

The Publicity Club of New York presents
"Beyond The Headlines - News Programs That Make You Think"

Tuesday February 7, 2006

CNN'S ANDERSON COOPER 360

Jamie Kraft, Senior Producer

Hi. Tough act to follow!

Yes, my first job in television was at "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous", I was a senior in college and somebody said, "Hey, there's this production assistant job open with Robin Leach." I thought, "Great, I'll travel the world and see everything. This'll be the greatest job know to mankind." Well, you know my naïve 18-19-20 year old personality was dead wrong. But it was a good place to start because as everybody knows you start someplace, you meet somebody, you move, move, move. As was said, I was at CBS for 12 years, just left and started at CNN first week in September as Katrina hit the shores of New Orleans. At that time the Anderson Cooper show was a 7:00 one-hour broadcast. Shortly thereafter, within minutes after the storm hit, we were doing three hours of television a night. Form there we morphed into a 2-hour program hosted by Aaron Brown and now Anderson, as of November 7th has the "Anderson Cooper 360" show from 10 pm to 12 midnight every night five nights a week. It's a huge undertaking every night, I will admit that. It's a great show, Anderson's a great guy, we literally got word that we were launching the show three days before the launch date. So when somebody says, "What it the show all about?" I'm not quite sure I have the answer yet but we are basically a work in progress. It's morphing, we try new things every not to see if the audience reacts, we're live every night, we take the show on the road whenever we can. As we know, Anderson probably 45 straight days at Katrina and that's pretty much what launched him into the public spotlight. When I interviewed for this job last spring, everybody was like, "Anderson who?" and now obviously you can't pick up a trade publication or any newspaper in the country without seeing a picture of him or hearing about what he said or who he talked to last night and that's obviously the goal for the show. We do everything from packages to live guests to panel discussions to call-in segments sometimes if it's an interesting subject that what we want to hear what people out in North Dakota and Nebraska are thinking about things and it gets people engaged and it gets people involved. There's no set criteria every night, like I was sitting here at the table launching a correspondent out to the west coast to cover these forest fires that now all of a sudden are springing up all over the place. It's changing moment by moment. Anderson has some definite themes for the show, that pretty much spawned out of Katrina, it's holding people accountable. There's a lot of people who made some pretty serious mistakes down there and he wants to make sure that every single person in Katrina that needs help will get help. We follow stories from start to finish, a lot of different shows will bring you a story and then you never know what happens to these people. Last night we had this great piece on with Susan Roesgen, who is one of our New Orleans correspondents, and there was this

piece that Anderson was following about FEMA trailers, which seems like it might not be a big deal to everybody in this room but this is a huge deal to people down there and we had gotten promise from FEMA on air that, "Yes, Mr. Cooper, tomorrow we will deliver 6000 trailers to these people," three weeks later: no trailers. So that's what we're trying to do, hold people accountable, ask the tough questions, not be afraid to shoot from the hip sometimes and see how people respond. Themes are, finding the truth, holding folks that are in these big jobs that we all vote for on a yearly basis and find out why they're making the decisions they're making that affect our daily life.

We also do a variety of other fun pieces as well, it's not hard news and serious news all the time but that's a big part of our viewership. We found that at the beginning of every hour people want to tune in to CNN for news, no doubt about that, so we give them the news but the beauty of our show and "Anderson Cooper 360" is that we tackle issues from all sides. We have two hours, we have the luxury to do that. We can do a little setup piece about what the issue is and then take it from a completely different perspective. And it doesn't have to be a package, we can have a panel of two or three guests so if you've got clients that talk about a certain topic, educators, anybody who you think are good on a topic we're open to that. We're open to new ideas, we're open to suggestions, it's not a formula, per se, at this point, we're rolling with it. And so far, in the three months that we've been on TV our ratings are up. We're up about 45% in the 11:00 hour, that means people want to see what's going on in the world at 11:00, which is huge and we're there to give it to them. 10:00 we're maintaining, which is always a great thing with a new show and a new host. Most shows go down but Anderson has been able to keep people in the tent. And we've been steadily growing, we actually beat Fox a couple of times last week, which is a great thing. And we're here to win. We really are. There's a lot of changes at CNN, a lot of new people coming into CNN and we're very much about telling people stories and we want to hear different types of stories and put them on TV. The best way to pitch us on ideas for our show, because that's the only show I'm concerned about, is through me either via email – I only have four business cards, ran out of the office – but I'll give anybody who wants my email after this, or a phone call. No idea is a bad idea because in two hours of television you can always figure out a way to approach it in a different way. So we're open to any suggestions that people have. Definitely need to have something happening, not looking just to do profiles of celebrities or profiles of interesting people unless they're just truly interesting people. Not into being pitched a person who will only talk about X and not Y or Z. That doesn't help in some regards, they're coming on our show to talk and if there's questions that regard something that they were involved in before it's going to come up and if they don't want to talk about it then maybe this isn't the place to send them.

The other thing about the pieces is that we're trying to get people to start talking about the show the next day, things that are edgy, things that have controversy, standing around the water cooler the next day you're going to say, "Hey, did you see that thing on Anderson Cooper's show last night? It's about X, Y and Z." So, it's a huge palette, there's never a "No-no-no-no-no", we're always

interested in thinking about it and figuring out ways to make it happen. As I said, it's a brand new show.

If anybody has any other questions, we'll go on after that.