is a classic example. Expensive cars come with integrated Bluetooth® systems. This device delivers a similar effect for a fraction of the price, broadcasting phone calls on an FM frequency any car radio can pick up.

Available from Telebrands

[More information at JupiterJack.com](http://MoreinformationatJupiterJack.com)



Germ Genie

Price: (\$19.99)

With flu scares in the news every day, this item is a timely addition to any retailer's line. Just wave your hand, and its built-in motion sensor dispenses the perfect amount of sanitizer gel. It's wall-mountable, so one can be placed anywhere – by the front door, in the kitchen or even the powder room.

Available from IdeaVillage

[More information at GetGermGenie.com](http://MoreinformationatGetGermGenie.com)



Buxton Cell Phone Wallet

Price: (\$9.95)

Buxton has made "fine leather goods since 1898." Only recently did someone come up with the brilliant idea to put this venerable name on TV products – and a hot new line of ladies' accessories was born.



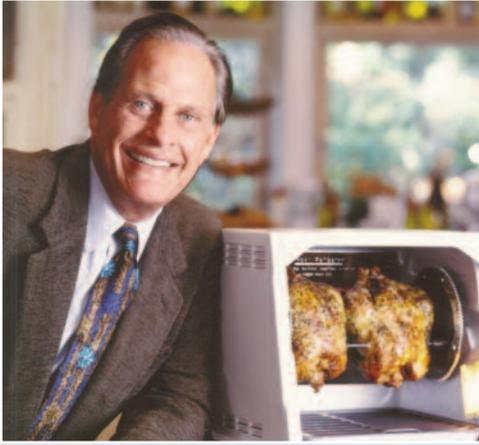
This product follows in the tradition of the Buxton Over the Shoulder Organizer, which launched the line. Like its predecessor, it expands to hold more articles than you ever thought possible.

Available from Allstar Marketing

[More information at BuxtonWallet.com](http://MoreinformationatBuxtonWallet.com)

The Interview That Needs No Introduction

Q&A with Ron Popeil



You were the first direct marketer ever to take a TV product and put it in retail stores. How did you accomplish that?

Let's go back 50 years. At that time, people didn't have credit cards. There were no telephone banks. The only way to sell your product was to direct people to a retail store. There was no other method of collecting money. COD existed, but it was a pain in the butt. So at the end of every commercial, we'd list a variety of stores that sold our product. We'd take the commercial to the retail buyers and say, "We will mention your store's name in our spots. Not only will people buy our product, but they'll buy other products in that department. It's free advertising for you, and there's no downside."

What were some of your biggest successes?

One of the biggest was a spray gun that washes and waxes your car. You put a soap tablet or wax tablet in it, turned a valve and water passed by, picked up the ingredients and shot it out of the nozzle. If you turned it a different way, the water would come out clear for rinsing. And when people ran out of tablets, they had to buy more, so we were in the razor blade business.

How big was that item?

I remember giving my partner \$19 million dollars that year. Let's leave it at that.

What criteria do you use when identifying a hot item?

It's simple: I invent the product. I create it. I spend an inordinate amount of time analyzing the marketplace to see what is really needed. I select the area that I want to focus on, where a market exists, and I fill that market. If I believe the market is big enough that everyone is going to want one, I go ahead. Most people in this business have to find the product first, and they don't know where it's going to come from. All they do is look for demonstrable products, and they've used up all the pitch items from the past. ShamWow? People have been selling that rag for 50 years ... I create my own products.

How do you prove items out before investing in an infomercial?

You don't. You put your money where your mouth is. But the infomercial is the smallest investment. Product development is the big investment. There are so many issues. Safety issues. Size issues. Patents.

Speaking of infomercials, it seems like every one you've introduced has become a success. What are the key ingredients in Ron Popeil's magic formula?

When I first make a product, 200 go to my audience. They use the product for 30 days and then come to the shoot, where they're asked what their experience was like. All of my testimonials are real. I must have people who are as passionate about the product as I am. People who took it home, followed the instructions and had an experience with the product they can share with a future customer. And when I shoot the infomercial, it's all unscripted. I have no idea what I'm going to do or say. "Set it and forget it?" I created that during shooting, not before ... Another thing: As a purchaser of a product, would you rather buy it from the inventor or just a salesman? Now you know why my products are so successful.

What are some of the most significant changes you've seen in the DRTV industry from the time you launched Ronco until today?

Things have changed, mostly for the good. I think the consumer is getting used to the infomercial. It's a great form of selling – as long as people deliver good stuff. The only thing I worry about is people who sell the bullshit stuff, the books and medicines. You hear about this guy going to jail or that guy paying fines.

Today, people make a commercial, air it and go right to retail, because retail is a cash cow. They get some sales, but they kill the retailer. That's because the buyer has expectations. If it's summertime and no one is in the stores, even an infomercial won't get people into that store. So the buyer will get disappointed, and he won't order any for Christmas. You should always put your product in at the best time of year, and in this culture that will always be the holiday season. Today, I would stay out of retail as long as you can. Wait until the merchandise manager owns and uses your product in his own house. Then he'll call the buyer and say, "Why isn't this great product in our stores?"

The DRTV industry recently lost one of its great pitchmen, Billy Mays.

What a shame. He was just at the beginning of his career. I remember he spoke when they gave me an honorary award. He looked at me and said, "I couldn't have done it without following Ron Popeil's lead." I don't believe that. Billy worked hard and put in a lot of time no one knows about.

Do you see his style of selling going away?

The pitch business will never go away. It's been around for 100 years, and it's going to be around for 100 years going forward. But the way Billy did it? I'm not sure. Yes, he was successful at what he did. Is it a good presentation, though? Not really. If I asked you to tell me about your product – why I should own it, what it costs, how I can purchase it – and do it all in 30 seconds, what would it sound like? It would sound like a machine gun. And what is the perception of someone who is trying to sell you at a machine-gun pace? They are trying too hard, so it's too good to be true. That's the blessing of an infomercial. It allows us to talk to people more intelligently. Not at them, but to them. Once you develop that one-on-one, you stand a much better chance of selling people.

Rumor is you have another hot item in the works. What can you share?

My new product is a deep fryer. The fried food market in this country is huge and even bigger abroad. We have been told that fried food is bad for you. Stay away from it. Yet people love it. That crispiness, that crunch.

I developed a deep fryer I believe people will not look at as something bad for you. I designed a machine that does some unique things ... My machine is relatively small and expands into a big machine, but only when you're using it. In its expanded state, it will do a 16-pound turkey in 49 minutes. Not only that, but the same amount of oil you put – three quarts – is exactly what's left over after the turkey is done – after the fat was trimmed to begin with. And we'll show you: The same oil, line to line, whether you're doing lamb, chicken, turkey. And the only oil you use in my machine is olive oil!

My fryer makes fried ice cream, crab cakes, Churros, roast beef, leg of lamb, whole fish, chicken fingers – even frozen food. In 15 minutes, you can have an entire entree. It will also make a dozen perfect donuts in around 13 minutes. That's the whole thing, start to finish, with no heat-up time.

Are there enough people in the world that eat fried food to make this a success? Do people want a healthy deep fryer? We'll see. After coming off the [Showtime] Rotisserie, I know people will buy it just because my name and face are on it.

Will this be your last infomercial?

If I knew the future, I'd invest in the stock market! Could another project come along? If it's small and easy, I'd probably do it. As far as big projects are concerned, this is it. What makes a big project? Price. You can't make serious money selling a product that's \$20. It has to sell in excess of \$100. These \$10 widgets today ... How much goes to media? How much to other expenses? There's not much profit left over. You have to sell five million to buy yourself dinner.