

Extreme Sampling: Part II

Don't Flush Your Underwear Down The Toilet

By: Michael Merrick Crooks

“Dad. I think I just flushed my underwear down the toilet.”

I just sat there ... looking at my nine-year old son, searching for words that seemed stuck in a mental quagmire of wonder and disbelief.

Finally, as nonchalantly as I could, I asked, “So ... how did that happen?”

“Well, um, when I sat on my pen it broke and got ink on my underwear. So I thought if I like, put some soap in the toilet, and, um, flushed it ... the turbo action would be just like the washing machine and get the ink out. I forgot the toilet like, eats everything you put in it.”

Wouldn't it be great to be nine again? We could just test out ... no wait; implement any idea that came to our mind knowing we were backed by the full faith and credit of mom and dad. But, in the world you and I live in, a creative or logistical faux pas costs real money and carries real consequences.

In June, I wrote an article for Brilliant Results called *Extreme Sampling: Avoid Oversights That Can Doom Your Promotion*. I said that effective Extreme Sampling involves two steps. 1) Product Testing. 2) Instruction Scrutiny.

I was wrong.

There are three steps to Extreme Sampling. Step 3 is, “Process Testing”. Process Testing is where you focus on logistics, distribution and final outcomes. In short, you conduct a trial run to the best of your ability to prevent, “Flushing your underwear down the toilet.”

Case in point. I recently sent a client some waterless tattoo samples. The client tested them and found that they worked perfectly. They ordered 50k. Unfortunately, they did not test them through the bindery equipment on which the tattoos would be affixed to a card. Turns out the tattoos were too thin for the machinery to pick up and place properly. This could have been remedied by using a thicker stock ... had we known. Instead, they're affixing them by hand, which costs more. (Insert flush sound here).

Forcing yourself to test the process will help you think it through and avoid problems. For instance, that umbrella you want to give everyone at the conference. You've tested the product and scrutinized the instructions. Now let's test the process. The conference is in a city to which most people will fly. Grab your suitcase. Will that 4-foot umbrella fit?

Daily, marketers fail to test the process and find out too late that the product, premium or incentive ... won't fit in the bag, the box, the envelope or the suitcase. Or they



find out at the worst possible moment, that leaving the chocolate parting-gift in the van, in the sun, all day ... was a no-no.

Here are a few things to think about regarding step #3 of Extreme Sampling:

Carton Weight:

Having UPS deliver five 40-pound cartons to your office is one thing. But can the person in your office who is in charge of getting those cartons to the event — lift 40-pound boxes? We often under-pack cartons for our clients based on how much weight THEY want to lift.

Effects of Heat/Cold:

Can it melt or freeze? Do you need to keep something cool or warm at the event prior to distribution? And for how long? Our chocolate vendor ships with ice packs to prevent melting in transit. But if the chocolate is not stored correctly once you get it, well, you're flushing your underwear down the toilet. Will those snow globes freeze and break? Will the deodorant in the personal care packs liquefy in the heat?

Time/Timing:

Your logo glowing at a night event on a t-shirt, tattoo or hat will look really cool. But, if you're placing your bets on a solar-powered, glow-in-the-dark item, make sure your event has daylight hours built in so the product has a time to charge up.

Fulfillment:

If you are going to have a fulfillment center do anything with a product ... make sure you give them samples to test before you place an order.

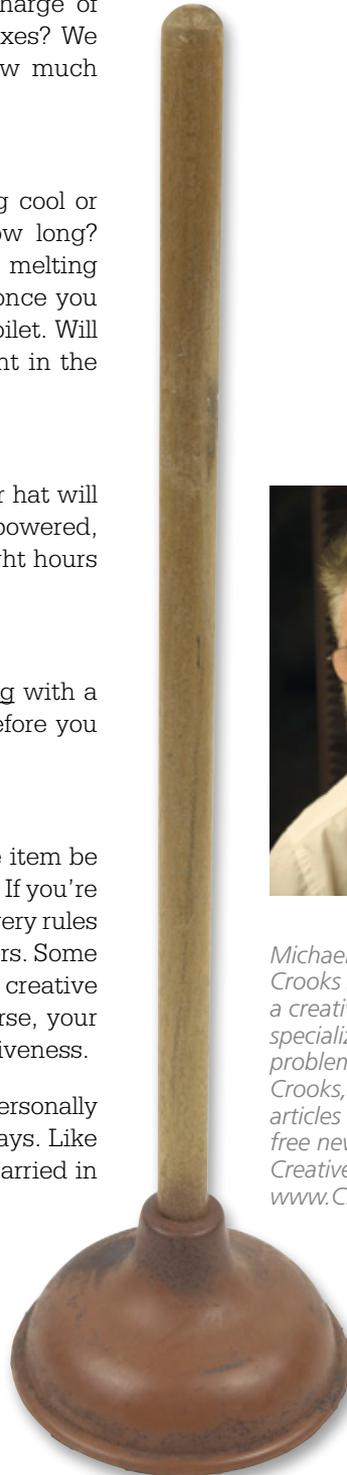
Rules & Regulations:

If you're distributing your item at a conference, will the item be accepted by the airlines in checked or carry on luggage? If you're mailing your item, does it conform to postal or other delivery rules and regs? Some stadiums have rules banning noisemakers. Some fairgrounds have rules banning balloons. Contrary to the creative thought process, when you stand to lose money or worse, your job — it's best to ask for permission than to beg for forgiveness.

Now before you roll your eyes, these are all issues I've personally dealt with or prevented from happening in the last 60 days. Like the client who wanted to order a 4' high banner to be carried in a parade by children that were only 3' tall...

- 1) Product Testing.
- 2) Instruction Scrutiny.
- 3) Process Testing

I'd share more but I just spotted Junior headed out back with a lawn chair, balloons and my helium tank. I'm sure the word "tether" isn't something he's thought of ... yet. 



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