

# For Art's Sake

**T**he use of humor in pharmaceutical advertising, whether it is a professional or direct-to-consumer campaign, requires a delicate balance. But if done properly and with sensitivity, a light-hearted approach can separate the generic from the exceptional. Ted Whitby, senior VP and creative director at Pace Inc., says mainstream consumer advertising has long understood that if advertising isn't at least somewhat entertaining it is difficult to be noticed let alone remembered in the age of the remote control.

Mr. Whitby identified GlaxoSmithKline's television campaign for Relenza as one DTC campaign that hits the mark. The creative team tapped into a well-known celebrity, Wayne Knight, whose persona has immediate entertainment value.



## RELENZA

Brand: **Relenza**  
 Agency: **Saatchi & Saatchi**  
 Client: **GlaxoSmithKline**  
 Debuted: **1999**  
 Chief Creative Officer: **Tod Seisser**  
 Creative Director/Art Director: **Scot Carouge**  
 Creative Director/Copywriter: **Dick Holt**

Ever notice how you can instantly recognize a consumer ad for a prescription medication? It's ironic that so much advertising for branded pharmaceuticals is so generic.

One of the most powerful tools to break into the consumer consciousness is humor. Using a lighter tone when presenting health issues and answers is always a delicate balance and is often inappropriate. Mainstream consumer advertising has long understood that if advertising isn't at least somewhat entertaining it is difficult to be noticed, let alone

remembered in the age of the remote control. Think about the commercials you recall. Chances are they use humor.

The first advertising I recall busting out of this generic feel was the consumer campaign for Relenza, star-

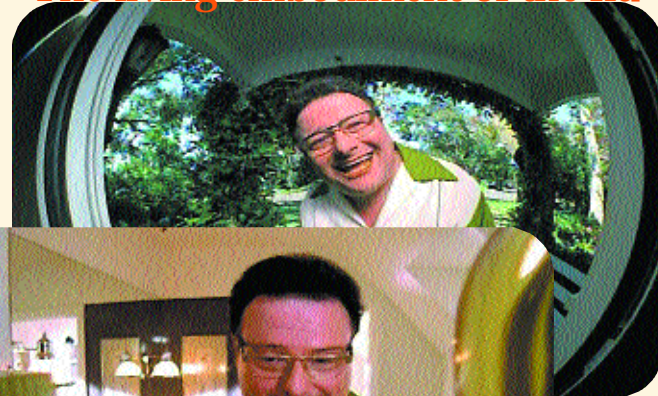
ring Wayne "Newman" Knight as the living embodiment of the flu. What a perfect way to (literally) embody the effect on your life of contracting influenza. It comes right in and takes over your life in a thousand ways, and seems like it will never go away. "People say I have an infectious laugh. What do you think?" I love it.

This is also a great example of how to use a celebrity endorsement for a brand. Not for borrowed interest, but because of a natural and believable alignment. The public persona Mr. Knight built, first in Jurassic Park and then on Seinfeld, made his character a brilliant fit to personify the flu.

A handful of other consumer prescription campaigns come to mind as using humor (or at least whimsy). The sweet quirkiness of Zyrtec and the back-to-earth twist in the Lipitor "Numbers" spots come to mind. But, much of the work the industry is spending so much money on is missing out on the potential of humor to build brands. And that's not funny.

*Ted Whitby, senior VP and creative director at Pace Inc., a full-service healthcare advertising and communications agency located in Parsippany, N.J., believes the Relenza TV campaign is a great example of how to use a celebrity endorsement for a brand.*

## The living embodiment of the flu



Ted Whitby

