

Culled from the headlines of the TV Industry's Trade Press, **CONTENT MATTERS** is a Bi-Monthly Newsletter curated and contextualized by **KATZ Content Strategy's Bill Carroll**.

# 5

## INSIGHTS TO KNOW

### **1. Autumn is a time of great optimism for television networks. Then reality sets in.**

It's as predictable as the turning of the leaves: Each year, a batch of shiny new sitcoms, crime procedurals, medical dramas and other television hopefuls rolls out with an array of familiar stars and expensive marketing campaigns, only to encounter scorn or indifference from viewers.

### **2. Why everything said about Gen Z could be wrong.**

As the millennial marketing craze reaches saturation, the new obsession is Gen Z. Roughly defined as anyone currently 12 to 20 years old; some are now falling victim to many of the same vague insights that characterized the Millennials. They're digitally savvy because they were raised with technology. They're either entrepreneurial souls looking to redefine the workplace or old-souled pragmatists resigned to climbing the corporate ladder.

### **3. What is the reality about Reality?**

Is reality dead? It is far from it. Despite a dearth of recent breakout hits in the genre, it seems that everything old is new again — and is still working. Producers tell us that the original reality shows are still going very strong. Those franchises continuing to evolve and reinvent themselves are ultimately able to find audiences. The audience always tells you, and the numbers prove, shows must always continue to evolve.

### **4. TV is still by far the most effective advertising medium.**

That's the finding of a study by marketing-analytics company MarketShare, which meta-analyzed thousands of marketing optimizations.

### **5. Is There A Secret Formula for Keeping Viewers Tuned in All Day?**

It's happened to millions of TV viewers at some point: They stumble upon Investigation Discovery while channel surfing and are instantly pulled into one of the network's lurid, true-crime shows like *Wives With Knives*, *Homicide Hunter*, *Nightmare Next Door* or *Happily Never After*. Hours later, they're still glued to the screen. Resistance is futile for many viewers.

**Of the 121 Fall network shows that premiered on broadcast primetime networks from 2010 to 2014, over 60% (74 shows) were cancelled after one season, just about 40% (47 shows were renewed) and five years later approximately 20% (34 shows) are still on network line-ups.**

As the New York Times reported in their extensive study of primetime, this fall brings 20 new network pilots. A lucky few could become primetime fixtures for years. Looking back, starting with 2010, concepts that crashed and burned in that season included a West Coast version of a formerly bulletproof franchise “Law & Order: L.A.” CBS’ “Mike & Molly” was the big winner from this class. “Hawaii Five-O” and “Blue Bloods” are still reliable performers for CBS. Of 27 network shows that debuted in 2011, 13 were brought back, making that the most successful fall of the past five years in terms of renewals. “2 Broke Girls” continues, even more surprising: not only did two different series about fairy tales “Once Upon a Time” and “Grimm” debut in the same season, but they’re also still with us. That said, four of the 13 renewed shows were later killed off. In the loss column, fall 2011 was distinguished mostly by glossy period failures and the sci-fi flop “Terra Nova,” a

costly time-traveling series.

Dennis Quaid, Matthew Perry, Andre Braugher were among the veteran actors who saw new series go belly-up in the 2012 season among a gimmick-heavy crop of shows. “Arrow,” “Elementary” and “Chicago Fire” continue to do well for their respective networks, and while “Nashville” has never been a ratings giant, the country music soap keeps truckin’ along. From 2013, “The Blacklist,” has become a bona fide hit, with several series that are still solid performers. “Mom,” a sitcom with an edge, has been a critical favorite. Michael J. Fox and Sean Hayes saw their shows end after only one season. Of the other cancelled shows from 2013, “Trophy Wife” had its advocates. Seth MacFarlane’s “Dads,” on the other hand, did not.

Just over half of the series that debuted last fall died quick deaths. It was an especially brutal season for FOX and NBC, which each renewed only one of their new series “Gotham” and “The Mysteries of Laura.” ABC, however, added “How to Get Away With Murder,” “black-ish” and “Fresh Off the Boat” while “Jane the Virgin” was a breakout for the CW. “Flash” made the network two-for-two on its 2014 series. CBS also had a relatively productive fall, bringing back four of its six new shows.

## CONTENT IN CONTEXT

The reasonable question that the article poses: How many of 11 surviving shows from 2014 will be here this time next year? Only time will tell. At a time with competition from streaming services and edgier content on subscription cable, can we accept this ratio of failure? Not only

do we have to create the next “Empire” but especially the next “Big Bang Theory”. Broad audience appeal has been the backbone of over-the-air broadcast success and we need to bring back our focus to achieving that goal. If we do, audiences will follow.

**What really separates Gen Z isn't that they use technology, or what their values and dreams are—it's how they choose to live their lives in digital.**

In an article authored by Scott Fogel, strategist at FIRSTBORN, a digital creative agency, he tells us whenever they talk with teens face-to-face, it's telling that many of the "truisms" that surveys conclude don't hold water. All generational differences are driven by environment. For Gen Z, the first and most obvious shift is the native nature of technology in their lives. Yes, they do have more screen-time than any other demographic, but it isn't their frequency of tech usage that's interesting. Rather, it's how that usage changes what resonates with them.

On the whole, millennials are attracted to the clever and witty: the sharp, biting commentary. But Gen Z connects to something completely different: the offbeat and raw. They embrace more absurdist humor more than clever witticisms. The content is self-deprecating centered on making people think you're offbeat or quirky. But for a generation that's

spent their entire lives online—mostly in the unfiltered lens, an intimate exhibitionism has emerged in a way that older generations simply don't have.

For Gen Z, niche communities and interests were facilitated at a much younger age than they were for older generations. Millennials tend to use their passions and identity interchangeably. But for teens, digital entertainment is proving to be a vital component in the creation and maintenance of friendships. A Pew study found that "more than half of teens have made new friends online, and a third of them (36%) say they met their new friend or friends while playing video games. Playing games can [also] have the effect of reinforcing a sense of friendship and connectedness." Because of Gen Z's willingness to open up online, the Internet has a much greater impact on their lives. It's important to understand the digital culture that Gen Z lives in today if we wish to connect with them beyond a surface level.

## CONTENT IN CONTEXT

As we get ready to try to reach younger viewers, it is suggested that we give Gen Z the tools to mess with anything we make, because they'll do it anyway. Gen Z is going to tweak it, and do whatever else they want, regardless of your intentions. Build stuff for the communities they're a part of instead of injecting messages into them. Do not always take a position

that everyone agrees with. Though counterintuitive for Gen Z, the honesty and exposure that you take when doing something potentially polarizing often strengthens the connection they have with your message. All of these recommendations are difficult to implement, but may be the only ways to reach out to this next key generation.



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**CONTENT MATTERS**  
IDEAS IMPACTING THE CONTENT COMMUNITY

## **It is a tough time to breakthrough with new reality programming.**

According to Variety, while predicting the next big hit is an impossible task, reality TV's producers insist the genre is in good shape despite the various challenges TV is facing — from time-shifted viewing to increased competition from digital outlets.

ABC's "The Bachelor" is booming with an after-show for its third spinoff; "America's Got Talent" just helped NBC win the summer season with the only double-digit numbers on broadcast television; "The Voice" anchors NBC's fall and spring schedules; "American Idol" delivers a solid audience for FOX as it heads into its final season; and CBS' "Survivor" continues to tour the globe, having just debuted its unprecedented 31st competition.

The content business is in a dynamic state. It's in a state of flux and it is an issue of content period. What we had seen for years was a tremendous amount of

unscripted content doing extremely well in cable. Programming needs to feel like a timely event, as viewers have many choices and loaded DVRs. There's been a swing back to a more traditional sense with the live variety show and game shows. "Celebrity Family Feud" was a summer success with an established concept and a known name in Steve Harvey.

The goal for producers is to really bring the family back together around the TV. With multi-generational shows, the things that galvanize family are the large, broad things — cooking, weight loss, games we can play along together. Whether ideas are new or old, there's no denying that reality is occupying much successful space on TV. Time together feels incredibly precious. Time together (can now be) defined by you and your mate hundreds of miles away chatting it up about watching the same show.

## **CONTENT IN CONTEXT**

As reality producers have shared with us, when you look at Twitter, [the viewers] are telling you what they felt. Social-media buzz has become an important factor in evaluating a show's success. The instant reactions help networks identify which shows are DVR-proof. It also underscores the ways in which reality TV can help bring people together, whether that

means a family sits down to watch, colleagues catch up over a watercooler or friends connect via the internet. As local broadcasters, we have yet to find the reality based programming in syndication that can take advantage of this current viewer appetite. We must continue to pursue any viable opportunity in the reality genre that may come our way in the future.

**TV has the highest efficiency at achieving key performance indicators; TV averaged four times the sales lift of digital.**

Earlier this year, AD WEEK reported about the study from Turner Broadcasting and Horizon Media partnered with marketing-analytics company MarketShare, which meta-analyzed thousands of marketing optimizations used by major advertisers from 2009 to 2014. MarketShare's analysis found that TV advertising effectiveness has remained steady during that time period and outperforms digital and offline channels at driving key performance metrics like sales and new accounts. The study also showed that networks' premium digital video delivered higher than average returns when compared with short-form video content from nonpremium publishers.

Among the study's key findings: TV has the highest efficiency at achieving key

performance indicators; TV averaged four times the sales lift of digital; TV has maintained its effectiveness at driving advertiser KPIs over the last five years; and Premium online video from broadcast and cable networks outperforms video content from other publishers.

The study concluded: "We're not saying that digital is bad, but digital just can't make up the reach that TV delivers. And digital, used in a way that's complementary to TV, is a more effective strategy." Even those involved in the study were surprised to learn of TV's dogged resilience. "TV has held its own under years of such dramatic change, was surprising, but obviously very pleasing." "TV really works and there are ways to make it work better in challenging times."

## CONTENT IN CONTEXT

The study found that "TV is the giant megaphone," said Isaac Weber, VP of Strategy at MarketShare. "When you want to get a message out, that's still really the most powerful means to do it....The way that people view and consume television

has changed ... but I think the question is less about what has changed with television and more about what are some of the underlying issues with some of these other vehicles." Television remains the most effective advertising medium.

## What is Investigation Discovery's secret to hooking viewers, keeping them glued to their screens and away from their remotes?

Investigation Discovery is better than any other U.S. broadcast or cable network at grabbing viewers and keeping them tuned in. This year, it ranks No. 1 among all broadcast and cable networks in total-day length of tune in.

Henry Schleiff, group president at Investigation Discovery took Adweek through the channel's five keys to success. Grab viewers in the first five minutes. "In this world, there is such competition for your viewership and you're so quick to move that one of our keys to success is grabbing you in that first five minutes. The middle is always easy because there's just a ton of different stuff going on—and then you want to stay till the end."

Reward them with a solid payoff at the end of the hour. ID viewers know the answers are coming at the end of the hour; they don't have to wait until the day or

week's episode for the story to wrap up. "We have closed end, and there's a payoff at the end." Then, repeat the cycle again. Once an episode ends, "We go seamlessly into the next one," said Schleiff. If the viewer gets hooked in the first five minutes, they're pulled back in for another hour.

Seal the deal with a memorable series title, like "Wives With Knives", "Homicide Hunter", "Nightmare Next Door" or "Happily Never After", which are simultaneously ridiculous and riveting. "It's no secret that we're all competing for people's attention. And one of the ways to get that is with what is either a catchy or funny title," said Schleiff. Keep the channel's tone consistent all day. No matter the time of day or what show is airing, Investigation Discovery is like the opposite of a box of chocolates: Viewers always know what they're going to get. "It's consistency in a world of confusion."

## CONTENT IN CONTEXT

We agree with Henry Schleiff that in a world with more than 160 advertiser-supported, Nielsen-rated networks, "you're able to say, 'I'm not sure what's on at 9 tonight, but I know if I go to ID at 9, I'm going to get a story with certain beats to it, certain elements to it. I know I'm going

to be amazed; I know I'm going to be interested. And you get that, and that consistency of brand is really serving us well." Broadcasters need to take this to heart as they manipulate and modify their established brands.