

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**.

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2016 Q3 ISSUE #2

CONTENT MATTERS
IDEAS IMPACTING THE CONTENT COMMUNITY

Now that the fall schedules are set, we have excerpted and substantially condensed a blog posting by former NBC and FOX scheduling executive Preston Beckman on his site the MASKED SCHEDULER.

There is an art to reading pilot testing results and often the only thing that programming execs hear is either it was a strong test or a weak test.

I have always believed that the genre with the largest number of false positives is Sci-Fi/ Fantasy. They are generally more expensive than more conventional pilots, but they are often concept driven rather than character driven. When you look at the testing among this group of shows you often see high scores for the “idea” of the show, but mediocre scores for the characters. Most other genres are character driven so if you have strong leads you can overcome a show that has a conventional idea. Weaker testing procedurals will succeed more often because they are more character driven.

Over in comedy one of the biggest drivers of a false positive has to do with whether the pilot is about “People Together” or “People Apart”. A simpler way to put it is to determine whether it is a premise comedy pilot or not. A premise

pilot (people apart) generally sets up the idea of the show and usually ends with the words “wait” “don’t go” “hold on” as the star of the show is walking out the door. You often feel good at the end of a premise pilot but you have no idea what the series is and often the producers don’t either. “People Together” comedy pilots start with another day in the life of a group of people (family or friends) who care about each other. Some event may happen in their lives in the pilot, but there’s no “wait” moment. These people like each other and care about each other and you do too.

Over the years I discovered a couple of recurring themes: Ordinary people in extraordinary situations, man (or woman) on a mission, fish out of water. I’ll leave it up to you to think of successful shows where you find these elements. For procedurals we have found that the core elements are: two leads with a pinch of sexual tension, one lead a cop, FBI, CIA whatever, the other lead has a “super power” used to solve crimes and a support group of really smart people. I just want to be clear that if a procedural has these characteristics there is no guarantee of success; it just seems to increase the chances of success. By success of course I mean ratings.

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The most dreaded part of the pilot process is hearing the results of the testing on the shows that the creatives have devoted their time and efforts towards over the past half year. The importance of audience testing is to try to find the “why” in a show.

As Beckman concludes and we agree, there is a need audience feedback that goes beyond ratings. It’s always helpful to understand why something is resonating with an audience. You need to listen to the viewer.

Streaming is the new normal for Millennials, according to the State of Cable & Digital Media 2016 report from Horowitz Research which was condensed and excerpted from press releases for this item.

Millennial (18-34 year-old) TV content viewers report spending 54% of their TV viewing time streaming and just 25% live. Across total TV content viewers 18+, the picture is flipped: 50% of viewing is live and 29% is streamed. The Horowitz study, conducted annually, has been tracking the rapid shift from traditional (live, DVR, and VOD) to streaming. Since 2012, the weekly share of viewing that is streamed has risen from 15% in 2012 to 54% in 2016, while traditional viewing has dropped from 75% to 39% among Millennials.

The study also reveals that Millennials are more likely to turn to Netflix when they want to watch TV than to live television: 36% say Netflix is their first “go-to” source for TV content; 29% say they go to live TV. Although streaming has increased substantially over the past few years, traditional television continues to have value. Three-quarters (76%) of 18-34 year-olds use a combination of traditional and streamed content; just 13% use streaming exclusively.

Adriana Waterston, Horowitz’s SVP, Insights & Strategy, shared the research firm’s newest data showing that overall pay TV and over-the-top (OTT) services,

like Netflix or Hulu Plus, currently co-exist, rather than directly compete. The picture changes dramatically among Millennials. According to Horowitz’s New TV Universe segmentation, traditional viewers, who watch the majority of their content through multichannel (live, DVR, VOD), comprise 66% of the viewing universe. Among Millennials, traditional viewers make up only 35% of the universe; the remaining 65% fall into leading-edge segments that rely heavily on OTT.

Despite their shift away from traditional TV, Millennials are more into TV content than their 35+ counterparts. New methods of viewing, like bingeing and catch-up viewing, allow Millennials to carefully curate their content and the content that is proving popular shares a common thread. Pointing to the success of shows like *Jane the Virgin*, *Empire*, and *Black-ish*, Waterston says, “Millennials are most certainly shaping the future in their quest for diversity and authenticity in content.” 28% of Millennials report regularly watching content from premium networks, more than twice the rate of those 35+. Millennials also report watching original series made for the web (like *Hulu Originals*) at almost three times the rate of viewers 35+ (31% vs. 11%, respectively). Waterston adds, “Both the numbers and the narratives tell us today’s viewers are looking for authentic content that reflects their realities and their lives.”

CONTENT IN CONTEXT

Unfortunately, we have found yet another study that confirms that Millennials are indeed defining the future. With other content providers seeking to improve the value proposition of pay TV and reinvent the traditional TV experience

with features like voice control, social media integration, and a more seamless cross-platform viewing experience. As broadcasters, we must be making similar advances. Whether these features will be enough is an important question.

This item excerpted and condensed from the DIGIDAY site outlines that for years, it was enough for the Sunday political talk shows to own the conversation for a single day on television.

But if they want to reach young people who are getting their news on Facebook, they have to own social media around the clock, too. NBC's "Meet the Press" realized this two years ago when it brought on senior producer Shawna Thomas to overhaul the show's approach to digital media realizing they needed to work harder to make Meet the Press a 24-7 brand. "They would push on Sunday and no one would think to put anything out throughout the week. That is not how news works anymore."

Thomas focused on Facebook, which is where "Meet the Press" has its biggest following. "Meet the Press" started doing Facebook Q&A in which the show's host Chuck Todd answers questions from the audience. On average, 829 people tune in to the Q&As. On Sunday after the show airs, "Meet the Press" posts a 2-minute video distillation called "Compressed," which have been averaging 53,500 views each. The results have been dramatic: its Facebook following has more than doubled well ahead of its closest competitor, "Fox News Sunday," which has 200,965

fans, according to Social Bakers. Total monthly interactions on those posts have soared, too, to more than 115,000 as of May 2016 from less than 15,000 two years ago.

"Meet the Press" isn't alone among the Sunday political talk shows in trying to use social media to connect with an audience in between broadcasts. CNN's "State of the Union" uses social media to promote the show starting on Friday. CNN's social media head Samantha Barry said "It's not just a Sunday play for us." "Fox News Sunday" has been soliciting viewer questions during the week, live-tweeting the show and running clips during the week of host Chris Wallace's other journalistic activities.

Facebook and Twitter are the primary platforms shows use reach social audiences; they're still figuring out how to translate their hard-news brands to the more playful, visual platforms like Snapchat and Instagram. CNN's "State of the Union" has a segment, "State of the Cartoon-ion," in which host Jake Tapper draws political cartoons, which are posted to Instagram. "Figuring out how to make what we do work on digital and social without the aid of puppies and small children is still tough for me, but what I think we have going for us is that it's not an afterthought," Thomas said.

CONTENT IN CONTEXT

It's also hard to know if all these efforts on social media translate to viewership because of the difficulty tracking people from one medium to the other. And while the appeal of social media is that it has a younger audience that the Sunday shows

want to recruit, that audience also is less likely to be deliberately seeking out news. Using these positive examples, as local broadcasters, we need to embrace social media to reinforce our newscasts as "24-7 brands."

Winter is coming, says Magid, and you better be ready, that is the warning in this item excerpted and condensed from TV Newscheck.

Here are five things you need to keep in mind now in marketing your television station's news product so you won't be left out in the cold. That's the essence of the message presented at the 2016 PromaxBDA Station Summit session titled Multi-Platform Brand at the Mirage in Las Vegas given by two speakers from Frank N. Magid Associates, Jim Thomas and Nik Thompson.

Although there were many revealing facts presented in this session, these stood out as ones that TV station creative service and news personnel can put into practice right away to help increase news viewership. First, concentrating on the internet and mobile devices, the talk asked, "What platforms will viewers follow to a newscast?"

The answer was concentrate on the web, Facebook and mobile alerts and not Twitter, Snapchat or Instagram, at least not yet. The report indicated that 47% of those on the web, 42% of those on Facebook and 36% of those getting mobile alerts were most likely to follow up by watching a local newscast. Only 24% on Twitter, 25% on Instagram and 21% on Snapchat fell in that category.

Thomas and Thompson advised stations to spend more time and money promoting on Facebook by creating daily thumbstoppers. Those are the videos that force Facebook users to stop scrolling to watch your video.

Citing an example of how one small-market station, a client of Magid's, reaches audience with topicals vs. digital and how much time is spent creating each message, the team looked at a video that a station used as an on-air topical and one that was used on Facebook. In the topical video, a reporter is on location where a house caught on fire. Everyone got out as she explains how and shows some of the damage. Then the team sat down and re-edited the Facebook video to include more words on the screen, a process that took just 22 minutes. Magid says Facebook videos must be able to work without sound.

The presenters analyzed the time spent and the reach for each of the examples. The topical took two hours to create and reached 3,000 viewers on air. On the digital platform the reworked video with added on screen wording took 10 minutes to create and reach 96,000 on line. Those stats underscored the reach of Facebook as a promotional tool versus the average afternoon broadcast viewership.

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In this brief review of the presentation, you cannot capture all that was shown. In their summary, Magid stated the following items as important for stations going forward. What are the 5 ways to be ready for your multi-platform brand? First, image is now everything. Then

be sure to write your digital plan. Also weather, it's not me, it's you. Stations need to have daily thumbstoppers on Facebook. And maybe most importantly stations need to redefine their promotion and marketing departments going forward.



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This article, excerpted and condensed from FORBES, looks at this phenomenon of binge watching now firmly established in today's TV viewing world.

Netflix has taken it upon itself to investigate the finer nuances of its subscribers' binging habits by analyzing the way viewers in more than 190 countries binge on more than 100 TV series. And the results, say Netflix, show that we respond to popular shows in one of two ways: we either devour them or savor them.

Devouring, says Netflix, means watching a particular series for more than two hours a day, while savoring means watching a show for less than two hours a day. And as Netflix will doubtless have noticed as it tries to figure out what sort of shows to invest in over the coming years, it turns out that our devouring and savoring habits follow surprisingly well defined genre lines. The most devoured shows according to Netflix's research are thrillers, with the likes of Breaking Bad, Dexter, and Bates Motel, stopping us from going to bed as we can't resist the urge to put on just one more episode. Next to these come horror shows including American Horror Story, The Walking Dead, and Scream.

At the other end of the scale, the most 'savored' shows watched for less than two hours a day are 'irreverent comedies', incorporating titles such as Arrested Development, Unbreakable

Kimmy Schmidt, and Love. Next to these 'most savored' shows, perhaps surprisingly, come dramas, including Homeland, House Of Cards, The Good Wife and The West Wing.

Netflix is keen to stress - unsurprisingly! - that the 'savored' shows binged slightly less prolifically than the 'devoured' ones are not actually less successful, pointing to the fact that the research examined member completion of the first season of all series, and data was only included for accounts that fully completed a season. So where do the different binging habits come from? Broadly speaking, Netflix reckons it has to do with how much viewers need to think about what they're watching.

For instance, it suggests that irreverent comedies are watched more slowly than comedies with a dramatic edge like Orange Is The New Black and Grace And Frankie because the irreverent comedy shows have more societal commentary, more densely layered comedy and more multi-dimensional characters. Netflix proposes, too, that viewers like to take their time to digest everything going on in dramas with complex narratives like House Of Cards and Bloodline, and that they like to soak up the period atmospheres of shows like Mad Men. When it comes to the shows people just can't seem to resist watching, Netflix has found that they tend to 'assault your senses' or 'go straight for the gut'.

CONTENT IN CONTEXT

Though these trends are specific to the viewing habits of Netflix subscribers, it should give us some insight into the phenomenon of binge watching. Also, as VOD and curated video library sites are

becoming more prevalent, we might have some clues for the potential strategies that networks and syndicators should be employing to best serve the next generation of viewers.