

Trust Me on This

By Dennis Knight

Do you remember O.J. Simpson dashing through the airport to reach the rental counter before somebody else got to that SUV? Hertz paid him for this endorsement, but years later, Ford and their white Bronco got the greater publicity in live aerial images of a long chase up and down the freeways of Los Angeles when Simpson learned he was about to be arrested for a double murder. He beat that rap but he's been in more trouble since. Hertz and Ford don't call him anymore.

Not that I've ever been in the market for a hair extension, but had I been, I certainly would have paid attention to Paris Hilton's commercials for Dream Catchers. A beneficiary of the massive Hilton Hotels fortune, the spoiled brat has since been in trouble for drunk driving, speeding, driving without a permit, even shoplifting. Her Dream Catchers are on parole.

We admired the remarkable endurance of Lance Armstrong, who survived cancer and yet won the Tour de France a record seven times, all the while denying, deflecting and trivializing allegations of using performance enhancing drugs. He became a trusted world hero and a spokesman for many brands, including Trek Bicycle, 24-Hour Fitness, and Anheuser-Busch. He was recently and finally caught up by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency which brought irrefutable proof he had done so throughout his career. When he finally admitted it, sponsors cancelled millions of dollars in endorsement deals.

Oscar Pistorius, who lost his lower legs before his first birthday, inspired the world by winning gold as the courageous "Blade Runner" in the Paralympics and gained his greatest fame as a viable competitor in the 2012 London Olympic Games. He had contracts worth more than two million a year with Nike, Oakley Sunglasses, and important European corporations, but lost them all after facing charges last February for the Valentine's Day murder of his famous model girlfriend. His trial in Pretoria is still months away.

We have allowed celebrities like these to tell us what, when and where to buy things, but they have let us down. It's time for a new face, and, trust me on this, the ideal spokesman for anything you can name is plain old me. The late Billy Mays was the king of Oxiclean, but I'll take cues from Jake Jabs, the furniture lion, or Dealin' Doug Moreland, who wears silly costumes and sells cars. People trust these guys because they tell them to.

Let me practice a little. Back in sixty-two, a big appliance company had Ronald Reagan to speak for them, but I can do it too. "At General Electric, progress is our most important product." Here's another. "See your Chevy dealer today and test drive a shiny new Stingray! It's precision that knows no equal."

And here's the one that will nail my career. "Don't change that dial, friends! Trust me on this! We're here to tell you about the most exciting product ever. It's the incredible ThighMaster!"