

The Tight Ten

(for tv shows, not standup acts)

There are a few ways to get in the room with Netflix or any major show buyer.

1. Be recommended by someone they know and trust (via development rep)
2. Have an agent, manager, or entertainment lawyer arrange it
3. Be so hot and so popular that they seek you out
4. Have a guarantee under your arm (attached talent or established audience)

Once you're in the room, you must give a pitch that they can't say no to. It's their job to find properties that can be made in to shows as quickly as possible. So, you should not meet them until everything is ready.

The main reasons why people bomb in the room, is because their story is not ready yet or this is the wrong room for your story.

For example, I won't pitch your zombie slasher movie to my children's animation connections. So pick the right room carefully because you'll not be invited back if it's not in their wheelhouse.

How do you know when your story is ready?

If you get in the room and you can answer these questions, or better yet, they don't need to ask because your trailer or pitch already does, then maybe you have a chance.

You know you're ready to be in the room when you have a "Tight Ten."

My Tight 10: Things I look for to ensure a successful TV show

1. Main character is complex.
 - a. "He" has a sense of right and wrong (although skewed) and is torn when forced to do something against his nature.
 - b. The way he is normally, causes others to react strongly: everyone he meets.
 - c. He has a variety of characteristics that sometimes clash.
 - d. There are things he would never do and always do. And your audience instinctively knows what those are after only a few scenes.
 - e. He has a distinct relationship with every other person in the show.
 - f. Everything he does affects or advances all of the storylines.
 - g. He has one big desire that drives him.
2. Main character skill. He has to do something very well that people can admire about him for and because of this want him to not screw up his life (even if he is a dark hero). Episodes must test this skill. (Think *Dexter*)

3. Main character flaw. The one thing that he knows is not good about himself but can't change. Everything he does is influenced by his bad trait. Episodes must test this flaw.
4. A world with its own rules. What is allowed and not allowed in this world? What could happen to bring it all down? How are things done and influenced? Who has the real power?
5. A Backstory that explains why things are this way but it drips out throughout the series.
6. Overall Plot Plan for the entire series
 - a. One theme and thing that keeps the main character passionately driving forward from the first to the last episode of the entire series.
 - b. Conflicts, cliffhangers, and major series plot points measured out the entire series. These are the milestones for the main character's quest.
7. Episodes that challenge the main character's quest.
8. Predictable episodic structure. Levels of tension and reveals in all the expected places. Typical Tv structure.
9. Dialogue that is different for each character, clever, and is subtextual.
10. An inherent situation that is in DIRECT CONFLICT with the main character's flaw. I can't stress this enough! You can't get in the room if this is not super tight.
 - a. Example, narcotics police officer during the day, and a drug addict at night. He arrests self-destructive people in his job (the situation), then buys drugs from them in his own self-destructive behavior (his main flaw) The consequence is that he'll lose everything if he's found out. *Pilot for The Wire*.
 - b. Example, Superheroes dedicated to saving the world (the situation), hunting down ruthless criminals; but secretly enjoy murdering them (the character flaw). The consequence is that the world will go crazy if they are found out. *Pilot: The Boys*
 - c. Example, CIA agent tries to prove American hero is really a terrorist (the situation), while battling her own bi-polar disorder (the character flaw). The consequence is that people will die and she'll lose everything if she can't stop it and they find out about her. *Homeland*.
 - d. So what is your main character's SITUATION; is it in direct conflict with his FLAW; and are the consequences the worst thing possible?

Just as you can tell when an actor is bad or a director needs more practice or a writer needs to rewrite: You can also tell when a story is not developed to a professional level.

If you are determined to make your project network-ready, then you'll need a development consultant or experienced story editor to do your Tight Ten if you can't. Someone who has been a head writer on a tv series is best. Then he/she would be able to work with you to get it ready.