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**Mercury Media** is the largest privately owned, full-service direct response media agency in the country. The agency launched the first full-service Hispanic direct response specialty practice, *Mercury en español*, in 2009. **Marcelino Miyares Jr.** is vice president, and **Lucio Maramba** is director of operations.

### What advice would you give to direct marketers who are just entering the U.S. Hispanic market?

For both novice and experienced marketers, we have proven that it pays to find an agency that specializes in Hispanic DR. A good agency will identify the operational challenges that can get in the way of your success from creative and production all the way through contact center management, transactional factors and digital solutions. These are challenges, not barriers. But they often result in a path to profit that will be unique to this segment. So be patient, keep your eye on ROI, believe in your product and give the Hispanic consumer a chance to catch up.

### What are the advantages of using a Hispanic-focused DR agency?

Managing operations for a DR campaign can be tricky – even more so for a Hispanic DR campaign. Let's take inbound call handling – the bread and butter of the DR world – as an example. Ask any DR veteran, and he or she will tell you that optimizing the flow of incoming calls in a multiple call center environment and finding the “sweet spot” where a client's campaign metrics are in balance can be an art in and of itself.

## Mercury en español

Having been around longer, the English vendor-side of the DR space has a plethora of experienced medium and large call centers that can handle large rollout campaigns and high call volumes. As the younger, fast-growing sibling, Hispanic DR call centers may face challenges when handling high call volumes for short-form and long-form shows in rollout. This means that more time and expertise are required on the client and agency side to not only find the right vendors, but to successfully manage multiple vendors on a day-to-day basis to assure that you are maximizing your Hispanic campaign's potential.

### How has the economy affected the U.S. Hispanic market over the last few years?

The U.S. Hispanic consumer is first and foremost a U.S. consumer. The economy has put a crunch on this segment like all others. Of note, however, is the cash orientation of this customer base, which we believe represents an opportunity. Alternative forms of payment to credit cards and e-checks make a big difference in the success of a Hispanic campaign.

### What would you say to marketers who are worried that it costs too much to enter the U.S. Hispanic market?

Fifty million-plus consumers. Thirteen million families. Sixty-plus in-language cable outlets. Five broadcast networks. The undisputed population growth engine of this country. These and many other related realities point to a market worth investing in. After more than 25 years in this market, managing dozens of campaigns, we have yet to find a marketer who actually found that it “cost too much” to target U.S. Hispanics. It does not cost any more to market to Hispanics than any other market segment. The metrics may not align as expected, but the market pays off. The real question should be, “What does it cost to not enter the market?” As Seen on TV marketers should begin to take a close look at their retail and internet sales. It might turn out that they are already doing a lot of Hispanic business at CVS, Walgreens, Walmart, Anna's Linens and all of the other “end game” retailers that DRTV campaigns subsidize. 