

local programming CONNECTION

Accomplishing the Cable Industry's Goals with Local Programming

Each of us has faced the difficult task of convincing our organizations of the importance of local programming. Our efforts have often been looked upon as a drag to the bottom line. However, by using Local Programming resources in a strategic manner, we can enhance the value of our service, achieve our public and governmental relations goals, and enhance revenue through marketing and advertising efforts.

TCI Cable of Brookhaven has three local programming or P.E.G. Channels. Our public access channel airs up to 25 hour per week of programming; TCI-6 airs 72 hours of local programming; Channel 15 airs C-SPAN II in addition to local and marketing programs totaling 56 hours per week. When programming is not being aired, our TCI Community Connection is aired. This system features community events and information, as well as information about our cable service, photo news, and various public relations projects. As department head, I serve as Community Affairs Manager. This allows the department to focus on our relationship with our customers and community leaders.

A strong L.O. department, whether resources and coverage area permit it to provide local news, enhances the customer's perception of the value of their local cable service. By airing high quality local content programs that customers are unable to receive from alternative sources, our service maintains an advantage over the competition. If a customer is considering alternative services, they can be quickly reminded they will lose their local programming channel(s). The stronger these channels, the less likely a customer is to switch.

Local programming can be used to greatly enhance our public and governmental relations efforts. At TCI Cable of Brookhaven, our local channels are one of our greatest

resources in accomplishing these goals. For instance, we try to include local programming components of charitable or other community events in which we are involved. Government access programming is a key factor in maintaining close relationships with our local officials. Their efforts provide our customers with important information about their community. As a major component of our programming efforts, they are supplemented by programs concerning issues such as education, politics, law enforcement and crime, exercise and nutrition, and entertainment. Many cable systems feature a program hosted by the GM, where information about policies and services are provided directly to the customer.

Local programming provides great opportunities for enhancing revenue. Marketing efforts are aided through the production of programs promoting Pay-Per-View and programming. Our goal is to present our service in a way that demonstrates its tremendous value. These efforts have a long-term effect, however, our companies often want more tangible results. On TCI-6, our programming philosophy is grounded into dividing our line-up into 2/3 public interest programming and 1/3 revenue generating. Revenue is generated through the sale of half-hour blocks of time and airing infomercials on a pay-per-inquiry (PPI) basis. The revenue we create nearly pays for our system's local programming and public relations efforts by itself.

Local programming provides our industry with incredible advantages as we move forward in the era of competition. The successful use of these resources will help us to meet our interdependent goals.

John Zaher is Community Affairs Manager at TCI Cable of Brookhaven.

Local Programming Connection provides a forum in which to exchange ideas and information on what is happening today in local programming. Cable Academy members are encouraged to submit articles (no more than 500 words) on new production efforts, production techniques, programming ideas that work for your company, or simply tell us about successful community events you have held.

If selected, your article will be published in *Cable Basics* as well as in our on-line site at "www.ncta.com." Please send your articles to Michelle Ray, National Academy of Cable Programming, 1724 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

**Mark
Your
Calendar !**

1998 Local Programming Seminar and Local CableACE Judging

February 22-24, 1998
San Antonio, TX