



1998



The 25 Most Innovative People in DRTV

By Gina Gladwell

This year's recipients of ResponseTV's "most innovative" award have proved that with the right approach, DRTV can still be quite a lucrative business.

This has been a year when breakthrough thinking has been a means of survival, and business as usual, for many, has meant disaster.

Our 25 industry pioneers have transcended 1997's tough market conditions and distinguished themselves by breaking new ground overseas, launching breakthrough products, championing new direct marketing opportunities, opening up creative back-end opportunities and bringing new clients into the marketplace. They span the broad range of companies involved in DRTV, from agency executives to televised shopping leaders to infomercial marketers.

And their dedication to this business has opened the doors for many and helped secure the continued success of DRTV for years to come.

Barney Adams, president of Adams Golf

His company sort of falls right, smack in the middle of traditional infomercial success stories. Like the product inventor with a great new gizmo, Barney Adams knew his Tight Lies Fairway Woods were sure to be a hit if he could demonstrate the clubs to golfers convincingly. Unlike most "overnight successes," however, his company, Adams Golf in Plano, Texas, had been manufacturing quality clubs for more than 10 years.

"We knew that we had to do something dramatic or lose our window of opportunity," he says. "We had a great product that was selling well, but we had limited funds and competition that spent tens of millions of dollars per year on advertising and promotion."

That was the risk. Where many larger companies with vast financial resources have begun to experiment with direct response television, Adams would literally have to put everything on the line to fund their show. "It was a big deal for us," he remembers. "But when you're a small company in a big industry, you're not exactly making their choices; you're trying to figure out how to dance to their music.... After analyzing our alternatives, all of us here agreed that an infomercial, albeit risky, was the best way to go."

The gamble paid off. After airing *The Truth About Tight Lies*, with big-name ABC sports commentator Jack Whitacker, Adams' sales skyrocketed from \$3 million in 1996 to \$36 million in 1997. Projections for 1998 are around \$60 million.

Adams is quick to credit his vice president of sales, Mark Gonsalves, consultant Rick Jarrett and others for supporting the infomercial plunge while the company held its breath. Today, Adams Golf sees direct response television as the perfect way to meet the company's steadfast goal of driving retail sales. "We have become champions of direct response," says Adams. "And as long as we are helping retail, we use direct response wherever and whenever we can."