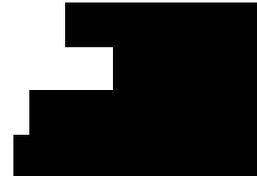


"SWEEPS"

Treatment

Created & Written by:
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Great Title – “Sweeps”

Great Tagline - “Real news happens when the cameras are off”

HIGH CONCEPT IDEA

“Marketable logline” (Core Creative Idea) - Network News “wannabees”, in a small town, hustle to go from worst to first during ratings sweeps but it’s their personal demons that’ll be the lead story.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

(Great in theory) – “Sweeps” will show the dark side of a news reporting in a small town and provide a voyeuristic view of the newsroom staff (anchors, reporters, photographers, studio technicians and management) their interaction with one another, their personal lives on and off screen, the news subjects and finally what it takes to get the News on the air.

In “Sweeps” the newsroom is a highly charged and emotional atmosphere creating real-life drama both on and off the screen. Although most news professionals appeared to be unbiased and picture-perfect when they’re on the air; there’s a side that’s hidden from the cameras which, includes murder, robbery, domestic violence, drug trafficking, grifting, drunk-driving, assault, homophobia, misogyny, pedophilia to name a few of the suspected charges haunting newsroom professionals. Most viewers are unaware that their beloved local news anchors and reporters walk a very fine line **not** to become the subject of a televised news story. Agreements are made with law enforcement to keep News personalities out of jail and names off the police blotter.

Sexual tension is also high in the newsroom and promises of sexual favors in return for a chance at the anchor desk or producing that perfect demo-tape is not uncommon.

Among the straight shooters in the newsroom, there’s still the chance lying, cheating, backstabbing, animosity, self-doubt, low self-esteem will doom a journalist’s budding career before he or she gets the chance to make it to the big league. It’s not uncommon for news staffers to have nervous breakdowns on the job.

And then there’s The News to report while keeping those dark secrets at bay and off the screen. The News show must go on live every night at Six o’clock, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year without fail. And it takes a toll on the news crew, especially during sweeps where risks are taken in an effort to win viewers and a sizeable market share. And as Murphy’s Law dictates if it will go wrong, it will especially during sweeps.

(Great in Reality)

"Sweeps" will reveal what actually goes on in the newsroom and news studio and will serve as an impetus for voyeurism into a world that is not readily available to the average local news viewers.

America has a love and hate relationship with broadcast media; conservatives believe the media is liberal biased; liberals believe the opposite, and everyone thinks broadcast journalists are dumb and insensitive, especially when a journalist puts a microphone in the face of a grieving mother, who's just lost her child, and ask "How do you feel?" Even print journalists have disdain for broadcast journalists. America's fascination with broadcast media will translate into viewers hoping to gain access into the lives of those who report the news and how news stories come to fruition. Viewers will see there are real, fragile and less-than-noble people bring them the news stories of the day.

(Why timing is right) According to several studies most Americans get their news from local news than any other source, except maybe cable news channel, CNN. Although local news audience was reported to be dwindling in the past there is a new interest and growing audience for local news. 59% of Americans report that they watch local news regularly. There is a potential for broad appeal if targeting the same target audience who watch 24-7 cable news, bloopers and other reality shows. The target age for 24-65+ moderate to-high income viewers.

Source: The State of the News media 2005 Journalism.org

http://www.stateofthemediamedia.org/2005/narrative_localtv_audience.asp?cat=3&media=6

In its 2004 biannual news consumption survey, the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, fully 59% of Americans surveyed said they watched local TV news "regularly," compared with 57% in 2002. That is also higher than the percentage of Americans who say they "regularly" go to any other news outlet.

Another potentially positive sign is that unlike many other news media, particularly newspapers, local TV news enjoys viewership that is consistent across income and educational levels. According to Pew Research Center's 2004 survey, 57% to 62% of Americans in every income category say they watch local news "regularly." The percentage is similar across all levels of education (54 to 62% say they watch regularly).¹⁴

The greatest disparities in the local TV news audience are by age group. Older people in general tend to be heavier news users (with the exception of online news), and local TV news use fits the pattern. Seven out of ten people 65 and older (70%) say they are "regular" local news viewers. By comparison just under half (46%) of 18-to-29-year-olds are "regular" local news viewers.

Still, at a time when many news outlets are worried about appealing to younger generations, local TV news seems to be in an enviable position. Only one in four young

adults (23%) reported reading a newspaper on the previous day when polled by the Pew Research Center, half the amount of "regular" local news viewers. An even smaller percentage, 18%, said they were regular viewers of the networks' evening news programs.

The question for the industry is whether younger generations will become more likely to watch local TV news as they "age into" older demographics. But local TV news is fortunate to be starting from a much higher baseline.

THE APPROACH

Can be physically produce -

The location, TBD, should be in the Midwest or Southeast at one of the 150-212 DMA (Designated Market Area) television station. Consideration should be given to independent stations or one of the four network affiliates. Television station is in 4th or 5th place in the ratings, in a two or three station market; and has a cast of main "characters" such as a fat-balding Ted Baxter-type and an aging beauty queen as the main anchors; a blonde pretty anchor without book smarts gunning for the main anchor job; a token-black weekend anchor whom co-workers seem to think he or she has a degree in "negrology" and is the spokesman for all black people; an geriatric news reporter that has been on the beat since television began ; a foul-mouth hot-tempered photographer that is also pathological liar; marginal news anchors and reporters that are on trying hard to get out of the market; a highly intelligent low-achieving, no college degree live newscast studio director; a maniacal manipulative news director, and a fat-cat general manager with no-guts for enforcement and lives in the shadow of his wealthy dead father.

Shooting schedule should be for about 6-8 weeks. Preferably 2 weeks before sweeps and the actual sweeps month. October and November are prime months because of inclement weather that causes residents to get cabin fever. Residents then sometimes create hard news in the most horrific ways which adds more drama to the reality show.

A news station that is in last place in "East Po-Dunk" USA has nothing to lose, sales team need a boost in the ratings to acquire substantial sales revenue, news crew need a boost in ratings that will translate into a boost in morale if their news team is on top, not to mention national exposure afforded to the talent that is needed to gain a fighting chance to get out of the market. Cameras should be set up in the control room, studio and newsroom. Production crews should follow News crews on stories. TV station News cars should have cameras and wired for sound. A

"confessional" should be set up in the News staff' safe-haven and will be an ideal spot to find out what is really going on in the mind of the reporters/anchors/technicians.

BENEFITS

(And brings true and unique entertainment value)- (Why we will watch)

Great hook, twist or payoff

"Sweeps" is a real-life unfolding drama within a drama both on and off camera.

- There's a certain amount of satisfaction gained from watching "pretty people with perfect hair and smiles" stoop to low depths to get the big story.
- Reporters and secondary anchors employing ruthless tactics to get on the anchor desks to make it to the big market and/or network.
- Conflict and tension between anchors/reporters vs. photogs and studio technicians
- Comic relief potential with a motley crew cast working with inadequate equipment. It's like watching a train wreck and you can't look away.
- News director job is on the chopping block if ratings don't rise.
- Real news stories ranging from horrific such as a Pakistani national slicing the throats of his family members including a two-year-old baby girl because it's permissible in his country to do so.
- -to sad stories such as a man being released from the psychiatric ward early and shooting his family to death.
- -to X-File type bizarre stories such as a woman living in a house that has a huge nest of wasps living behind the walls, (the walls pulsate)
- And watching how the anchors and reporters handle the carnage, casualties and still smile throughout the broadcast.

Overview – An ideal shooting scenario would be a television station that's in 4th or 5th place in the ratings, in a two-station market; The station would be located in Poo-Dunk, USA and has a cast of main "characters" such as a fat-balding Ted Baxter-type and an aging beauty queen who is a stick-figure as the main anchors; a token-black whom co-workers seem to think he or she has a degree in negro-logy and is the spokesman for all black people; a news reporter that has been on the beat since television began ; a foul-mouth hot-tempered photographer that is also pathological liar; other news anchors that are on trying hard to get out of the market; a maniacal manipulative news director, and a fat-cat general manager with no-balls and still lives in the shadow of his wealthy dead father...

Journalists know that they are only as good as their last story and they will take risks to make the next story bigger, better and sexier than their last. More risks are taken when a journalists' hopes of making it to a big market one day, slowly fade if they don't get that one big break; having their story make national news.

And their news gathering techniques shown in a reality show format; learn of biases of the reporters and how reports sometimes end up slanted;
focus on personal lives of the news staff on and off screen working under the pressure of being underpaid, overworked, using inadequate equipment that it takes to get the news on the air;

6-7 One hour shows: 1 week for introduction of news staff (character), town and towns' people & highlights of the competitor station. 4 weeks during sweeps, Nielsen ratings results show. 1 hour outtakes and bloopers show.
Six weeks shooting on location.

MARKET ANALYSIS/COMPETITION

Several Commercial and Educational productions

PBS - "The Newsroom," BBC - Situation-Comedy exploiting the lives and trials of several members of the news staff - premiering summer 2005

"Local News" - Documentary highlighting the local news rooms effort to bring up their ratings without selling out by promoting crime "If it bleeds it leads" news cast. Produced 2001 - ongoing town hall -online

Journalism.Org - Survey of Americas newsroom

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Mel Hopkins is a six-year veteran of broadcast journalism. She worked as a News Anchor, Reporter, and News Cast Producer at a CBS Network Affiliate and a ClearChannel Radio Station in Wheeling, West Virginia. Ms. Hopkins is a freelance writer and has published several short stories, essays, op-eds, news reports, and feature articles including "getting media attention for soft news". She works as a corporate communications consultant specializing in Marketing Communication for nonprofits organizations, and small business enterprises. Mel Hopkins resides in Naperville, IL.

Kimber Wheeler is the member of the California Bar and works as a literary agent for Talent Works.