

**TITLE OF CASE STUDY: TV LAND'S LAUNCH OF HOT IN CLEVELAND**

---

**BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES**

For years, TV Land has been the home for reruns of television's most celebrated sitcoms and dramas. Our target demo is A25-54 with a focus on A40-54 and W25-54. We offer advertisers steady, reliable ratings and an appealing, upbeat and positive environment. Despite our best efforts to push the brand into a more contemporary direction with more modern acquisitions and original reality programming, we've always been known for reruns and a retro look and feel.

In 2009, TV Land took the first bold step in a long-term business goal to shift from aging acquisitions to all-new original programming. Our June, 2010 launch of TV Land's first original sitcom, *Hot in Cleveland* starring the newly-hot Betty White, would be the debut of this effort.

Here we were: a small network with a small audience launching a BIG new show that needed to attract a BIG audience to be successful. Bigger budget shows need bigger ratings to be profitable. Our marketing needed to bring in a lot of new viewers for this to work. This presented several challenges: new viewers might not know the show is airing on TV Land, might mistake the show for just another rerun, might not know where TV Land is on the dial, or worse, not even know what TV Land was. Our success would hinge on reaching these potential viewers and getting them to TV Land for a big launch.

The launch campaign objectives were nothing short of daunting:

**Objective #1:** Strong ratings.

**Objective #2:** Raise awareness and shift perceptions about TV Land. This was certainly more difficult to measure, but every bit as important for our new business model in the long-term.

**RESEARCH STORY**

We began by showing the pilot of *HOT* to male and female respondents aged 30-54. After a dial test and survey, the respondents participated in focus groups aimed at identifying the heart of the show's appeal and the main reasons for tune in. Next, we conducted an online test of the pilot with 400 respondents aged 30-54, followed by a 15 minute survey. The results for both tests were overwhelmingly positive for the show but we got early indication from non-viewers of TV Land that they would be challenged to find it and even hesitant to go to TV Land for it.

Knowing that we had a potential hit in place (great script, great cast and the right fit for our vision of TV Land), the next step was to conduct research that would guide our creative messaging. Not only did we need to let the people know that a new show was launching, we had to get them to a channel that they had never watched before.

We conducted an online survey with OTX with 500 adults aged 30-49. The survey investigated their familiarity and usage with various media platforms and TV consumption and was designed to inform our media plan and guide our placement of messages in order to maximize our reach and impact with this audience.

Additionally, we conducted in-home ethnographies with respondents who were screened to fit the socio-economic and psychographic profile of our new target audience. We wanted to witness their TV habits in their “natural setting” first-hand and have in-depth interviews with them about their passion for television, the role their favorite shows play in their lives and, most importantly, to find out how they learn about new television programs and how and why they evangelize for their favorites. We then invited the participants to sit on a panel and answer questions from top TV Land executives during an all day “Audience Immersion” event. It was important for the executives to meet these new target audience members first hand and to keep them in mind as they designed content and marketing materials.

### **HOT Specific Findings**

The main overarching findings were that:

1. The appeal of HOT IN CLEVELAND lay in the familiarity of the cast and the traditional multi-camera format.
2. The mature themes and sex appeal of an older cast would keep the audience coming back for more.
3. If you build it, they won't necessarily come...you better draw them a map.

The results of the in-person and online pilot tests were remarkable. The show received overwhelmingly positive marks. Through the pilot discussions, we learned that the cast was key to the show's appeal. The cast was named as the #1 reason to tune in by a large margin. We knew the cast (Valerie Bertinelli, Jane Leeves, Wendie Malick and Betty White) had to be the main and sole feature of any creative. All creative should directly let the audience know that this fantastic cast was in a new show together...and that's it. Any reference to the plot or setting would be superfluous and potentially distracting. We also knew that these ladies were familiar enough that we didn't need to give their past credentials in any message (*One Day at a Time*, *Frasier*, etc.) so we had the freedom to be very streamlined with our presentation of the cast.

Surprisingly, we also learned that the traditional, multi-camera format of the show was a big draw and key to the appeal of the show. The multi-camera format with live audience was a familiar throwback yet also so different than the current crop of single camera comedies on broadcast and cable. We knew we had to reference this distinction in all the press and creative materials to an audience that grew up with traditional sitcoms. As such, we only referred to the show as “a new sitcom” in all the creative and press, never a “comedy”, knowing that the term would distinguish us from all the single-camera formats. We also made clear that this show will be “taped in front of a live audience.” Additionally, the focus groups revealed that both men and women were excited about a cast of women that were over 45, yet very sexy and glamorous. While the respondents loved the Elka character for her humor, top descriptors for Victoria, Melanie and Joy included: “likeable”, “good natured”, “attractive”, “funny” and “sexy”. The “Windblown” spot was developed with these principles in mind: highlight the cast, glam them up and call it a sitcom.

The biggest hurdle for HOT, according to the data, was getting viewers to find and accept it's placement on TV Land. When asked on which channel respondents expected to see HOT, the top responses were dominated by broadcast networks, in line with the perceived strength and quality of the program. When forced to choose a cable network for HOT, networks well known

for their original programming took the top spots. Only 3% of respondents identified TV Land as the expected network home for HOT. Worse yet, we discovered that “intention to view” the program dropped when TV Land was identified as the network home.

We knew we had to help these viewers find this gem of a show. Whenever we could, we drove to the channel number on which the viewer could find TV Land. And we weren't subtle: Spots began with the channel number, ended with the channel number, AND included a graphic with the channel number throughout the spot. This dictated not only the pacing of the spots but also where we bought the media time. The majority of our media plan was local markets which allowed us to tag EVERY spot with a channel number. And when we couldn't do that, due to restrictions or a national media (such as print) we drove to a URL ([hotincleveland.tv](http://hotincleveland.tv)) for the channel number. All digital advertising and social media had a dedicated tab for the channel finder as well.

### **New Target Audience Findings**

The main findings of our ethnographies and media usage survey revealed the following:

1. Popular media coverage and social network recommendations can have significant sway on this target's TV viewing decisions.
2. This audience is very savvy with entertainment technology (DVR, IPG, HD) and uses these technologies to plan their viewing schedule and find new shows.

According to our findings, we discovered that Adults 30-49 are very social about TV shows: 76% claim to be either influencers, influenced or both when it comes to talking and hearing about TV shows. We found that the most influential factors to impact a decision to watch a new TV show include: interesting clips of the show on TV and the star of the show. Further, most respondents noted that “buzz” around a TV show as very influential when making a decision to try a new TV show and nearly a third noted that “positive publicity” can convince them to watch. Additionally, TV commercials and “word of mouth buzz” were cited as the best ways to raise awareness of the program, while coverage by entertainment news programs was also considered a valuable means to get the word out. Many also noted that they find out about shows through Facebook status updates.

We realized that our optimal target audience of 40-somethings would be tapped into pop culture and looking for new shows and we needed to get *Hot in Cleveland* into the fray. This was very different from TV Land's traditional strategy. We had always considered our brand as an alternative from current, popular fare and marketed the brand as a respite from all the pop culture noise. To attract new viewers, it was clear we needed to take a different tack. To drive new viewers to TV Land, we created and contextualized our media idea to capitalize on pop culture trends and other peoples' buzz.

We had been given an unexpected opportunity with Betty White's media resurgence but we needed to transfer this momentum to our new show. If Betty was big on Facebook we'd have a Facebook page with fan solicitation ads. If talk shows wanted Betty as a guest we'd make deals to include the rest of the cast as well. Betty's hosting SNL? We scrambled to debut our spot during the broadcast, much sooner than we had originally planned. From *The View* to The New York Stock Exchange, Betty got us in the door and we parlayed that into opportunities to promote our show and its ensemble cast. We soon found other opportunities. When the “Girl Power” touchstone *Sex and the City 2* was creating a media sensation we latched onto it with our own four-women-of-a-certain-age comedy and created a custom trailer that would run before it in movie theaters. Cleveland itself provided us our next media opportunity: The free

agency of NBA star LeBron James, one of the year's biggest sports stories. We took advantage by producing a Facebook video message with our stars trying to convince him to stay in Cleveland. People noticed and they talked about it. We garnered press in both entertainment and sports media.

We also needed to be selective on where we ran our ads. We could not financially afford to blanket our potential target, so we hyper contextualized our placements based on the information we garnered from our Media Usage survey. We ran print ads in *People*, *In Touch*, *Star* and *US* magazines. We did Digital Out of Home at supermarkets throughout the country; 1,500 screens in businesses like WalMart and Acme. We reached female sitcom fans by advertising during hit shows like *Cougar Town*, *Old Christine*, and *Big Bang Theory*.

Through our research, we also knew that this target use their TV technologies to guide their viewing choices. An overwhelming amount of A30-49 respondents cited the on-screen interactive program guide (IPG) as their #1 source for finding out what is on TV and nearly half said that they use their program guide to decide what to watch when they sit down to watch TV. Further, nearly 40% say they use the program guide to help schedule recordings of new shows. The IPG was also mentioned several times in focus groups as a favorite way to browse offerings days ahead of time, then set the DVR accordingly. In fact, "checking recorded shows" was cited as the top way to decide what to watch on TV when sitting down to watch and a full 74% of respondents set "automatic record" for their favorite shows. We wanted to take advantage of this behavior so during the week leading to the launch, we ran a lower third ad in the IPG of several MSOs including Time Warner, Comcast and Cablevision with channel number, date, time and a "record now" button.

## **RESULTS**

The launch of *Hot in Cleveland* was an undeniable success from both a ratings and awareness perspective. We achieved our goal of getting the word out about this show. According to OTX's TV Dailies, which measures awareness of new programs, awareness of *Hot in Cleveland* among A25-54 was more than double the cable average for new shows during launch week. Network linkage was also incredibly strong....three times the norm for cable. Viewers clearly knew where to find us and the proof was in the ratings.

*Hot in Cleveland* was the highest cable sitcom premiere ever with nearly 6MM total viewers! The number one program on all of cable with A25-54, W25-54, A18-49, W18-49 and total viewers! Actual ratings were 1.9 (A25-54), 2.4 (W25-54), DESTROYING our original goal. With inclusion of a 3-day DVR playback, all ratings jumped 20+%. W25-54 jumped to a huge 3.1. We got a 245% gain (A25-54) from lead in. And perhaps most significant was 59% of A25-54 that watched the premiere were NEW to TV Land. (Source: The Nielsen Company, Most Current Data) These are impressive numbers by any measure, but it's important to remember that TV Land wasn't a network that anyone came to for original content. In fact, most viewers didn't even know we produced original content. To get viewers to our network for an original show was HUGE for us. To get them in the numbers that they arrived was beyond anything we ever imagined. The success of *Hot in Cleveland* has effectively changed who we are as a brand and how we'll operate going forward.

Since its launch, *Hot in Cleveland* has received tremendous press coverage including countless magazine covers and feature stories in newspapers and entertainment shows (*USA Today*, *New York Times*, *Entertainment Tonight*, *Today Show* just to mention a few). The launch of season 2 was a highly anticipated event of the Winter TCA gathering and sparked an astounding wave of new press. Thanks to this massive press response, the perception of TV

Land as a brand has changed dramatically and has opened doors for the development of our new sitcoms arriving on 2011-2012 slate. Not only has the response from critics been beyond expectations, our cast was honored by their peers and industry leaders with a 2011 SAG nomination for an ensemble cast...a first ever in MTV Networks history.

We've gone from "the rerun channel" to the place for the hottest new show on cable. And none of this would have been possible without the strategic and creative use of media, informed by a comprehensive research plan.