

Cablefax Daily™

Monday — September 15, 2014

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 24 / No. SPECIAL

Lifestyle? Guess You Can Call It That...

What's harder than buying a new house, renovating a kitchen on a tight budget or cooking steak at the perfect temperature? Apparently, it's defining 'lifestyle programming.' The term is changing shape faster than a house on "Extreme Makeover," and its slippery nature is clear evidence of the category's dynamism. Once exclusively used in reference to cooking shows, fashion spots and visual travel guides, lifestyle has now become the Swiss Army knife of the programming world as scripted series gain glory by the season.

And while the lifestyle category is increasingly nuanced and certainly not for everyone (**A&E** phased out its Saturday morning lifestyle block, and **Turner** nixed digital lifestyle platform Upwave in May), it could hold huge potential for adaptation in the face of industry change, with many cable nets experimenting with how to use it to their best advantage. Among them **CNN**, **TLC** and **Animal Planet**, 3 nets that are remodeling the conventional understanding of the category to fit their specific brands. But for others like **Scripps Networks Interactive**, new net **Esquire Network** and **Hallmark Channel**, classic lifestyle programming suits their audiences best.

What's so great about lifestyle? A lot, apparently. As **HGTV's** 20th anniversary approaches in Dec, parent net and lifestyle leader Scripps doesn't feel pressure to do anything else. "What it goes back to for us is relatability," said Scripps pres *Burton Jablin*. "Our subjects within lifestyle are ones that are very, very personal. Lifestyle and our version of it in particular will remain popular because of that. We're always going to be what we are. It's not what we do."

Scripps has built an entire business around lifestyle content, breaking the wide range of topics into 6 cable channels: **HGTV**, **DIY Network**, **Food Network**, **Cooking Channel**, **Travel Channel** and **Great American Country**. The company's big programming mission is "to provide information, ideas and inspiration on home and garden topics in a way that enhances the lives of our viewers and respects their intelligence." This boils down to what Scripps execs call "the three i's"— information, ideas and inspiration.

