



## Comfort Grip Eyes Success of Banjo Minnow Lure

By Theresa Howard

With its response rates and sales meeting projected benchmarks, Comfort Grip Llc. continues to increase media spending on its recently launched signature product that aims to cast for new opportunities in a niche infomercial category—fishing.

The first hit infomercial in the fishing category was for the Banjo Minnow, a fishing lure system that is considered to have paved the way for products targeted at experienced fishing enthusiasts.

Comfort Grip's show was produced by Script to Screen, an infomercial production company in Santa Ana, CA. The infomercial offers the product for \$99, although Comfort Grip would not disclose unit sales since launching the campaign earlier in the summer. The company said both sales and the average cost per lead were on target.

"We found the product very intriguing and looked at the size of fishing marketing," said Dave Savoka, president of Comfort Grip. "We saw there was marketing behind a ton of golf products out there, but it didn't seem like there was anyone pursuing anything new fishing arena."

"This is the first legitimate substantial fishing rod marketed via an infomercial," said Tony Kerry, vice president marketing of Script to Screen said. "The success of Banjo has attracted people in the business to utilize the format. Successes are good in recruiting certain industries to use the format."

Ronco Inc. sells the Popeil Pocket Fisherman, a travel-size product that fits inside a glove compartment, for \$39.95.

"We are trying to position ourselves the way Callaway positioned Big Bertha," Sovaka said. "Anytime you have a revolutionary product, you must have better have quality and value. We thought about how to bring this product to market and thought about retail. But without a track record, it is difficult to walk into outlets and say, 'Here we are.' We look at the direct route as a way to create a customer base and build a buzz for our product."

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Comfort Grip infomercial features boots Randy White, above, a NFL Hall of Famer, and Paul Newsom.



The product is intended to reduce stress that may develop from the repetitive motion of casting and hooking. Comfort Grip is ergonomically designed with a slight bend at the end of its graphite rod and an attached reel that is suspended from the rod. The design allows for a direct grip on the rod and eliminates the need to split fingers around a reel "The fact that our handle is curved and the reel is set behind the hand balances the rod much better," Savoka said. "Because the handle is angled at 19 degrees, it is proper ergonomic condition, I which allows the hand | muscle to relax and to be more sensitive to the feel a striking fish."

Greater accuracy, quicker hook set and greater sensitivity are the I selling points of Comfort Grip that sells with the bonus of a free spool and drag stack. Additionally, up-sells include | the purchase of a second rod at a \$20 discount; the purchase of a Luhr Jensen Total Bait System and a trial subscription to Bassin' magazine. EDM handles fulfillment for the program, while teleservices are under review.

Tapping former Dallas Cowboy defensive tackle and NFL Hall of Fame, Randy White, along with outdoorsman host, Paul Newsom, to tout the product, the Comfort Grip infomercial runs currently on local cable. Hawthorne Direct, Fairfield, IA, handled the media buy for Comfort Grip, based on populations of fishing enthusiasts within particular markets.

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"Regional cable has been a good mix," Sovoka said. "We're really looking at the fishing frequency category and the viewing markets and looking at the concentration of fisherman and where they live. I don't think we'll ever spend money on national cable." Script to Screen said it is hoping to replicate the success of Banjo Minnow with the latest effort behind Comfort Grip. "It appeals to traditional fishing community but at the same time going after the less active users as well. It appeals to the very credible

standard fishermen and transcends weekend warrior products," Kerry said. ■