



TITLE OF CASE STUDY: HAWAII FIVE-0: TV SERIES RE-BOOT

BUSINESS SITUATION:

Re-boot a TV series to appeal to multiple generations of viewers where remakes had previously failed and skepticism prevailed among consumers and media. To achieve this, a strategically backed marketing plan needed to be created that would garner immediate appeal to both those familiar and unfamiliar with the original show.

The history of television remakes is almost as classic as the original series themselves. Despite numerous attempts to revive previously popular series – including ‘Knight Rider’, ‘Bionic Woman’, ‘Dragnet’ and ‘The Fugitive’ – to name a few, all of which had short runs and little success despite significant production costs and losses.

The level of difficulty involved in remaking a TV series is perhaps exemplified in NBC’s launch of ‘Knight Rider’. The show premiered in Fall, 2008 with a full 22-episode order to remake the popular 1982 series. By the time NBC’s 2009-2010 schedule was announced during the NBC upfront in May, 2009, it was no longer on the schedule and its original order had been reduced to 17 episodes. The NBC remake of the ‘Bionic Woman’ in 2007 was lauded as the hottest new show of the fall season – and was gone after just nine episodes.

CBS set out to reboot the series and moreover, place the show in the cornerstone of its successful Monday night line-up, replacing CSI: Miami which averaged a household rating/share of 8.1/13, with 12.74M viewers the previous season. *1

Hawaii Five-O would not only need to hurdle over the challenges particular to a remake but would need to break through a fall premiere season that included 26 new network TV shows and 17 time changes. Additionally, the show faced strong competition with two new premieres that would receive heavy promotional support including Bruckheimer’s ‘Chase’ (NBC) and ABC’s ‘Castle’ which benefited from following ‘Dancing With The Stars’.

Initial background research conducted by CBS Vision revealed that nearly 50% of respondents found the notion of remakes unappealing. Or as Bill Carter aptly wrote in The New York Times, in an article about the probability of remake success, “The track record does more than suggest not. In the history of network television, no remake of a previous hit series has ever become a hit itself on network television.” *2

CBS’ BUSINESS OBJECTIVE

The objective for the show was to establish it within its new time period with an expected average household rating/share of 8.0/13. To achieve this, the marketing campaign would need to strike a precise chord between both familiar and unfamiliar viewers of the show.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- Target precisely which aspects of both the original show and remake would appeal to viewers, which would turn viewers away and how that varied by demographic.
- How elements of both shows should be combined to maximize appeal.
- Identify which specific media – publications, websites etc – would provide the most effective platform for driving viewership and converting awareness into tune-in.
- Convey which aspects of the TV promo campaign would positively convert viewers and where to find primary and non-primary viewers on network and cable television.
- Guide the overall creative execution and quickly relay findings to senior management to devise long-term strategy and moreover, in the short term, alter creative executions along the way to reflect viewer sentiment.

RESEARCH FINDINGS/CREATING A ROADMAP FOR MARKETING CAMPAIGN

CBS Vision's Television City, based in the MGM Grand Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, was a cornerstone for garnering strategic learnings that would inform the campaign. The facility was a non-stop, round-the-clock epicenter for intelligence gathering. In creating a campaign for the series launch, there was no time for staged/extended phases of research – instead, a continuous series of focus groups, a dramatically enhanced/targeted method of on-air promo testing, panel studies, ongoing tracking, and quantitative and qualitative studies were conducted – largely within Television City but ancillary staff and support services on the west and east coasts were also utilized. Key to success was not only delivering a strategic plan identifying key levers of the show and competitive advantages, but in drawing research and implications in rapid-fire time to inform senior management throughout the campaign as it expanded throughout the summer leading up to the September premiere of Hawaii Five-O.

Faced with the challenges of successfully and swiftly ushering the series to success, the link between research and marketing was dynamic and the distance between them tightened as reliance on research was centripetal to winning. The research findings – and their impact on creative – were instantaneous and best positioned here together to demonstrate efficiency:

Music as Core to Campaign

Finding/Research Development

The score to the 1968 series was originally thought to be familiar and known only to older viewers who had watched and known the original show. Research uncovered, however, early on, that the Hawaii Five-O theme song was known and adored by all generations of viewers, young and old. This was a critical nugget that without it, the music would have merely served as 'background' to the show campaign, rather than being front and center, informing every element of the marketing.

The key was using the theme song early in the campaign, allowing the show to be 'marketed' before it's official, formal launch. The score's strong resonance across such a broad audience was leveraged to create a sense of early connection with the show as both the known/familiar versions of the song – and variations of it throughout the years by well-known performers such as Sammy Davis, Jr. – and viewer interpretations of the song within every age group – were seeded locally and nationally.

Marketing Execution

The musical score was incorporated everywhere and to appeal to all demographics. College bands throughout the country were invited to participate in 'Marching Band Mania' and competed in a contest to determine who played the best rendition of the Hawaii Five-O theme song. Online voting took place at the CBS College Sports website and the winner, University of Maryland, was featured on the October 11, 2010 episode of the show. 'Hollywood met Hawaii' when the USC Marching Band traveled to Hawaii to kick off the USC Trojans football season and the footage was used for a CBS promotional campaign that was featured on-air and online. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter and other sites were incorporated into the campaign. For mass appeal, a free ringtone of the iconic theme song was created and the download generated approximately 4.5 million impressions. Print and outdoor elements were also incorporated.

Media Placement: The Yahoo! Effect

Finding/Research Development

In advance of the show's marketing launch, throughout its execution and even post-launch, rigorous, weekly research was conducted to uncover specifically where viewers – primary and ancillary – find out about TV shows and make their decision about what to watch. Above and beyond the broad categories of on-air, outdoor, print, etc., we needed to identify exactly where viewers went to find out and make their decision about which shows to watch and drive them to tune in. Research repeatedly demonstrated that Yahoo! was the #1 portal for our viewers. This finding would be a precursor to a bold, never-before-executed portal deal by the network.

Marketing Execution

CBS partnered with Yahoo! to create a first-ever, broad-scale, 'takeover' deal with Yahoo! Banking on research, rather than spreading its online media presence, the focus for Hawaii Five-O was entirely focused on Yahoo! Hawaii Five-O was featured not only on the home page but throughout the site and new executions and designs were created especially for the show.

On-Air Promo Evaluation & Placement/The Next Level

Finding/Research Background

To compete, and moreover, stand out in the highly competitive, late Summer/early Fall premiere launch period where TV airwaves are dominated by the 'noise and combustion' of new shows, Research recognized it needed to refine its promo testing process and placement. Greater targeting capabilities could drive tune and deepen audience understanding and analysis. Two actions were taken. The first, its worth noting, that of fine-tuning promo testing, needed to seamlessly and immediately work within the pressurized timeframe of testing – just days from the delivery of promo cuts to testing and then delivering results to senior management. Further, the learnings garnered from promo testing extend far beyond the :30 or :60, etc., spots themselves to informing other elements of the campaign. All the more reason for efficacy. Research was able to take the promo testing process to a new level that went beyond evaluating and rating promos by descriptors, to creating a holistic, quintile-based evaluation for recall and conversion. By categorizing promos with data-driven accuracy, executives could understand the promos effectiveness and choose at a moment's glance. To enhance targeting, Simulmedia, a start-up company was utilized for the first-time and employed set-top box data to enhance our understanding and use of off broadcast air.

Marketing Execution

With these new systems in place the on-air promotional machine – from creation to placement –

was stronger in its accuracy and efficiency. Simulmedia's psychographic targeting delivered incremental viewership to Hawaii Five-O by identifying counter-intuitive networks for ancillary, unduplicated audience.

Show Positioning

Finding/Research Background

How to best position the show to appeal to all demographics was of central concern – a misstep early on would turn viewers away permanently. The dilemma was knowing if the focus should be on showcasing elements of the original series for an impassioned, but older fanbase, or creating something entirely new for the unfamiliar viewing audience. Research uncovered that viewers desired a mix of the two, old and new, and by striking the right cord, could satisfy all demographics. Each of the elements of the show could be incorporated to resonate with all. The exotic, tropical setting of Hawaii, Research uncovered, could provide more than mere background but could serve as it's own 'character' in the show, so to speak, driving viewership on its own. In fact, the Hawaiian setting was the #1 image conjured among among viewers with 75% selecting it as what most immediately came to mind when thinking about the show. *3 And to keep viewers engaged and invested, the crime-solving/mystery aspect to the show was critical. The playful, fun or 'sexy' elements of the show, nor any one character, would not be as important as keeping the viewers interested in the mystery, procedural storylines.

Marketing Execution

The marketing indeed focused on a dynamic mixture of well-loved elements of the show, with a new campiness. The locale was featured throughout the campaign – in the on-air, print and online executions, etc. The ensemble nature of the cast was emphasized and the procedural element highlighted which parlayed well in promoting Hawaii Five-O along with CBS' mainstay and franchise series – rather than differentiating it as something new and exotic.

BUSINESS RESULTS

Big Picture Performance

Hawaii 5-0 premiered on September 20, 2010, 42 years to the date of the original program and succeeded in reversing the trend of remakes as it launched – and sustained – to terrific success.

- Hawaii Five-0 launched to success with a household rating/share of 10.7/13 and 17.58M viewers, beating the previous time period average for CSI: Miami by 38%. The premiere also outperformed the prior season time period average in both key adult demographics: +45% in A25-54 and +35% in A18-49.
- In a highly competitive time period against two highly promoted dramas, NBC's Chase and ABC's Castle, through December 2010, the show was number one in its time slot virtually every week in households, total viewers, A25-54 and A18-49.
- Hawaii Five-0 is the #1 new show of the 2010-11 season (based on data through December 2010), averaging 13.77M viewers each week
- The series premiere posted the largest DVR playback audience (post same-day) ever recorded by Nielsen at that point in time (3.37M viewers). *4

Campaign Breakdown/Results

The Yahoo! online campaign and subsequent in-depth research study conducted by Nielsen and Yahoo! demonstrated the success of the online campaign toward driving tune-in and significantly raising awareness of the show. Those who were exposed to the Yahoo promotion were more than twice as likely (112%) to watch the Hawaii Five-O premiere. More than 18% of those who saw the Yahoo! promotion watched the Hawaii Five-O premiere; less than 9% of those who were not exposed to the ad watched the premiere. Overall a 10% lift in ratings among A25-54 resulted from exposure to the campaign. Unaided awareness of the show among those exposed to the ad of the show was 60%, and importantly and very difficult to achieve, is recognition of the network the show will be airing on which was 43%. *5

Daily tracking of our Fall premiere shows – as well as those of our broadcast competitors – was conducted throughout the Summer among 2000 respondents. Hawaii Five-0 outperformed the competition – from the start of tracking through to completion and its September premiere. Tracking measures awareness of shows and intent to view, and serves as a measurement tool/barometer for the Fall premiere ratings. In awareness, the Hawaii Five-0 ‘re-boot’ started the Summer at 27% aware among A18-49; average awareness among all shows was 12%. Awareness just prior to premiere was 39%; average among all shows was 24% (and a few of those shows were already on the air). The top 2 box intent to view (the most stringent/toughest measurement) for Hawaii Five-O at the beginning of the Summer was 11%; average among all shows was 5%. Just prior to premiere, intent to view was 19%; average among all shows was 10%. *6

The on-air promo strategy – the driving force of the campaign – and where nearly 90% of viewers make their decision about whether or not to watch a show – clearly worked. Tivo’s second-by-second ratings indicate CBS was most successful among the networks in converting promo watchers to show viewers – despite other networks devoting more media weight. Hawaii 5-0 recorded a 23.7% conversion rate. *7

The success, however is best noted however, by its performance and being licensed in 145 international markets.

Footnotes

- *1. Based upon CSI: Miami 2009-2010 Nielsen NPM Season Average.
- *2. The New York Times, December 27, 2009
- *3. CBS Vision/Research Panel, Summer 2010
- *4. Nielsen NPM, 9/20/10-12/19/10
- *5. Nielsen New Program Awareness Tracker, Summer 2010
- *6. Yahoo! Ad Effectiveness Research
(Conducted in partnership with Nielsen, Fall, 2010)
- *7. Promo effectiveness viewing data from Tivo’s Power//Watch Ratings Service
Released November, 2010