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## 12 Steps for Creating a Hit Web Series

Earlier this month, we attended the NATPE LATV Fest in Los Angeles, and from our experience, wrote the forthcoming article "The State of Online Media," in which we discuss the current world of Web entertainment as it relates to the overall Hollywood industry. (Look out for it in the September/October 2009 issue of Script magazine.) But for those with an insatiable hunger for online-media advice, we wanted to share the following information gleaned from a great LATV Fest panel session entitled "Anatomy of a Hit Web Series." Continue reading ...

The panel was moderated by Zadi Diaz, host of the online series EPIC FU and featured Garrett Law from Dorm Life, Alex Albrecht from Web series DiggNation and Project Lore, Hayden Black, creator of Goodnight Burbank and the upcoming Cabonauts, and Sibyl Goldman from Yahoo!

From the tips, comments, advice, and reflections of the panel we assembled these rules for any creator to follow in hopes of their Web series being the next big online break-out hit.

### 1. Understand What's Working

Watch Web series that are successful, both in traffic and critical acclaim. If you were writing a TV spec script, you would spend time studying up on successful TV series, right?

### 2. Have Passion

You will be putting in a lot of sweat equity into a project for little or no pay, so you better be excited about what you're producing. Plus, a show creator's passion for the subject matter always ends up on screen.

### 3. Use Your Storytelling Talents

Good writing can gloss over so-so production values, acting, editing, and marketing.

### 4. Make it Interactive

Understand that Web video is a social medium. It should, at it's best, bring people together. Ask yourself, "Why would people talk about this show after seeing it?" Fans want to interact with each other, so give them something to comment about AND make sure to provide a forum for them to leave those comments.

## 5. Be Topical

The Web moves very, very quickly. If you can't produce quickly enough, your "topical" show will already be old news upon release. Consider, for example, Yahoo's daily talk show Primetime in No Time that chooses its TV topics from the day's most popular Yahoo.com search requests.

## 6. Niche Works

Web series that appeal to a specific, targeted audience were some of the first to work in the online space and still work. Find a group of people without an online voice, and be their champion. It worked for Felicia Day, who now gives World of Warcraft players something to talk about with her show, The Guild.

## 7. Too Long to Work Online? Not Anymore.

Sites like Hulu.com show 30 minute, 60 minute, and even two hour long movies, so people are slowly getting used to watching longer shows online. If your show is long, it's no longer a bad thing. But if it's long and boring, all bets are off.

## 8. Play to an Attractive Demographic

Recent studies show that 12-17 year olds are watching the most amount of online video. A show programmed to appeal to that age group has a chance of growing with them over time.

## 9. Create Your Own Revenue Streams

Advertising is not the only way to pay for your series. As Alex Albrecht pointed out, "Creating [your Web series] is the fun part, but figuring out a way to pay for it is the hard part." Maybe DVD redistribution or merchandising could work, or perhaps soliciting donations from fans. When you're a producer, as well as talent, you have to "sniff out as much money as you can," said Albrecht.

## 10. Attract a Star

If you don't have a relationship with a celebrity (either personally or through an agent or manager), then make your series so good it attracts stars. If they're a fan, they will find you. Honestly, online video production doesn't pay enough, so it would be like a hobby for them, but actors are always using the medium to stretch their skills and participate in ownership.

## 11. Be Lucky

LonelyGirl15 creators Miles Beckett and Greg Goodfried of EQAL once conceded that part of their success was that their show rose in popularity as YouTube became a fixture in worldwide popular culture. But then again, they wouldn't have made any progress if they hadn't of made the series in the first place. Part of luck is having irons in the fire when the opportunity strikes. Which leads us to &hellip;

## 12. Keep Creating

If one idea doesn't work out, move on. "Don't get stuck on one idea," said Hayden Black, creator of multiple successful Web series. If your show or series doesn't attract an audience in a reasonable amount of time, just let it go. Unlike a failed TV series, there is very little analysis, press, and embarrassment around an unviewed Web series. Writers and creators should be a fountain of ideas -- and sometimes moving on from one idea will lead to better decision-making in the next project.

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Photo: Alex Albrecht and Hayden Black

Courtesy: Space Shank Media

