

PCNY Luncheon  
Cable News on the Rise  
July 23, 2003

**Shelley Lewis, Executive Producer, “American Morning” CNN:** “American Morning” has, if you’ve not had a chance to see it we have a new anchor, I want to say that first, Soledad O’Brien, who we’re thrilled has joined our team with Bill Hemmer, and I hope you have had a chance to see it. If not, don’t call until you do. I don’t want to start with a pet peeve first, but it really is really incredibly helpful. We’ll all save one another a lot of time if you know what the show is and what the show isn’t before you pitch or before you think about getting one of your clients onto our show. It’s a 3-hour morning show that considers itself to be a hard news show. That’s not to say we don’t do features, we do. But the features are meant to have a news peg or a seasonal peg. We don’t just do a lot of features without a particular hook.

Mike made a very good point which I’ll reiterate on a little bit about finding one of your guests who fits in a news story. And I’ll give you a different example, we were interested in the serial arson cases going on in Washington and it’s been a little bit under covered, dozens of homes that have been deliberately set afire, and just for the heck of it we went to Amazon and looked to see who had an interesting take, who’s written about it, and we found that Joe Wambaugh had a brand new book on arson, it’s fiction based on a true story. He was a great guest, he was a good fit, he was articulate and had a lot to say and that was a good way of taking a small but interesting news story and finding an interesting booking. It worked really well for us and I’m sure it did for him as well.

The regular features that we do every day are health, all kinds of health stories, it *is* morning television, but again we like a timely or a news peg as much as we possibly can. We do a lot of business coverage on our program as well. We don’t cook. Maybe someday, but not now - no, probably never, I don’t think we’ll ever cook on the show. By health, in case any of you do have health clients, I mean not just medical, we have a wonderful medical correspondent, Dr. Sanjay Gupta, but we also do fitness and nutrition and all manner of health. Yes, we do a lot of books, we do mostly nonfiction and issue-oriented books but we do some fiction if there’s a reason. We do some entertainment reporting every day.

This is a program that never shuts down for the night. Having done “Good Morning America” and other morning TV, because it’s such a hard news show, there are people at our program 24 hours a day, literally, 5 days a week and people on call on the weekend.

If you’re pitching you should pitch to our booking department directly. If it’s for “American Morning”, Jamie Zahn, who many of you know because she’s been around almost as long as I have, is head of the booking department. CNN, as you know, is headquartered in Atlanta and has an enormous booking department in Atlanta and also in Washington but for our program it would be Jamie Zahn.

What are we looking for? We’re always looking for something new. It feels like everybody knows everything. There was a time when there were not shows about every little specific niche subject, but because of cable there are. So the bar is higher – people who want to know about fitness have 42 channels they can look at, what can you tell me that’s new and different and that will be different for our audience. Obviously we’re also

always looking for great human-interest stories, great personal stories. Yes we did have on a couple of the members of the soccer team from Iraq this morning, they were very compelling, had a compelling human story to tell as well as lending greater understanding as to who these people were.

What else... if I could read my writing...

Basically, in terms of a guest we like a guest who is a fresh face, but somebody who really is articulate and who really does know how to express a point of view or a particular take in shorter rather than longer sentences. Morning TV has a faster-pace and that is pretty much what we're looking for.

And that's it. Thanks.