

This NATPE is Different

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been hard to attract people to speak, specifically about production. I hope this thing gets resolved quickly, but it's hard to know how it's really going to impact the industry."

Other participants, however, believe that the strike could bring more buyers to Las Vegas, especially from the U.K., Canada and Australia, if only for face-to-face meetings with the studios about the upcoming new U.S. TV season and the related L.A. Screenings. Even though each of the studios will be producing a couple of "strike-proof" shows for the new season, buyers are eager to know more about the big picture.

With regards to this, industry insiders are optimistic. "International buyers won't stay home," said Alfred Haber, founder of New Jersey-based Alfred Haber Distribution. "There will not be a diminution in attendance. I bet we'll see lots of exciting reality show ideas. There will probably be more network reality series from independents than we've seen in the past since nets are ordering less writer-driven stuff."

The most challenging problem that NATPE faces is diminishing support from U.S. studios. While the domestic divisions are now opting to attend CES instead of NATPE, their international



Carsey-Werner's Herb Lazarus

counterparts are sending fewer people to NATPE since its appeal is limited primarily to Latin American buyers. Said Feldman: "I don't profess to tell studios how to do business or what's good for them." However, he added, "The market would certainly be better with them."

Herb Lazarus, president of the International Distribution division of California-based independent Carsey-Werner, warned: "I doubt the studios will ever completely drop out. But if they did, NATPE would be in trouble." And, added Ken DuBow, president of Worldwide Sales for PorchLight Entertainment: "If the studios decide

not to support it, NATPE won't work at all. Sony Domestic's not going this year, but they've each had their turns. I don't know why NATPE was never able to take a world stage."

Another blow to NATPE has been the desertion of the advertising community — which opted for events sponsored by associations such as the SNTA's in New York — and the traditional U.S. broadcast TV network's affiliate meetings.

Despite these concerns, Feldman is confident that it'll be business as usual once the market begins. "We expect 400 exhibitors and 8,000 people," he said. "This is a major transitional time in the business. I'm looking forward to getting people talking about what's working and what's not."

Indeed, as a result of some unusual coincidences, this could be NATPE's biggest event in recent history, and a signal that its management — especially, its board — has to come up with a clear blueprint for the future if the market is to stay alive. The next president, if Feldman opts to bow out, should be introduced at the 2009 event, and, it is hoped that he or she will be different from both Feldman and his predecessor. The former had the unique ability to put an organization that had been left to derail back on track — not an easy task — thus leaving him little time for anything else. It's up to the next CEO to carve a future for it. Regardless, the general opinion is that this NATPE is indeed going to be different.

Hispanics Are Not All Alike

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respond to the same media campaigns designed for the general English-speaking population.

According to Cavalieri, the number of years a Latino has lived in the U.S. is also a factor, as is the number of generations that have assimilated. Other factors include education levels, and the reasons each person came to America.

Corporations too often assume that Hispanics are all of Mexican descent. Although 70 percent of the U.S. Hispanic population does hail from Mexico, that culture isn't dominant in all American cities. For example, only four percent of Hispanics are Cuban, yet in Miami, the Cuban population is dominant. In L.A., however, the Mexican culture is dominant. Therefore, corporations need to develop different marketing plans for Miami and L.A.

When Stephen McGill, CEO of Eastern Financial Florida Credit Union, introduced automated phone-banking services, he decided that the voice commands would be with a Castilian accent. But the response was decidedly mixed from a diverse membership with roots in Cuba, Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil and many other nations. "A lot of customers didn't like it," he said.

Another important aspect of cultural relations is knowing the difference between educating and persuading, said Juan Guillermo Tornoe, a marketing consultant in Austin, Texas, who authors a Latino marketing and advertising blog called *Hispanic Trending*.

Several years ago, Heineken USA did a clever radio campaign called *Traducciones (Translations)*. In each spot, a Heineken beer drinker at a party tells a simple story using the accent and slang of a different national dialect: Argentine, Mexican, Dominican, Puerto Rican. The humor came when a second voice blandly translated each colorful, colloquial sentence into standard Spanish. The advertisements entertained while educating about cultural differentiation.

It is easy to understand why companies want to target the Hispanic community. In its report, *The Multicultural Economy, 1990-2009*, the Selig Center for Economic Growth said the Hispanic population is growing faster than other groups. By 2009, one person out of every six living in the U.S. will be of Hispanic origin — up from one in eight in 2000. And by 2009, Hispanics will account for nine percent of the U.S.'s buying power, up from 5.2 percent in 1990. And in 2006, the *Washington Post* reported that by 2011 Hispanic buying power will have grown by 48 percent, to nearly \$1.2 trillion. Who wouldn't want a piece of that pie?

47 Million Viewers

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though niche programming has experienced a boom in the past few years, many U.S. advertisers are still reluctant to jump on the foreign-language bandwagon. "Advertisers don't consider some ethnic channels because their audiences, taken individually, do not pull in enough viewers to even be rated," said Max Smetannikov, vice president of GAS.

Smetannikov attributes the recent increase of ethnic channels to globalization and improvements in technology. Plus, said Smetannikov, "immigrants are no longer expected to assimilate. They are more inclined to cling to their homelands."

In addition to cable and satellite platforms, ethnic programming is popping up on terrestrial TV. Stations like Washington D.C.-based MHz cater to the international crowd with content from all over the globe. MHz's main channel, for example, buys and broadcasts content from stations like France 24, Nigerian Television, and Russia

Today. With nine affiliates in both urban and rural areas, MHz reaches about 14 percent of the population.

In recent years, the growth of foreign-language TV in the U.S. has also been encouraged by an organization called the Ethnic Broadcasters of America (EBA). The non-profit organization was founded in 2003 by Elie Kawkabani, president of L.A.-based Reach Media, which offers, among other things, Arabic programming packages by subscription. The EBA is dedicated to advancing foreign-language channels and programmers broadcasting via satellite and cable. Kawkabani said his goal was "to create a forum by which [foreign-language channels] can pool their resources," to attract mainstream corporate advertisers.

In 2000, the U.S. Census Board reported that 47 million people in the U.S. speak a language other than English at home, and that the purchasing power of these individuals will only increase. They predict that Hispanic buying power will reach \$1 trillion a year by 2011.

However, the absence of a ratings system remains a deterrent for advertisers, and about 95 percent of ethnic channels are financed by subscription.

Among its many flaws, Nielsen fails to



Reach Media's Elie Kawkabani

take into account what millions of non-English speakers are watching. GAS plans to rectify the problem with what it calls the Multi-Cultural Multi-Platform Programmer Platform. The system would not gather ratings from individual stations, as in the Nielsen system, but rather aggregate channels together by ethnicity and count them as one entity. This way, advertisers could find out which time slots and programs are most popular among Spanish speakers, for example, and insert Spanish-language ads accordingly. The plan would bring advertising to foreign-language TV, which could prove to be a multi-million dollar industry.