



The synergy, the analytics and the available data to make creative decisions was the common ground for three very distinctive cable brands: Freeform, truTV and National Geographic, during a relationship-themed session at the 2018 PromaxBDA Conference.

All three outlets, all targeted to a specific audience, are guided by the creative minds that ensure each vision is adequately positioned across all linear and digital platforms.

"Great creative starts with great strategy, and I lean hard on insights from every possible place - from social, our network research insights, our consumer panels, and so much more," said Tricia Melton, SVP, marketing, Freeform. "We really do look at that and build a strategy before we work on the creative."

In addition to spearheading the creative marketing vision, Melton also oversees all on-air and off-air marketing, audience development, brand management and promotional partnerships.

Two years after rebranding from ABC Family, the new logo and a new tagline, "A Little Forward," represents the newfound focus on "becomers," specifically those viewers in the 18-34 demographic who are experiencing a series of firsts.

Two programs in particular align with Freeform's strategy: the drama *The Bold Type*, set at a magazine for millennial females, and *Black-ish*, a spin-off *Grown-ish*, featuring the Johnsons' eldest daughter Zoey (Yara Shahidi) as she heads off to college.

"Specifically our goal is to bring clarity to the brand," said Melton. "About two years ago there was a huge initiative, very bold and very brave, to rebrand the network. But anytime you make that kind of change it takes time for the audience to really understand what that means."

Turner's truTV, led by *Impractical Jokers*, has morphed from a destination of "trashy reality," according to John Cassidy, VP, multiplatform creative, to a platform for all things comedy related. "We have been working really hard in the past few years to underline that we are legitimate," said Cassidy. "We have some great comedy talent, some solid shows, and a comedy development department that has done a good job finding the right programming targeted to the updated brand."

"Any decisions we make creatively is focused on keeping truTV a destination for fun and laughter," he added. "What sets us apart in this cluttered landscape is our comedy focus, and when you make that radical a change like we did you need a creative strategy behind it."

Chris Spencer, who joined National Geographic Partners less than a year ago in the newly created position of EVP, creative, has an interesting dilemma no executive would mind having.

"We are a brand with a lot of awareness," he said. "People know us, they love us, and they tell us we are part of their family. No one hates National Geographic. But I think the big challenge for Nat Geo is relevance. How do we be relevant now? Not only do we have to do a good job of producing any show, we have to explain to the audience who might be expecting a certain thing why we are doing a certain type of show."

Nat Geo's current roster of programming includes drama *Genius: Picasso*, which will focus on famed literary figure Mary Shelley in season three, *Mars, Explorer*, *The Story of God with Morgan Freeman*, *Cosmos: Possible Worlds*, *Life Below Zero* and *Star Talk*.

"I think you have to stand for something and you can never lie to the audience," said Spencer. "You must always remain true to the brand."

"At the end of the day, if even one viewer tells a friend he has seen something cool, or funny or interesting on our platform, we are doing our jobs properly" added truTV's Cassidy. "It is all about standing out in the crowd through inviting creative."