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## Sales for K-C's Duckbill Line Get Goosed by Viral

Video Seen by Only 65,000 Sends DIY Business Soaring

By Jack Neff

The prevailing wisdom is that a viral video has to catch on big to boost sales. But a relatively modest hit has worked for Kimberly-Clark Corp.



Another shirt ruined: In K-C viral, test subjects were sprayed with finger paint to highlight how Duckbill masks keep residue away from nostrils.

The marketer that spends millions behind Huggies and Kleenex claims it managed a 30% sales increase for its much-lesser-known do-it-yourself products (such as Scott Shop Towels and rags) with a viral video that cost next to nothing for its surgical-masks-turned-dust-masks marketed under the Duckbill brand.

The campaign shows people getting blasted in the face with black finger paint to prove Duckbill masks protect them better than an unnamed competitor. It has yielded 115,000 blog mentions and 65,000 visits to [www.duckbill.tv](http://www.duckbill.tv) since the campaign was launched last year.

### Feather in K-C's cap

Those aren't huge numbers, even by viral standards. But Brad Herren, president of K-C's DIY business, credits the campaign and the demos as the primary impetus behind a 30% across-the-board sales increase for the business. (That is, of course, likely off a low base, but an exact figure couldn't be determined as the company doesn't break out DIY sales.)

That DIY business has been around since the mid-1980s, when it was launched by Scott Paper Co. before K-C acquired that company a decade later. But it's gotten a new lease on life as Chairman-CEO Tom Falk has made growth in the DIY channel more of a priority -- albeit with a mandate to operate faster and leaner than the

company's consumer brands typically do.

To that end, the effort includes finding new consumer uses for things K-C's professional business already markets. Surgical masks seemed a natural fit. "We really felt we had a product that provides better comfort, better protection and fit," Mr. Herren said. "And we needed to come up with some nontraditional marketing approaches to introduce our dust mask," he said, in part because the DIY business has a small marketing budget.

So K-C turned to Buzzmarketing, a Swarthmore, Pa., shop headed by Mark Hughes and known for such stunts as getting Halfway, Ore., to change its name to Half.com and putting ad messages on the backs of fortune-cookie fortunes. "We specialize in creating buzz, but strangely enough, some of the best work we do is for boring products," Mr. Hughes said. The DIY business definitely fit that bill, he said.

Mr. Hughes' charge was quite open-ended. K-C executives, who had read his book, "Buzzmarketing," asked him to look at the entire DIY and professional product lineup and develop a campaign for any item that could help build the whole business.



Brad Herren, president of K-C's DIY business

### **Masked potential**

The dust masks caught his interest. Interviews with K-C executives indicated that people said the masks made them look like ducks, and it turned out the medical-supply business had a trademark on the name "Duckbill" that it wasn't actively marketing.

Mr. Hughes got the idea of demos spraying people with black gunk, he said, because his father was a pressman who used to come home with ink residue in his nose. A bit of research with spraying nontoxic black finger paint at test subjects found the Duckbill masks did much better than competitors at keeping the stuff away from nostrils and mouths.

Buzzmarketing then turned to AdOrganic, which uses a panel of amateur and semipro filmmakers to create advertising videos in contest format for a flat fee of \$25,000. Mr. Herren declined to peg the total cost of the campaign but said it was well under \$1 million.

One key to success has been using the demonstration concept with some key influencers: retailers. Mr. Hughes hired twin male actors to do a side-by-side stunt at a Home Depot store managers' show last spring, and K-C followed up by using them again at the National Hardware Show last summer. Mr. Herren said those demonstrations have helped generate interest and better display at Home Depot and elsewhere