Sell Your Element Project

This is a group project I use to familiarize students with the properties and uses of specific elements. The scenario I set up is that students are employed by an ad agency and are hired to create a marketing campaign to “sell” an element. There are 3 basic parts: a PowerPoint presentation, a poster, and a commercial.

The PowerPoint presentation is basically the report portion of the project. Students have to design a presentation of 10 slides. I am very specific on what has to be on each slide (to prevent students from just cutting and pasting from a website). Information in the PowerPoint includes the physical and chemical properties of the element, how the element was discovered, uses of the element, common compounds, how the element is obtained/manufactured, and the cost of the element. Students present their PowerPoint in class and other students take notes on those presentations.

I have the students make a poster to sell their element. The poster is designed to look like either a magazine ad or a billboard ad. I grade it based on visual appeal and creativity. Their slogan and logo are an integral part of their poster.

The final part of the project is a 1 minute commercial. Students may perform their commercial live, or record it at home. I emphasize to the students that their commercial needs to encourage others to buy their element. They have to use their slogan, include the cost of the element, and why we should buy their element. To help get them started, we go over successful commercials and analyze what makes them work. I often get very creative, funny commercials.

Things I have learned over the years of doing this project:

- Don’t let the students pick their own elements. Otherwise you will have a ton of projects on oxygen, gold, silver, and platinum. I cut up a periodic table and have a group member randomly draw their element.
- Groups should be no larger than 3 members.
- Be very specific about what items you want on each slide in the PowerPoint and what information should be on the poster and in the commercial.
- Stagger the dates each part of the assignment is due. Since students need to know about the element before they can develop a good commercial, I have the PowerPoint due first. I also have students turn in rough drafts and scripts of their commercial a week before it is due. I have found it helps prevent the last minute unorganized, unfocused commercial.