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## Bernie & Phyl's commercials pair bad ideas with great furniture ideas

Clint Engel, January 10, 2019

NORTON, Mass. — Bernie & Phyl's has unleashed a new campaign of humorous commercials filled with dogs, a cat and a heavyset adult entertainer. And they're all juxtaposed with the "great idea" of buying furniture from the [Top 100](#) company.

One spot features a young woman at the computer chatting online and searching for love and thinking she found it in a suitor named Rex. She's intrigued by his sense of humor after he offers up his age "in dog years." But by the end of the commercial, the viewer learns the woman is actually chatting with a long-haired Chihuahua pawing away at a keyboard.



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Then the voiceover: "Finding true love online? Bad Idea. Finding furniture you love online? Great Idea. Bernie & Phyl's."

It ends with a shot of furniture, the retailer's logo and an invitation to shop online or in store.

Another spot opens on a heavyset man performing a striptease to the dismay of three female partygoers.

"Saving money on the bachelorette party? Bad idea," is juxtaposed with the great idea of saving money on a new mattress.

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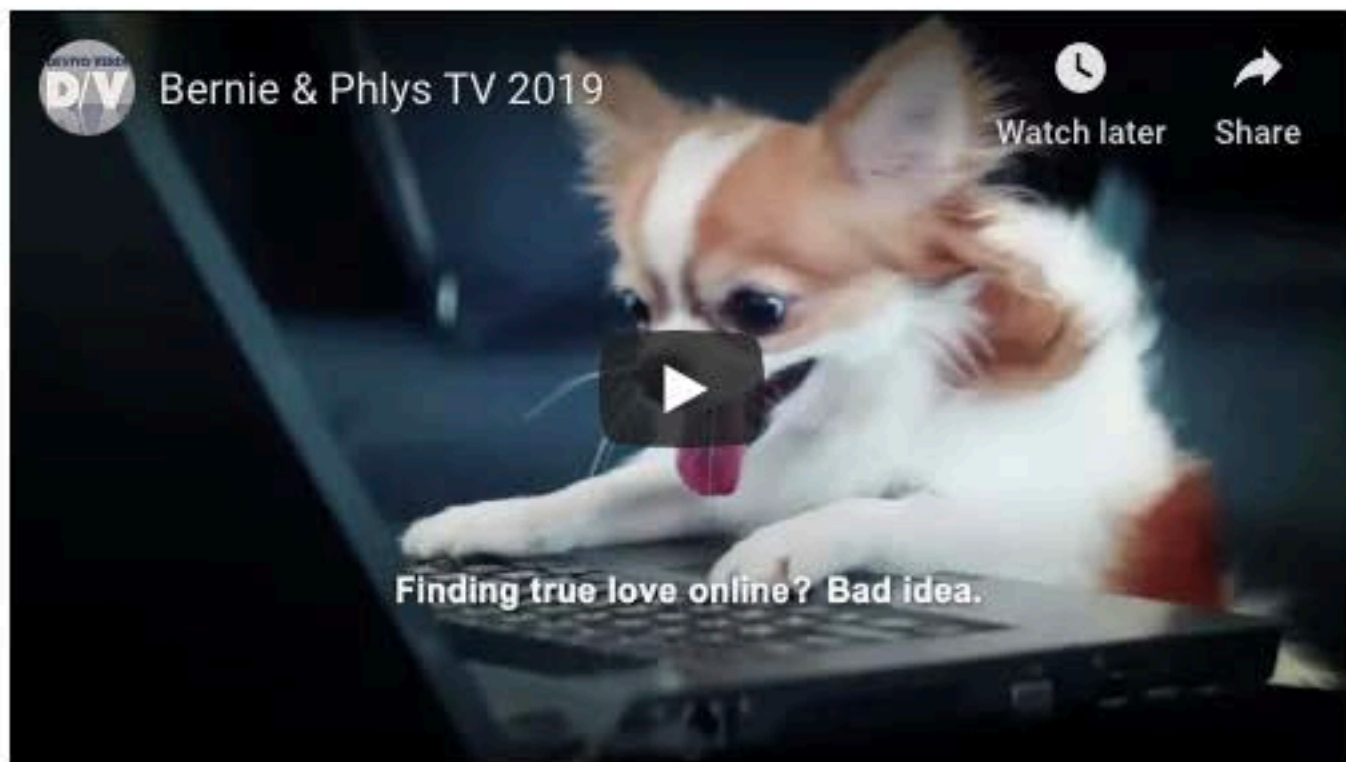
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Three more spots are coming, including one featuring an office worker bulldog and a cat playing the organ at a wedding reception.

"We have a monkey in one; actually it's a baboon," added Bernie & Phyl's CEO Larry Rubin, noting that spot is from a couple of years ago but fits the new campaign perfectly.

The family-owned eight-store Boston-area retailer made a major shift in its advertising in late 2014, when it moved away from a long-standing campaign featuring its family members to humorous spots designed to appeal to a younger consumer.

All of the latest campaigns have been created by New York's DeVito Verdi, starting with the "Naked Man" commercial — an Austin Powers-inspired spot that followed a nude man through one of its stores as furniture and accessories covered him up in all the right places.

Rubin said at the time the spot drew complaints from some of Bernie & Phyl's older customers but helped the retailer with the younger set as intended. The company's business has been on the upswing ever since, he said, noting last year was another strong year with sales up mid-single digits.

In 2016 a campaign that used vintage stock film from "B" movies dubbed with dialogue promoting the price, selection and quality at Bernie & Phyl's, won 11 Hatch Awards presented by The Ad Club of Boston. That included the top award for best "Television Campaigns Under \$50,000."

"It definitely gets attention," Rubin said, "and it's quite different from what most furniture retailers are doing."

In a statement, DeVito/Verdi President and Co-founder Ellis Verdi said the furniture industry "is badly stuck in a place which relies on an advertising formula of using heavy promotional marketing, which lowers the value of the product to the customer.

"None of the furniture retailers can exist without some level of promotion, but Bernie & Phyl's has found the perfect balance."

The latest campaign began airing Tuesday so it's too early to judge the response, Rubin said. He declined to disclose the investment but said the retailer didn't spend any more than what it typically spends on advertising.

Bernie & Phyl's executives plan on presenting the new campaign to members of the Furniture Marketing Group buying group during the group's annual Symposium in Las Vegas immediately before the Las Vegas Market.

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