



Levin: Mass Media era ending Consumer demand influencing entertainment

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It's time to say goodbye to the era of mass media and hello to the new media world order of highly targeted entertainment fueled by consumer demand rather than network and studio release schedules and marketing campaigns.

That was the message delivered Wednesday night by Generate partner Jordan Levin during an gab session held at the Museum of Television & Radio in Beverly Hills as part of its Industry Forum series.

"We're in a transformative media age. We're seeing the vanishing of mass media," Levin said. "Mass media is being replaced by customized, targeted media....The old adage 'adapt or die' has never been more pressing."

Levin, the former CEO and programming chief at the WB Network who co-founded management-production banner Generate last year, noted that traditional media concerns are having a particularly hard time getting with the program because of bottom-line pressures. Levin's suggestion? Talk to the assistants and other youthful types who populate the cubicles, if not the executive suites, at networks and studios. That's where the next genius idea a la YouTube will come from, Levin posited.

"New media companies are listening to their employees, who are much closer to their customers. Traditional media companies are still listening to their financial people," Levin said. "How can creative talent thrive in an environment that is not betting on the new and different but desperately trying to cling to old business models?"

Levin argued that traditional Hollywood has operated as a "Communist" state, with the timing and release of entertainment being imposed a la central planning. Now, with new time- and place-shifting technologies giving consumers many more options for when and how they watch movies and TV shows and listen to music, the industry has to come to grips with the demands of a digitally empowered generation.

"Broad-based media is not going to go away entirely," Levin said. "There are still going to be blockbuster movies. But it's becoming a feast or famine business that is only going to get tougher."

Santa Monica-based Generate's goal is to be a "pure-play content company" that produces for a range of platforms, Levin said. The company has a first-look deal with MTV Networks and has already seeded some MTV sites with Web-exclusive content. But it has also waded into more familiar waters with a number of pilots in development at traditional networks and plans to launch a publishing imprint for graphic novels, Levin said.