

# BEWARE ALL YE WHO SUBMIT SPEC SPOTS HERE...

by

Blaine Parker

Pity these poor reps who stray into my line of fire. It would be so easy to just fix things for them. But then, they'd never learn anything. And it wouldn't be as much fun as poking them through the bars of the cage.

A script for a spec spot recently crossed my desk on its way to production. It was for the local branch of a national maid service. I read it, then picked up the phone.

"Got your script. You sure you want to do this?"

"What's wrong with it?"

"Besides dialogue that reads like a skit from a junior high variety show?"

"You can fix that."

"But it doesn't fix The Bigger Problem."

"What problem?"

"No compelling reason to call for a maid."

There was a long, annoyed silence. On the other end of the line, paper rustled. "But right there, it says 'dependable, professional and affordable.'"

"Right. You ever buy a new car?"

"Of course."

"Why that particular car?"

"Uh, looks good. Handles well. Liked the warranty."

"Un-hunh. The advertising talk about those things?"

"Actually, yeah."

"OK. What if the ad for that car said only one thing: 'It has four wheels!'"

He laughed. Or snorted. Not sure which. "That's stupid. Every car has four wheels."

"Right. Four wheels. That's the price of admission to compete as a car. Well, as a listener, you're asking me to pay a maid a hundred and twenty bucks every time she steps into my house. The notion of 'dependable, professional and affordable' is our four wheels."

"Oh. Well...so what? It's only a spec spot."

"ONLY a spec spot?"

"Yeah. The guy hasn't signed yet."

"So, we're planning on winning him over with a badly written scenario that indicates we know nothing about his business."

His voice jumped half an octave. "But...it's only a spec spot!"

"And when it's ONLY a spec spot, it has to sell two people. And count the listener second. First, it's gotta sell the client. And by producing this spot, we're wasting tons of time."

He was beginning to sound hysterical. "Don't *spend* tons of time on

it! It's a spec spot! How good does it have to be?"

"Suspend reality a moment. Assume everybody involved is actually willing to do the job half-assed on purpose. Even at that level of incompetence, here's all the time you're wasting. The writer on the re-write. The producer's time on production. The time of two actors and an announcer on voicing it. Already, four people. Then, you'll go to the client. You'll present the spot. It says nothing relevant or salient about his business. You don't get the sale. Why? Because he feels like you're wasting his time. And that makes it a big fat waste of your time."

There was another long silence. I hoped he wasn't crying. Finally, he said, "So what am I supposed to do?"

Call me diplomatic. I resisted saying, "Your job." Instead, I asked him, "Well, did you know your prospective client is OSHA compliant? That ensures the safety of both me and the cleaning person."

"What?"

"They also hire the best people and give 'em the best training. That means my house gets cleaner faster."

"What's OSHA?"

"And their proprietary cleaning products aren't available to the public.

So they must do a better job than my over-the-counter products ever could."

"How do you know this?"

"And their clean-it-again guarantee is huge! If I'm not 100% satisfied with the job they've done? They'll come back and clean my house again. No charge! Wow. Maybe I'll call. After all, I clean my house like a guy in radio."

"Tell me how you know all this!"

"While we've been talking, I logged on to their website."

"They have a website?"

How do these guys get these jobs? "Just a suggestion. If you want to cash in, do some detective work. It pays off handsomely."

After a bit more discussion, we reached an understanding about how to proceed from there. We hung up the phone. But I knew. Despite saving him from himself, I'd just made another rep hate me.

I'll have to live with that.

*Blaine Parker is a Creative Director at Salem Los Angeles, and author of the new book, Million-Dollar Mortgage Radio: How Mortgage Brokers Can Use Radio Advertising To Make More Deals. He can be reached at [blaine.parker@salemmla.com](mailto:blaine.parker@salemmla.com). Book info is online at [www.sellmoremortgages.com](http://www.sellmoremortgages.com).*