

New Networks to Give Your Lineup a Boost

More niche programming that can make a compelling difference to your subscribers

By Michael A. Kashmer ■ *Broadband Properties Magazine*

When we think about cable programming, all the big networks with millions of subscribers come to mind. They have been around for some time, are enormously successful and have become household words. But of course there are other program providers out there that should be looked at. It is these specialized, niche networks that can make a difference to your bottom line. Adding the emerging networks that offer other genres will help attract and retain subscribers.

For example, it seems that 99.9 percent of all incumbent cable operators carry ESPN and USA. You must have added them to your lineup as well. But what is the programming difference between your state-of-the-art system and your competition?

Don't be discouraged by the fact that these networks sometimes die as fast as they come to life. Just a few months ago this column reported on MTV's foray into ethnic music video channels with MTV Desi, MTV Chi and MTV K aimed at South Asians, Chinese and Koreans, respectively. Perhaps MTVN's rush to get these music nets to the marketplace in some way signaled their doom. At any rate, the Asian community remains teased and underserved.

Let's take a look at some of these new programmers and see what works for your system. There is contact information at the end of each profile.

Gospel Music Channel - This network has been around for about two years and has made steady distribution gains. The name says it all. It is available in 156 DMA's nationwide and was ranked the #1 network to add by Beta Research. There is a need for family-friendly programming that can be a positive

force in people's lives. It has been reported that Gospel will absorb Black Family Network and its 16 million subscribers, too. See www.gospelmusic-channel.com or call 770-969-7936 for additional information.

BlueHighwaysTV - While we are on the subject of music, don't forget to take a look at BHTV, which is available as a linear or digital channel and via VOD and broadband. It features original signature-style shows highlighting America's diverse people and rich history. Programs feature the root music of today's bluegrass, blues, folk, gospel and traditional country along with Western lifestyle, outdoor adventure, equestrian, cooking and agriculture reporting. If traditional lifestyle programming will be a hit with your viewers, BHTV is for you. Contact www.bluehighwaystv.com or call Denise Hitchcock or Davida Shear at 866-454-2487.

Documentary Channel - Original programming dominates this lineup. A recent project with the Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star program to produce "emPOWERed" is airing now on the "EarthView" block of green programming. Current carriage includes both DBS providers and attracts upscale, curious viewers. Cable veteran Bill McGowan (formerly of Discovery Communications) was recently hired to handle ad sales and create a tailored placement strategy. Visit www.thedocumentarychannel.com, or call 615-514-2110.

BabyFirstTV - This is a new net that provides early-learning-stage entertainment for the very, very young with interactive and productive experiences. It appeals to parents as well. Daytime

programs engage and delight while nighttime programs soothe and prepare baby for sleep. Network demographics include parents (18-45) and grandparents too. If your system includes babies and toddlers 6 months to 3 years, here is a commercial-free 24/7 premium channel just for them. Content is supervised by a worldwide advisory board of top child development experts. See www.babyfirsttv.com or call Glenn Kopelson at 310-442-9853.

Fueltv - This Fox Networks action sports and lifestyle network covers skateboarding, snowboarding, surfing, BMX, freestyle motocross and wakeboarding. Fueltv is available in more than 24 million U.S. homes through DIRECTV, Cox, Charter and several other MSOs. It is also seen overseas in 54 countries. There are original series, short-form content, films and major event coverage plus interviews with action sports athletes. Fueltv is targeted to young men 13-24 and to all people 18-34. Contact www.fueltv.tv or call Peter Vesey at 212-822-8663.

Qubo - Here is a new, fresh kid's network that targets ages 2 to 11 and their caregivers. Available on digital 24/7, it also can be seen on NBC Saturday mornings, ION Television Friday afternoons and on Telemundo Saturday and Sunday morning. Launched less than a year ago, this joint venture between ION Media Networks, NBC Universal, Scholastic, Classic Media and Corus Entertainment helps children become more learning-ready, acquire a love and respect for reading and reinforce values that build a lifelong foundation for self-esteem and integrity. Programming highlights include the popular Babar, Jane and the Dragon, Postman Pat and Veggie Tales, among others. See www.qubo.com or call Rick Rodriguez at 212-603-8422.

Next month we will take a look at several other networks that are just getting started and may be a welcome addition to your current lineup. **BBP**

About the Author

Mike can be contacted by email at mike@broadbandproperties.com.



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