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Facebook Inc. to Hollywood: Let's do lunch.

The social-networking giant is talking to Hollywood studios and agencies about producing TV-quality shows with an eye toward launching original programming by late summer, people familiar with the matter said. In meetings with major talent agencies including Creative Artists Agency, United Talent Agency, William Morris Endeavor and ICM Partners, Facebook has indicated it is willing to commit to production budgets as high as \$3 million per episode, people familiar with the situation say.

That's the price range of high-end cable-TV shows. Facebook is also interested in more moderate-cost scripted shows in the mid-to-high six-figure-per-episode range, these people say. The company will be aggressive about trying to own as much of that content as possible. The push for TV shows is part of a two-track effort at Facebook to up its game in video and target the tens of billions of ad dollars spent on television.

Facebook also is seeking short-form content, primarily unscripted, that could run for 10 minutes in the Spotlight section for videos, the people familiar with the matter say. The social network is guaranteeing creators of short-form fare a minimum \$5,000 to \$20,000 share of ad revenue per episode, a person familiar with the company's strategy said. Companies working on such content for Facebook include BuzzFeed, ATTN and Refinery 29, according to people familiar with the situation.

Facebook declined to comment on specifics of its content plans. In a statement, Vice President of Media Partnerships Nick Grudin said, "We're supporting a small group of partners and creators as they experiment with the kinds of shows you can build a community around—from sports to comedy to reality to gaming. We're focused on episodic shows and helping all our partners understand what works across different verticals and topics."

Facebook has told people in the industry that late summer is a bit of a moving target for launch. It hopes to target audiences from ages 13 to 34, with a particular focus on the 17-to-30 range. It appears to be seeking shows along the lines of the drama "Pretty Little Liars" on Freeform, the cable channel formerly known as ABC Family, or similar to ABC's "Scandal" and reality hit "The Bachelor," people familiar with the matter say.

Among the shows Facebook already has lined up is "Strangers," a relationship drama aimed at millennials that made its debut at the Sundance Film Festival, and the game show "Last State Standing." Facebook is willing to take another network's castoffs or "distressed assets," as one entertainment executive put it. The company is nearing a deal for the family comedy "Loosely Exactly

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Nicole,” which Viacom’s MTV canceled earlier this year after one season. An executive familiar with the show said its budget was in the \$1 million-per-episode range.

Everyone Wants to Make TV Shows

Hollywood is getting crowded with digital players who are making original TV programming.

STRATEGY	TYPICAL FARE
Netflix	
Dozens of original show releases per year, aiming for global appeal. No ads.	Master of None, Orange is the New Black
Amazon	
Treats video as a value-add for Prime subscribers; no ads; pushing into sports	Transparent, Man in the High Castle
Apple	
Creating shows for Apple Music subscription service; hired top Sony TV executives.	Carpool Karaoke (half-hour version they have rights to)
Facebook	
Targeting people ages 17 to 30 with combination of high-end cable TV fare and shorter, unscripted content.	Loosely Exactly Nicole
Hulu	
Spending aggressively on both acquired and original content as part of its effort to compete with Netflix and Amazon Prime.	Casual The Handmaid’s Tale
Google/YouTube	
Focusing on original content for its commercial-free service YouTube Red platform.	Escape the Night

Source: the companies

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

“Loosely Exactly Nicole” is near and dear to Mina Lefevre, who developed it while at MTV and now heads Facebook’s development effort, reporting to Ricky Van Veen, founder of the website CollegeHumor, who joined Facebook last year. Facebook has told people it wants to steer clear of shows about children and young teens as well as political dramas, news and shows with nudity and rough language.

Facebook enters a bustling TV scene where old and new players are creating a staggering amount of original programming, making it hard for even good shows to break through. Last year there were more than 455 scripted shows on TV. Compared with digital players such as Netflix Inc., Amazon.com Inc. and Hulu, which have been in TV for years now and have well-stocked pipelines of original programming, Facebook is late to the game. Apple Inc. is also hunting for original TV programming and **just hired two top executives** from Sony Corp.’s TV studio.

The longer-form scripted shows on Facebook are expected to run no more than 30 minutes and will carry ads. A potential challenge for Facebook is Hollywood’s desire to own much of its content. Typically, studios and producers effectively rent their shows to networks through licensing deals, and are reluctant to part with rights to shows in perpetuity.

The entertainment industry is eager to see if Facebook can translate the data it has on tastes and habits of nearly two billion monthly users into insights that make for more popular television. Facebook is expected to spread out the release of its episodes, in the traditional fashion, rather than dropping an entire season at one time, as Netflix and Amazon do, the people familiar with the matter say. Facebook sees its platform as an in-house water cooler of sorts, ideal for building a social community around shows.

In another move that will distinguish it from Netflix and Amazon, Facebook is also telling Hollywood it will share viewership data with them. “Facebook is saying, ‘We’re going to be completely transparent,’ ” one agent said. “ ‘You’ll share in our ad dollars, our profits will be your profits, you will get all the data.’ It’s a humongously different mind-set.” – *Wall Street Journal*

New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft said the future of NFL broadcasts is in “over the top” deals like the livestreaming agreement the NFL signed with Amazon this spring.

Amazon will charge advertisers \$2.8 million for an “OTT” ad package around its 10 Thursday night games, Reuters revealed on Thursday. Amazon paid \$50 million for the non-exclusive rights to NFL games starting this season, nudging aside Twitter, which had paid \$10 million to stream Thursday night NFL games last season.

“There has been a dramatic shift,” Kraft said at Cannes Lions, speaking as part of an interview with WPP Group CEO Martin Sorrell. “This year we’re with Amazon and for us the future is OTT.” Kraft continued: “We’ll be very interested to see how Amazon goes as it’s behind the paywall. The thing we have to be careful of is millennials. They don’t watch TV, they don’t have TVs or subscribe to cable. So we have to bring that audience in. Partly it’s done through fantasy games and linking to that. Over-the-top is a great opportunity.”

Amazon will air the games to members of its \$99-a-year subscription service, Amazon Prime Video. Kraft said he would also like to see the NFL expand internationally, a goal that the league has yet to fully realize, he noted. “Now we play four games a year in London and sell tickets to 80,000 people and we’re going to have a team in London,” Kraft said. “We’re playing the Raiders in Mexico and have plans to play in Germany, Canada and Brazil and China. I don’t know why not France?”

Kraft also was asked about how he feels now about “Deflategate,” the controversy in which Patriots quarterback Tom Brady was accused of deliberately underinflating footballs during the 2014-2015 playoff season. “I don’t hold grudges but I never forget,” Kraft responded. “Sometimes people mess up at when they’re doing their jobs, but it most organizations people make bad decisions. I’m about the present and the future.” “We were unfairly punished but we wound up winning the Super Bowl.”

Sorrell also asked about Kraft’s thoughts on FBI director James Comey’s firing. Kraft dodged on that one, but had some words of support for his friend President Trump’s economic plan for the US. “His economic plan if executed well, will be excellent for America and the Western world,” Kraft said. We have the highest corporate tax rate in the world. Two to five trillion dollars is parked outside of America, he has a plan to bring that money back and put it into manufacturing jobs. It could be a great uplift for the economy.”

Kraft who recalled a time when money was tight in his home and even a season ticket was a luxury. “One of my big concerns is people like ourselves have done well, but working class people have not. It behooves us to get government working together to take care of them and get them the proper healthcare.” – *New York Post*

Readers can now take an intimate look into the life of the state’s longest serving U.S. senator — Arlen Specter — courtesy of Pennsylvania Cable News’ recently released book “Arlen Specter: An Oral History.”

PCN’s Brian Lockman and Francine Schertzer transcribed 15 hours of interviews to produce the book about the Kansas native’s nearly 30-year senate career. Within his decades-long political career, Specter wove himself into American history, being a prominent voice in controversial supreme court nominations, the John F. Kennedy assassination and Bill Clinton’s impeachment. He built himself a reputation as a demanding boss, sharp-as-a-tack legal mind and pragmatic bipartisan negotiator.

His centrist attitudes became his political career’s downfall, however, when he left the republican party in 2009, saying he could no longer align with the party’s increasingly conservative ideologies. It was in that election that republican Pat Toomey unseated Specter after his decades of service. It was this that ended his political career, but not his battle with Hodgkin’s-lymphoma, with which he battled throughout his final years of his senatorial career, even after losing his hair to chemotherapy. Complications from non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma eventually took Specter’s life in 2012. – *Allentown Morning Call*



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