

How to Get Your Brilliant Idea on Television

Television is a hungry monster which swallows ideas and regurgitates them as fast as its army of eager minions can shovel them into its huge fetid, tastebudless, mouth. So, just maybe, there is a place in its grubby intestines for the tasty morsel you and your friends have just dreamt up in a bar. Yes, it is a brilliant idea. A sure-fire hit. A shade better than "X Factor" and "Big Brother" and "Bikini Dance Off Challenge".

So what now? Most ideas are too big, too difficult for someone who isn't already working in the industry to develop, you just have to laugh and move on. Someone else will do it, one day.

However there are some ideas which are simple, which deserve to be on seen by a mass audience. Something involving something you know about intimately, a story that you have access to. This article is aimed those who want to take these ideas further, but who don't work in the industry, and don't people who do.

An idea on its own is worth nothing. Nothing. Nada. Tipota. If you are lucky enough to be the first person to have an amazing TV idea, then you have a limited amount of time to turn that idea into something else through hard work.

That is, of course, if you really want to do it. It is going to be a pain in the butt from beginning to the end of the process and you will probably end up shafted, so the first important question is: "Why? Put yourself through this?"

This is really lots of little questions. Why do you really want see this on TV? Will this make people happier? Will it enhance peoples lives? Will it inform people about something they really should be aware of? If this is the case then is there actually an audience for it? Why do you want to do this? What have you got to gain? Many people labour under the misapprehension that an idea can be worth money. Which leads to the next question.

What have you got to offer? Why would anyone pay you to be involved in the production? Do you have unique expertise in the subject matter and you have unique access to the subject. You should be essential to the project, not just some schmuck who had a good idea.

So, traditionally, if you have a worthwhile idea, and relevant skills, and all importantly access to a key element of the programme, then it is worth approaching a TV production company directly. There is no point in approaching a broadcaster, they will tell you to find a production company to take on the idea.

If the production company like your idea, they will ask you to send them something. If they like that they'll ask you to come in for a meeting. In order to get their attention you should put together something that demonstrates your project's potential.

If the idea revolves around your aunty, then shoot some video of her doing the thing you think is going to be so great on TV. If you've had news coverage, take the clippings, if you have had a news report, then take show them the clip on youtube. Be ready to sell your idea with enthusiasm and know what you are talking about, but most importantly have a realistic idea about what your role in the project will be.

If you haven't already got experience in the industry, then you might get a role as associate producer. You're going to have very little say on how the project develops. Are you going to be happy with that?

Before meeting TV people there is something to be aware of. These may once have been good honest people, but they have been crushed by years of mistreatment, overwork, and importantly being forced to work on programmes they know, deep down, are so bad that they are actually detrimental to the evolution of the human species.

Now they have been broken. They will not treat you with respect and they will not tell you the truth, as they have long since been stripped of both these things. If they appear to be nice to you, it is because they want something. If you are replaceable, these people will replace you with someone they already know who will not argue with them.

So although it is good that they like your idea enough to meet you, it is no big deal. The production company will be developing many ideas to present to broadcasters they have 'relationships' with. Some will get developed to a pitch, some might not even make it to that stage.

If it does make it to that stage it will be in a different form to the one you imagined, it may resemble a prayer sheet to be offered to the lord of commissions. If a broadcaster does then show some interest then the production company might get some money to produce a pilot show. You probably won't see any of that money, but you should get your name on the credits as Associate Producer. Happy?

However, there is another way. If you really want to have fun and keep control of your project. Make the pilot yourself. There are lots of people who have the skills to help you. Seek them out, get them to love the idea as much as you do and they will help you.

If you make something good, then you can go to TV on your own terms. If it isn't that great, you will have learnt a lot and hopefully had fun.

About the Author: Maria Fuchs-Alcox has had a distinguished and colourful career as actress, singer, film-maker and shameless hagiographer. She is feline puppet and was a founder member of the "Gran Teatro Pervarotti" - the first opera house to be built in cyberspace. She is currently marketing director at Video Production in London.