



Linear Television Still Has Its Place, Says Amazon's Mike Benson

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"Shows that find a deep core audience that love them, get obsessed with them and talk about them is still what we are really want, on any platform," said Mike Benson, head of marketing, Amazon Studios at industry close-up "Now/New/Next" at the 2018 PromaxBDA Conference.

"If you go back, people love a show like Modern Family because they can see themselves in that family, or parts and pieces of it," he said. "Then you have a show like The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel, which represents this woman, even though it is set in 1958, that is trying to find her voice and I think that is incredibly relevant today."

Benson, who was EVP, marketing at the Disney ABC Television Group from 1998 to 2010 (and subsequently chief creative officer at Time Warner, Inc. and president of Hurryback Holdings, Inc.) joined Amazon Studios in early 2015. In his current role, he is responsible for overseeing marketing and advertising for Amazon's original TV series.

"What is radically different for me going from one side of the business in the linear world to a different kind of company is how customer-centric we have become," he said. "The best experience we can create for the customer instead

of what is the best thing we can do to drive Nielsen or drive ad sales is now our concern. If it is good for the customer it is good for our business."

Citing 127 benefits for an Amazon membership, Benson pinpoints the various advantages of the brand including shipping, the music, the cloud storage, and more, in addition to the premium high-quality programming that is offered as part of the overall membership.

"Amazon is a brand; people understand what that brand is," he said. "Prime Video is now also under the umbrella, and we are in the process of developing what exactly that is right now. HBO has had decades to develop their brand; Netflix has had years, and we do know that we want to be a premium service that is included with Prime. We want to find shows that people absolutely love."

"The more we can do to tell people that a show like *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* is included with their Prime membership through both brand marketing and traditional show marketing is a large goal for us," he added. "We have a lot of work to do on that front. And the linear platform is a way for us to do that."

Last January, for example, Amazon Prime unveiled its first Super Bowl commercial during the live telecast on NBC - a 60-second spot promoting its upcoming *Jack Ryan* series, starring John Krasinski as Tom Clancy's globe-trotting intelligence agent.

"It was not just about the spot in the game, but everything that happened leading up to the game," noted Benson. "It was the public relations, the social media attention and the buzz you got leading up to it. The engagement and the halo effect from the Super Bowl alone are massive. All these months later and we are still talking about it."

Benson suggests an array of regularly scheduled series, including *This Is Us* on NBC and programming on the cable outlets, as potential advertising outlets to educate the customers about the Amazon Prime programming brand.

"Linear TV still works, and it is my job to find out how I can best use that platform to convince my customers to spend their time with us," he added. "I don't know that there is really that big a difference between a streamer and a broadcaster other than they are looking for different experiences to meet their needs."

"It is all about remaining relevant on any given platform, and what the customer is telling you that you should know," he added.