

# NYC TV:

This Revolution  
is Televised

In the TV business the time for change is always, and nowhere is this more evident than at NYC TV. New York City is the most competitive media market in the world, and here there is no such thing as standing still. Since launching our network in 2003, we've leveraged our status in the public television space to create a unique value proposition for viewers and sponsors alike. We have a clear

definition of who we are and more importantly, who we are not. As the official television station for the City of New York, we aim to be the destination for New York City lifestyle programming for and about New Yorkers. We create hip and energetic programming targeting a young demo. The New York Times calls us a "civic-minded MTV." We're fast-paced and tackle everything from restaurants to fashion, history and architecture, as well as music and culture – just about everything that has to do with New York City, the greatest city on earth. NYC TV is to New York City what The History Channel is to history and The Food Network is to food. Our tagline sums it up best, we're "Everything New York."

**Keep It  
Local:**



The Best of PEG TV

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## NYC TV

### ■ The Vision

There is no such thing as government TV. There is only good TV and bad TV. And far too often, PEG channels get caught up in the idea that somehow they are special. They think that simply by having a channel, people will watch them. Not true. Television is about engaging and entertaining viewers and that's what we set out to do when we envisioned NYC TV.

The cornerstone to our new model of municipal television is predicated on a novel, and in some circles, bold concept: municipal television is not only about traditional hearings and press conferences from city officials. It's much more than that; it's about the people, places and things that touch government every day. It's about public libraries, teachers and parks, the people that run them, and the stories they hold. And much more.

When I took the helm of the City's stations in 2002, the first months of my tenure were spent not figuring out television issues, but figuring out basic business and administrative issues to make the operations run more smoothly. It was during this time that we developed our vision for shaping NYC TV. We envisioned a fun, energetic network that would serve as a postcard for New York City, becoming a destination for information about government services, what's happening around town, and other information that New York City viewers could not get from local news. In mid-2003, about a year after taking over the operations, we launched not only a new network, but a new paradigm in local TV - NYC TV.

Benchmarking and quantitative analysis have always been the hallmark of how we chart success. A year after we launched NYC TV, a Nielsen coincidental study showed our awareness and viewership were up close to 50 percent. Clearly, our novel approach to local programming was resonating with our cable-only audience of approximately 1.8 million households. And then opportunity knocked again. In a historic move early in his first term, Mayor Michael Bloomberg took over the City's public school system along with the School Board's broadcast and radio stations, WNYE. By 2004, the success of NYC TV was undisputable. Therefore, with these newly acquired broadcast assets, the decision was made to integrate the television and radio station of WNYE into NYC TV. This consolidation gave rise to NYC Media Group, the newly formed umbrella organization for all of the City's media properties.

The merger, completed in January of 2005, enabled NYC TV to broaden its footprint to 7.3 million homes, nearly 19 million viewers in the New York DMA, in addition to securing a more favorable channel position (moving from Channel 74 to Channel 25). The most important moment in our operations was the expansion from just the PEG channels to include the broadcast TV and radio properties. It enabled us to take our quality programming to more viewers and to other platforms. The ability to reach larger audiences through the broadcast channel allowed for tremendous growth in NYC TV's viewership. On a gross ratings

points basis (GRPs), in the month of February 2006, the number of viewers was up by a multiple of 176 over the same period in 2003. In other words, prime-time/late night viewership levels were up an astonishing 17,633% over the same time period prior to the consolidation. Translation: NYC TV now commands over 100,000 viewers per show on a given night in primetime, competing with many top tier cable networks.

### ■ Staying Current

In the 500-channel universe, there is only one mantra that holds true: differentiate or die. Every night is a battle. If viewers are not watching us, they're watching someone else. It doesn't matter how you did yesterday, what matters is tonight and tomorrow. We are acutely aware of our need to innovate and change to keep and grow our audience by creating engaging and lively programming. Here's the kicker: Audiences are fickle. If you aren't consistently challenging and entertaining them in a creative way, they will leave and go somewhere else. Our challenge is to stay true to our mission while finding new and spirited ways to connect with our audience.

NYC TV is a powerful communication tool for reaching people in the New York tri-state area. Our unique portfolio of channels allows us to separate our government channel from our more entertainment, lifestyle oriented channels. Currently, Channel 25 is home to our Emmy Award winning original content, while Channel 74 has become the home of mayoral press conferences, City Council hearings and other official government functions. We've taken Channel 93 and turned it into a 24/7 traffic channel, and we've slated Channel 73 for ethnic programming. Channel 71, has become New York City's #1 horse racing and off-track betting channel.

### ■ The Three Rs

I often refer to the three Rs that drive NYC TV: ratings, recognition, and revenues.

Our relative value as a network is a function of the number of people watching our programs. Ratings are the key factors in our calculus for determining what airs when, what stays on the air, and what programs require changes in direction to be more responsive to viewers, etc. We also use ratings to determine how to value programming for sponsors licensing. Without ratings, you're throwing darts, and relying on anecdotes.

Here's a sampling of some of our shows that get our highest ratings: *Blueprint | NYC* is a show about famous New York City landmarks. We call it "MTV Cribs meets Ric Burns New York." We dub *Secrets of New York* as "The History Channel meets CSI." *Eat Out NY* is a restaurant program showcasing the culinary delights of New York City - and it's made in partnership with *TimeOut* magazine, which gives us a valuable off-air promotional platform. For more on our shows, visit us on the web at [www.nyc.gov/tv](http://www.nyc.gov/tv).

## NYC TV

Recognition, such as the Emmy Awards, where we compete head-to-head with all other local stations, is another important indicator of our relevance to viewers and peers. Make no mistake about it: Every night we go head-to-head against the networks' flagship affiliates here in New York: WNBC, WABC, WCBS and many others. Since the birth of NYC TV, we've been awarded 34 local Emmy Award nominations and taken home 14 statues. In 2005, we had eight wins, beating WCBS and WABC. We think that our format of extreme localism presented in a fun and engaging way, is a winning format for every city looking to connect with its citizens. In fact, world-class cities from Seoul to Paris to Rio de Janeiro have sought out NYC TV as a model they want to import back home. As they say, imitation really is the sincerest form of flattery.

On the revenue side, NYC TV has developed a strong pro-business orientation. Over the past few years, we've been able to wean ourselves from tax dollars such that only 10% of our budget comes directly from city monies. Through grants, franchise monies, sponsorship, and syndication, NYC TV is on its way to becoming a self-sustaining entity. Here's one of the secrets of our success: We run NYC TV like a television station, not a traditional governmental entity that happens to run a television station. There's a big difference!

There is actually another important 'R' to keep in mind – recruiting. When you're in a competitive and creative industry like television, there is no resource as important as your *human* resources. A GM's #1 responsibility is attracting and retaining the best-of-the-best when it comes to human capital. Because of our unique position in the market, coupled with the opportunity to work for a network that is revolutionizing the

way we think about localism in television not only in New York but across the world, we've been able to attract some of the most talented programmers, producers, engineers, and business executives in New York City.

### ■ Radio: The Next Frontier

We occupy a unique space in the media landscape. Redefining the role of media in government necessitates that we find new and creative ways for gaining audience share in the most competitive media market in the world, New York City. We are young and nimble enough as a network to implement many changes fairly quickly, especially around programming and developing strategic partnerships that advance our goals. Now we're turning our sights towards overhauling our radio station, WNYE 91.5 FM. Using our success on the television side as a blueprint, we are making moves to breathe new life into our radio station so that it will better complement our television stations, and serve as a more viable tool for cross-promotion.

### ■ Closing Thoughts

The TV industry is at the crossroads of tremendous upheaval not only in terms of the business model, but with regards to technology and distribution. As content migrates to new and alternative platforms, and viewers learn to consume content differently, television "networks" will have to adjust and adapt. To stand in place is tantamount to going backwards. There is no constant state. There's only progression and regression. From our perch in New York City, we feel that NYC TV has staked out a claim as a leader in terms of innovative thinking and creative operational structure at the intersection of government and media. ■