



By Peter Sengenberger

Building International Into the Plan

By now, seasoned marketers know what a goldmine international distribution can be for their products — so it's frustrating when a hit show fails to take off overseas. Realizing that what does well in Tulsa might not work in Tokyo, marketers can avoid costly snags and maximize their international potential by marketing with a global audience in mind. It's not as daunting as you may think, but does take some planning.

Share your product and marketing message with your international distributors as early as possible. Your distributors can then secure the local market intellectual property rights and provide invaluable feedback about what substantiation and compliance issues may exist.

Advertising compliance regulations are stricter abroad than they are in the U.S. Knowing what claims and testimonials will meet international advertising standards, marketers stand a much better chance of keeping their message and response impact strong. "If you tell a successful story in one market, it should work in other markets," says international DRTV pioneer Rob Woodroffe of Toronto-based Interwood Direct. "But keeping your message relevant is key."

Distributors Investing Time and Money

Once scripted, your distributors can help you take the next step by writing alternate takes that can be used — unedited — in their own markets. "We ask them to shoot the strongest U.S. show they can, but make sure to do some alternative takes to be used internationally," says The Maverick Consultancy's Richard Whinfrey from London. There's virtually no marginal cost for extra shots, but they can mean the difference between keeping your strongest claim or losing it forever. Often, it comes down to things like phrasing and word order.

More than ever, international distributors are willing to invest in making your production work best in

their markets. It's not uncommon for distributors to shoot their own material locally and insert it into the show, so including them in the

creative process will encourage them to build their own ideas into the messaging to make your show perform better. Scott Reid, managing director, brand and sales operations at Oak Lawn Marketing in Nagoya, Japan, adds, "The best marketers come visit us and help build the sales strategy. Spending the time on the ground is essential."

Every show — long or short — will have to be localized to some degree. Whether it's a matter of inserting a new call-to-action (CTA), voiceover, or a top-to-bottom re-edit, your material has to be as easy to work with as possible. Super-less, split-audio masters are essential as they allow the maximum flexibility for editing and foreign language dubbing.

Talent, Strategy Maximize Possibilities

Considering the international punch celebrity talent brings to a production is another important aspect. Many of the familiar faces here don't carry the same appeal overseas and can confuse your marketing message. Do some research on your celebrity's exposure in foreign markets. Also, make sure to include non-U.S. market clauses in your talent agreements to ensure flexibility down the line — it's often impossible to predict where your show will take off.

As rewarding as foreign markets can be, don't make the mistake of thinking your U.S. strategy will work perfectly abroad. As competition across all distribution channels grows fiercer than ever, a well thought out strategic plan is necessary to maximize opportunity. "Rapid distribution and a range of SKUs at different price points are often important for international success unless you have a strong patent or other competitive advantage," says Richard Stacey, CEO of Toronto-based Northern Response Intl. Ltd. "This allows maximum market coverage, better control over market holes and maximizes the potential channels of distribution."

Stacey adds, "Just like Hollywood, many shows today find more success overseas than they do at home." It's a fact your international partners already know, so include them in planning and use their insights to build lasting multi-channel success. Do your homework, and you'll be toasting your sales in Tokyo as well as Tulsa. ■

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