



BSR Conference 2010
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Greening Show Biz: From '30 Rock' to 'It's Complicated'

Breakout Session Summary
November 4, 2010 | 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Speakers

- » **Meredith Bergmann**, Principal, Green Media Solutions
- » **Beth Colleton**, Vice President, Green is Universal/Sustainability, NBC Universal
- » **Kara Hurst**, Vice President, BSR (moderator)

Highlights

- » Media is a very energy-intensive industry. Through innovations in LED lighting, which uses 70 percent less energy than the standard, companies have recently been able to achieve the right light for films.
- » The more efficient a company is, the more money it saves. It can reinvest that savings in making its products better. This results in better actors, costumes, and even better food for the crew, making that production a better place to work.
- » NBC Universal has a person on staff that exclusively works with the production teams to use the green guides in their purchasing decisions to help reach sustainable production goals.

Memorable Quotes

"We have content, and we want to make sure that our content doesn't just entertain, but informs."
—Beth Colleton, NBC Universal

"The core importance of 'Green is Universal' is that it starts a conversation." —Meredith Bergmann, Green Media Solutions

"The solution lies within the workforce, not with a specific department designated for CR or sustainability. Moving people in mid-management who really have an understanding of how business works—and understand the trench and what is realistic—can get you far in sustainability." —Beth Colleton, NBC Universal

Overview

Hurst opened the session by talking about how the media industry is creating innovative approaches to sustainable production. NBC Universal reaches a broad mass of consumers every day through its 40 brands, which include Oxygen, SciFi, Universal, NBC Sports, and Focus Features.

NBC Universal's ability to reach more than 100 million people per month places it in a unique position to make green topics more mainstream and to spread a powerful message. The media company is bringing together all of its resources for the first time for a single cause: "Green is Universal." Through this initiative, NBC Universal is airing hundreds of hours of programming that engages and encourages viewers to live a more sustainable lifestyle.



Colleton explained NBC Universal's approach, which started in 2007 when the company ramped up its commitments to the environment based on two premises. First, as a media company, NBC Universal has a different physical footprint than other industries. Second, its ability to engage with millions of viewers puts it in a unique position to communicate ideas.

Each year, NBC Universal dedicates a period of time during which all of its units “go green.” Its entertainment channels, news channels, and theme parks find unique ways to talk to their audiences about the environment. Colleton explained this approach as the area of highest potential, enabling NBC Universal to provide information to busy people who are already consuming entertainment and who wouldn't seek the information on their own.

Bergmann and her team were brought in to look at production at NBC Universal. She explained the challenge of change management—how to communicate with production teams, including the crews, producers, suppliers, and vendors. To address this challenge, they developed a series of guides on the “how-tos” of greening large-scale productions through saving on building materials, improving energy use, and more. It serves as a step-by-step primer on how to carry out green production and addresses questions that producers should ask suppliers.

The guides also cover better construction practices and provide ideas on how to build sets so that they can be reused. Other topics include substitutions for materials such as specific mahogany veneers that are used often in film production but have negative impacts on rainforests in Latin America.

Colleton described how NBC Universal motivates its employees to address sustainable production. Every production team is required to enact 20 “Green Goals,” which range from recycling to forming green committees to selecting sustainable energy sources. Employees are rewarded for going the extra mile through “Ecogration” awards, which are given to recognize individuals within the pipeline who have transformed their business. While winners are given cash awards, they also take pride in being champions for the movement and getting their departments to engage in sustainability. This recognition has spurred all types of additional innovations.

Colleton reiterated that green production is a company-wide initiative at NBC Universal. She has never found that a corporate responsibility manager could be effective in changing things on his or her own. People throughout the organization have to be given the floor and encouraged to commit to green innovation.

During the Q&A session, the panelists were asked for their thoughts on selling the value proposition. Colleton explained that while people understood, they resisted change because of fear that the product would suffer. Her response is that the ramifications are worse if managers are forced to change, rather than choosing to opt in.

The panelists also explained the initiative's success with advertisers, who are eager to participate in “Green Weeks” for the recognition they gain from airing their ads during this period.

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