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Books like the man from earth

Yup, The richest man in Babylon is now stealing the trophy from The Millionaire Next Door! Haha... although I would highly recommend both books as they really give you a wonderful perspective on life:) What I liked best about The Richest Man in Babylon is that it's all based on fables! Each chapter is a whole new short story that tells a different aspect of money management. It's freakin' great. Sometimes the chapters are not, but it is seriously the best financial book for those with A.D.D. And it fits wonderfully in your back pocket! Haha... So if you take the subway/train every day like me, it's super easy to save and read, along the way:) The whole book can be read in a few hours (it's only 140 pages long) and it discusses everything from saving 10% of your paychecks to invest it wisely to pay off all the debt. The craziest thing about it is that it takes place thousands and thousands of years ago, but the council is STILL relevant in today's time! It's really a good read for any of us out there who needs a little more motivation – and even more if they *just* get into personal finance. It is a PERFECT book for current graduates and/or uneducated adults:) Here's a pretty cool quote that highlights his simple but effective writing style: Wealth, like a tree, grows from a tiny seed. The first copper you save is the seed from which your tree of wealth will grow. The sooner you plant this seed, the sooner the tree will grow. And the more faithfully you feed and water this tree with consistent savings, the sooner you can sunbathe in satisfaction under your shadow. While I would like to continue and break down all the chapters here for ya, I really don't want to give everything away. Just know that it covers a handful of financial advice and represents them in a very nice way. This Def. ability to tell stories, we have fixed ourselves to the idea of the end of the world. We have always had questions about when it will end and what it will be like for those who survive. Will they be zombies? An asteroid? Climate change? The society we have built can be overthrown in a begging way, and television and movies will always try to use this idea to entertain and educate. CW's The 100 shows us a planet Nuclear war was devastated, reducing the surviving people to a belligerent tribal culture. TN's Falling Skies imagines a conquest of the human race by alien invaders. The list goes on and extends to movies Days Later (Zombies), Waterworld (global warming) and Mad Max (energy crisis). But what Fox's latest show, The Last Man On Earth, is doing is something else entirely. It takes place in a post-apocalypse world in which Will Forte is the last person to stand still after a vaguely described world-ending virus. From there we see Forte spending much of his time alone as he wanders through the abandoned remnants of society. It is not a big surprise, of course, that on his first night in the air it became something of a critical darling. The pilot was written by Forte himself, and the series is not directed by any other The Lego Movie visionary Phil Lord and Christopher Miller. With an All-Star creative team at the helm, The Last Man On Earth tackles the apocalypse from a whole new angle. What this show does that no one else has really exploited is to see and enjoy an abandoned human society as something, rather than a death trap of risk and danger. Zombieland of 2009 did so to some extent, but much of this film was based on dodging the undead. For The Last Man On Earth, we see Forte squatting in the chicest villa he can find, playing with invaluable collectibles and destroying them and taking advantage of an inflatable swimming pool. The whole world is its comedic playground, which makes the possibilities infinite despite the scarcity of the performers. In doing so, it examines many of the practical questions that a normal person would have if he or she were left alone on Earth. Forte balances comedy and emotional depth as he fights loneliness and embraces the chaos that goes hand in hand with his situation. But then something interesting happens (spoiler for anyone who hasn't watched yet) — Forte meets a woman, played by Kristen Schaal, who takes the opposite approach to him. It still clings to the order of the past planet, holds stop signs and longs for the organization of a pre-virus society. It acts as a perfect foil to Fore's rather chaos-centric approach, while helping to extend the show's premise beyond just one character wandering through abandoned buildings. While other films and shows choose to treat the apocalypse as something to survive, The Last Man On Earth decides it's something to enjoy. Thanks to clever writing and spot-on performances by Schaal and Forte, this feeling comes across crystal clear and gives us a breath of fresh air among the darker offerings of the apocalypse genre. More from Entertainment Cheat Sheet: Chris Albrecht, the 49-year-old president of HBO's original programming, is in the midst of his beige on the sun-kissed top floor of a Century City Tower, surrounded by pictures of Sarah Jessica Parker. Parker. on window sills, even on the floor. There's a shot of Sex and the City's iconic heroine, Carrie Bradshaw, sitting on a park bench, her chin tilting into the sartorial edge with a tiara and white gloves). There's a flirty Carrie throwing a prickly choo at a hot dog stand on the street corner; a thoughtful Carrie looking out of a phone kiosk in one picture; and a glamorous Carrie, sparkling in a beaded dress, all burning eyes and shiny lips. We will have to present these to the SJ tomorrow, says Carolyn Strauss, Albrecht's deputy. Albrecht draws attention to himself: Then we pick up the four that we like best and let them choose from them. We do not want to single out that. Both scan the photos in a slow circle and point almost in unison to the same four. The one, the one and these two, says Albrecht. Definitely, says Strauss, adding that I am amazed that SJ took a photo of himself smiling. (Ultimately, when the actress' photos are shown, the thoughtful Carrie prevails.) A few hours later, Albrecht sits at the wheel of his bright white city safari vehicle. He makes his way through the traffic of Beverly Hills and puzzles over the connection between Tony Soprano, Carl Jung and riding. Albrecht is enthusiastic about all three. A compact man with watchful eyes who prefers sleek, open suits, he exudes the casual intensity of a skilled deal maker. But despite the Mercedes G-Series SUV tricked into rolling call dashboard computers on the way from his malibu ranch, it's hardly what you'd get if you called central casting for a network manager. (Funny that when Fast Company went to the press, he was promoted to chairman and CEO of HBO.) Albrecht is both smooth self-confident and openly curious. A fast-talking former stand-up comedian from Long Island, he's thoughtful in conversation. He takes the Jungian analysis he has followed over the past 10 years almost scientifically, but you can be aware of the ideas behind it: that the psyche has a structure, that the unconscious is a very powerful force, that we are all on a journey and strive for individualization and wholeness. If you understand this, you will have a better grip on what is relevant, resonant and rich in human experience. They also have an incomparable formula for the production of really and really good television. Albrecht's instincts lead him to what is both robustly entertaining and strictly human, from promotional photos to character development. But he's not just a philosopher of television. Under his leadership The division has unleashed a creative juggler in the television landscape. In any case, when it comes to original programming, Albrecht is the most original spirit on television. Sex and the City, which debuted in 1998, The Sopranos (1999) and Six Feet Under (2001) – the 3Ses, in HBO shorthand – are three of the biggest hits on television. The shows attract prime-time audiences (an average of around 12 million, 14 million and 12 million viewers per episode) to a network that still reaches only a quarter of all TV households. HBO regularly receives more Emmy nominations than the big three broadcast networks and wins Golden Globes, Oscars and Peabody Awards for its original series and films competing with the biggest players in Hollywood. At the 2001 Emmys, HBO received 94 nominations and won 16. No less than 20 prizewinners personally thanked Albrecht from the stage. Also this year, HBO leads with 93 leads with 93 leads with 93 leads with 93 leads with 94 leads with 94 leads with 95 leads with 96 leads with 96 leads with 96 leads with 96 leads with 97 leads with 97 leads with 97 leads with 98 leads nominations, including 23 for Six Feet Under alone. The Sopranos, the veteran TV writer-producer David Chase's tirelessly original, intrepidly real-life series about a fear-ridden New Jersey mob boss (played by James Gandolfini to be repulsive and captivating) with two dysfunctional families, rose to public consciousness two vears ago. Even if you haven't seen an episode vet, chances are you know everything about the show. The series has earned both high-brow recognition and street-level props. The New York Times film critic Stephen Holden declared the series the greatest work of American popular culture in the last guarter of a century, while a few lieutenants from the New Jersey DeCavalcante crime family were recorded on surveillance tapes that raved about the show. HBO's line-up is breathtaking in its depth and diversity. Along with The Sopranos, Sex and the City (an antique mix of sex, shoes, restaurants and relationships) and Six Feet Under (the dark-comic chronicles of a dysfunctional family of undertakers by Oscar-winning screenwriter Alan Ball), other original series are Oz (a brutal, boundless prison drama), Curb Your Enthusiasm (a cruelly comic, inventive comedy by Seinfeld producer Larry David). , The Wire. HBO's original programming is also responsible for such critically contested television films as the Emmy-winning Wit (with Emma Thompson and directed by Mike Nichols) and the virtuoso Path to War, starring Michael Gambon as Lyndon B. Johnson, directed by John Frankenheimer. A colossal 120-million-dollar miniseries, Band of Brothers (based on Stephen Ambrose's book and produced by Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg), was released on September 9. and attracted nearly 59 million viewers in the weeks after 9/11. The docu-group has won a dozen Oscars in the last decade. Part of the secret lies in Mix: Event films like The Laramie Project and the Rudy Giuliani documentary, In Memorium: New York City, 9/11/01, coexist with such gloomy late-night fares as Real Sex and Taxicab Confessions. It is a virtuoso mixture of intelligence, emotion and invention. And as it turns out, the production of high-quality television is a good deal even in the age of Big Brother 3. With a 27-million subscribers per year, HBO is dwarfing Showtime, its closest pay-cable rival. HBO has posted an average earnings growth of 20% as it turns out, the production of high-quality television is a good deal even in the age of Big Brother 3. 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But broadcast networks, pay channels, and basic cables are crying out for attention in an increasingly crowded, competitive and fragmented entertainment market. In a business where every home run is revered as a pseudomiracle, HBO's almost eerie ability to awaken popular imagination, raise audience expectations, and deliver hits represents a radical victory. It changes the game for everyone. The networks, of course, have their thrust back. Some network executives reject HBO's success as a byproduct of the trinity of th vulgarity - violence, graphic language, and sex - that separates the pay cable from the rest of the TV landscape. Most have turned their calendars around to mark Sunday, September 15 at 9 p.m.: the long-awaited return of The Sopranos for their fourth season and one of the most competitive hours on television. Everyone is trying to crack the formula for soprano-esque hits. Of course, when it comes to producing hits, Albrecht knows that the best formula at all. When it comes to our creative philosophy, the good news is that we don't have rules, he says. The bad news is that we don't have any rules. What Albrecht and his team have is a set of prevailing values. Spend time with HBO's decision makers, and vou'll keep hearing the same questions: We're just wondering: Is this different? Is it unmistakable? Is it good?, says Albrecht. What is good? The network guys have an objective criterion for making decisions about shows: Do they pay for themselves? Albrecht says. Due to the cable distribution model, we have no idea whether a particular episode of The Sopranos or a more subscriptions. The only thing we need to move on is our own sensitivity – the gut. This sensitivity boils down to a principle, says Albrecht: At the end of the day, is it about something? From something, I mean not only about the subject, the arena or the place, but really about something that is deeply relevant to the human experience. Sopranos is not about a mob boss on Prozac. It is about a man who is looking for the meaning of his life. Six Feet Under isnot so much about a family of entrepreneurs as it is about death in order to get on with their own lives. The next guestion is: is it the best way to implement this idea? Is it true to itself? It's a simple strategic insight that's easy to describe but extremely difficult to execute: forget what's popular—what works now—and start with what's good. Then ignore the conventions of the medium, and reject the received wisdom of industry to follow the internal logic of each project. It's not a recipe for hits It's a discipline to produce original work – and to work productively with people who make things that make a difference. Albrecht and his team pull it off with a powerful combination of innovation, instincts, creative practices and production values. [Scene 1: Fortunate Son, The Sopranos, Season 3] TONY: All this from a slice of Gabagool? DR. MELFI: Kind of proust's madeleines. TONY: What? Who? DR. MELFI: Marcel Proust. Wrote a seven-volume classic, Remembrance of Things Past. He took a bite from a Madeleine – a kind of tea biscuit he had as a child – and this one bite unleashed a flood of memories of his childhood and finally his whole life. TONY: That sounds very gay. I hope you do not say that. We have decided to take the high road. The Sopranos were the perfect storm of hits for HBO. The network, which aired in 1972 in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, as a pay-TV station with boxes. theater films, and stand-up comedy, had more than a decade of original programming under its belt. Some of it was groundbreaking: Robert Altman and Garry Trudeau's campaign mockumentary Tanner '88 and Gary Shandling's acclaimed send-off of a talk show host. The Larry Sanders Show. Some were less inspiring: The original program on HBO was a polka festival special. Primed by Oz (1997) and Sex and the City (1998) – and thirsty for quality in a vast sea of reality TV, game shows, and law and order spin-offs – critics unleashed a frenzy of praise for The Sopranos. The audience followed numbers that put HBO, which doesn't compete on ratings, up with some of some of the successful shows on tv. While The Sopranos does not reach the first three shows on television (for the 2001-02 season, NBC's Friends, with a 24.5 million viewers; CSI from CBS with 23.7 million and NBC er, with 22.1 million), it regularly fits into the top 10 or 15 shows, with a 14 million viewers per episode. The extraordinary thing is that HBO attracts its viewers from a 27-million-subscriber universe, while the potential commercial network audience is every US household with a TV set. More than the numbers, The Soprano's influence on the cultural conversation has changed the game for HBO. Robert Thompson, director of the Center for the Study of Popular Television at Syracuse University, believes The Sopranos is the best drama on television. Thompson: The Sopranos have put America on the map. HBO is the place where great television is made. It has also taken note of the networks. (Hollywood could be the next place: Albrecht recently said that a Sopranos movie could follow on the heels of the TV series.) Soprano envy ranged from the beminating about HBO's short seasons (David Chase produces 13 episodes compared to the typical 24 episodes for a network's hour-long dramas) to rumors about the show's graphic language, violence, and sexual content. The industry chatter reached its peak in April 2001 with a notorious memo distributed by NBC Chairman and CEO (and Vice Chairman of parent company General Electric) Bob Wright. An episode from the third season of The Sopranos culminated in the brutal beating death of one. Wright sent a tape of the episode to 50 NBC executives, studio executives and producers. The accompanying memo urged colleagues to help NBC think about an issue that I believe has a big impact on our business - the type of content in HBO's The Sopranos. Wright continued: It's a show we couldn't and wouldn't broadcast on NBC because of the violence, language and nudity. While Wright claimed that his motivation was simply to provoke a thoughtful discussion about The Sopranos, the interestingly worded letter, as Albrecht puts it, pointed to a different agenda. We were confused, amused and a little annoyed by the apparent negative attention to our show, Albrecht says. It also missed the point. It is a fundamental misinterpretation of the audience to assume that the success of the show is based on its graphic content. There is no gold mine at the end of the vulgar rainbow. Still, he says with a smile: It's a legitimate guestion they raise: How are we going to compete with it? To understand how extraordinary this guestion is, you have to go back to 1995. After a decade of different leadership positions at HBO, Albrecht was the newly appointed president of original programming, and Jeff Bewkes had just taken over the HBO chairman and CEO in New York from the outgoing Michael Fuchs. (And at the press time, Bewkes was appointed chairman of the new & amp; Networks Group promoted by AOL Time Warner.) The scale of HBO's original programming included two half-hour comedies, Dream On and The Larry Sanders Show, which ranked the network's best comedy on television. HBO programmers joked that they should have called it the only hour on HBO. Albrecht and Bewkes convened a two-day meeting of the Board of Directors and the most important original programming execs. The question on the table is: are we really who we say, are we? The answer came back: Not really. At least not yet. The words we always spoke about ourselves were different, 'distinguishable', 'worth paying', 'better', says Albrecht. In that meeting, we came to the conclusion that it was a great thing to strive for. The only way to move forward and win is to take chances and be unmistakable. For years, HBO meant nothing more than network TV. Albrecht and Bewkes believed that they needed a new starting place if they wanted to be original, we couldn't rule anything out. We had to be open to everything. That was a big change, says Bewkes. When HBO turned the corner from the network's counterprogramming, the only important question was: Is it good? Does it catch the attention for some reason? If we become much more imaginative, we will get into trouble, says Bewkes. Instead of focusing on providing an altruistic service to viewers, HBO's determined devotion to quality is part of a bold strategy. The more we can make the original programming the basis of the competition, the more we have an advantage, says Bewkes. It's something you can't buy. It is not a competition between cable operators and payment networks. It requires its own ability. At the 1995 meeting, Bewkes said, the HBO leadership team decided to jump off the cliff completely. It was a big leap. The unit had no way to measure the return on a particular show. They ventured into a hard-fought area with a 90% failure rate. It was a real mess, says Bewkes. But we just said, forget it - let's just do good things and we'll solve it later. We have decided to take the high road. This is a journey that has paid off. Today, HBO invests about '400 million annually in original programming in an increasingly competitive pay-cable landscape based on a new mix of original series, movies, and specials. Basic cable channels have followed suit, from MTV, with special Made-for-TV movies. But the advantage that really matters is the creative advantage of HBO. Bewkes admits that making creative hits a fun Is. Chris and I joke about it all the time. He says at the end of our phone calls: Okay, we found out. We're going to do some hits. I say, 'Great, you have it. Go it. Go make some make [Scene 2: A Hit Is a Hit, The Sopranos, Season One] HESH: Music is music. Talent is talent. There is one constant in the music business: a hit is a hit. And that, my friend, is not a hit. CHRISTOPHER: Why? HESH: Christ, for reasons that we could not comprehend or codify. Pathetic tug! You don't have to be a hack! When it comes to creating hits, there's television - and then there's HBO. The difference is that the last thing HBO programmers think about is a hit. In the networks, it is the first (and, as some argue, the only one). The purpose of television is to keep you in your seat so that you can see the commercials. Networks make money by delivering as many of the right eveballs as possible to the right time window. This structural reality leads to an obsession with measuring these eyeballs (most network execs dial into dedicated rating lines every morning at 6 a.m.). It also creates an accumulation of rules and conventions about what types of shows work best to grab these eyeballs and how those shows should be made. The name of the game is, whatever gets to see the largest number of people, says Alan Ball, a self-described refugee from the network TV gulag and creator of the HBO series Six Feet Under. What is that? It's a car wreck! It's a fear factor. It's always Playboy playmates to eat sheep eyeballs. They are proud of that! Look at the numbers we got! Supermodels pupated each other and people tuned in!' For a programmer who is exposed to extreme economic and performance loads, the safest decision is to go for something that is exactly what is now successful. As a result, television is polluted with imitation. Today, networks produce derivatives of their own reality shows, such as ZCO's Dog Eat Dog. Yesterday it was Who Wants to Be a Millionaire Clones. And there are always the ubiquitous cop/lawyer/doctor dramas and their spin-offs. Of course, the networks do very good business with these shows. But what they don't do is produce very good shows. And the reason has everything to do with how the networks deal with – or mistreat – the creative talent that is actually responsible for inventing the programs. Alan Ball, whose television career was mired in the frustration of writing and producing three network sitcoms (Grace Under Fire, Cybill, Oh Grow Up) before winning an Oscar for his American Beauty screenplay, is particularly eloquent about the central ritual of serial television: the Notes meeting, where the ongoing work is discussed. At every meeting there always seem to be twice as many people necessary, says Ball. There are so many people in the networks who have to justify their work that they sit in meetings and try to get some kind of accepted feedback. You use all these recycled You learned in a narrative seminar that I don't even understand: we need a reversal of the third act here or let's telescope the action here. Almost everywhere, the notes are a series of commercial decisions disquised as narrative priorities: be nice (the internal moral police of networks, standards & amp; practices, has the writing process under control so that authors learn to load a script with additional bitches and balls that they can exchange for another asshole); Solve the A-story with a decent emotional payout so viewers can go to bed happily; Spell it out; and Dumb it down. By contrast, HBO is in the business of selling itself. Attracting and retaining subscribers for the service is less the development of a mix of offerings that resonate individually with a particular segment of the audience and collectively attract the largest number of paying customers. HBO doesn't make money with a single show; it earns money by increasing the value of the entire network. HBO wins by increasing reach and quality. If, at the end of the day, we can set up a whole series of programs, some of which have a larger subscriber base, says Bewkes. We want to provide a real selection and a real range of sensitivities. At the same time, even if a subscriber isn't interested in a particular documentary about the Teamsters, but he hears that it's good, he'll feel better about his HBO. So it's about excellence and reach, But there's another reason why television writers and producers describe the experience of working with HBO as liberating. It comes back to Albrecht and his outstanding team of programming talents. Albrecht had a unique path to network management – from the failed stand-up comedian to the manager/owner of Improv on both coasts to a stint as an agent at ICM (where he signed talents such as Billy Crystal, Jim Carrey, and Whoopi Goldberg) to HBO executives in 1985. The trip has made Albrecht a unique combination of deal-making animal (as an agent he learned: you have to go in and let something happen every day. If you don't do a deal, you've had a bad day) and philosopher of the human condition. I think great writing and great filmmaking come from the unconscious, he says. That's why people see things in The Sopranos that we never thought of when we were creating them. We are all united in our struggle to find meaning in our lives, which is why people connect with the dilemmas of a brutal mob boss. The fact that we talking about this stuff is fun and exciting. It helps to expand the work and change the level of entertainment. Sometimes we look around the room and say, 'You can bet that they'll do this on NBC!' Albrecht's intellectual curiosity and ear for compelling human stories are reflected in the extraordinary talents that make up the original programming team: Senior Vice President Carolyn Strauss, an HBO lifewoman who has overseen the development and production of programs as diverse as The Chris Rock Show and Six Feet Under; The veteran Hollywood film producer Colin Callender, who as president of HBO Films has developed a stable of feature films that are as good or better than anyone else in the cinema release; and Anne Thomopolous, who oversees miniseries programming and honchoed the Band of Brothers production. Each team member has spent at least a decade, some nearly two, at HBO. They have forged their identity on the fringes of television production as almost defiantly different. Even as their achievements have exploded into the mainstream, they remain vigilant when it comes to keeping new eyes and freedom of convention. It's interesting that people at HBO always fix themselves as a kind of unfair advantage on content freedoms, Strauss says. But the freedoms that are really important are not the freedom to swear, to be naked or to cut someone's head off. It is a matter of expressing one's own point of view and getting the voice of the Creator through as unencumbered as possible. It turns out that the great talent of the members of the original programming team is their ability to work with creative talents. First, they respect and trust the author producers they work with. They say, 'We want your voice. We want your vision. We want the story you see. And they mean it, says Alan Ball. This may seem obvious, but in the networks every decision is judged by each individual leader in second place. At HBO, they leave you mostly alone and trust your instincts. When the team gives feedback, it's usually about one thing; helping the author bravely inhabit his own skin. When Ball Strauss presented his script for the Six Feet Under Pilot, she replied: It's a bit safe. I would love it if the whole thing was fucked a little more. She told Ball that the characters must be as complicated as people are in real life. Your problems are not easy to solve. And there has to be a level of reality and emotional truth that expresses the logic of the show - which really affects a family that has to do with the very real divisions that were born from a life in which they didn't communicate with each other, and a bunch of adult children trying to grow up. Along with the story points, Ball heard a Message: She told me that I don't really have to be a bad writer here! After five years of working on a network show, in which you always had to put the subtext in someone's mouth: Gee Dad, I think I'm angry because you did X when I was 12' – you could just let the subtext be the subtext and let the characters speak like real people. You don't have to be a hack! It's the kind of luxury that has talented writers, directors, actors and producers who connect with HBO. Countless Hollywood stars have asked Ball to make a guest appearance on Six Feet Under. Tom Hanks has signed up for a third project on HBO (after the production of The Earth to the Moon and Band of the Brothers, with Steven Spielberg). Callender is currently overseeing the production of the Tony-winning Angels in America, directed by Mike Nichols with Al Pacino, Meryl Streep and Emma Thompson., Albrecht strives to make the experience worthwhile for every HBO partner. If you're interested in the broadcast business where you can name your own recordings as creators, he says. We are there as guides and we want to push the boundaries, but basically we want people to take their courage out and bring it to Denfilm every week in a series or in one of our films. [Scene 3: In-Game, Six Feet Under, Season 2] NATE: Chinese checkers. Always hated this game. NATHANIEL SR.: That's because you've never played it for money. Nate, why don't you meet some of my friends? Uh, this [shows smooth-dressed middle-aged man], well, that's the man. Death. The Grim Reaper. DEATH: Cigar? NATE: Uh, no thanks. WOMEN: [meaty black woman dressed as tv-psychic] Good for you, baby. The stuff is evil! NATHANIEL SR.: And, uh, that, well, that's — DEATH: My partner. LIFE: Oooh! That sounds so professional! I love it! DEATH: Life. NATE: [Incredibly] Shut up! LIFE: Oh, yes. It's a whole yin-yang thing! NATE: You tell me you're two in the business together? LIFE: [laughs] honey, me and him are together in all sorts of shit! TOD: Let's just say it's a mutually beneficial arrangement. LIFE: [to NATE] It's your turn. NATE: Uh, shouldn't I wait for you to start a new game? LIFE: This game will never end. DEATH: You're either in the game or you're out. NATHANIEL SR.: On or off the bus if you prefer. NATE: Well, I'm in. [sits down] NATHANIEL SR.: You have to put something in the kitten, son. NATE: What do you bet? ALL: Everything. NATE: All right. I bet everything. Whatever. The biggest hurdle to our success is our own success. Colin Callender woke up on the morning of the 2001 Emmy nominations to learn that HBO had earned a whopping 94 (compared to NBC's 76, ABC's 63 and CBS 46). He Chris Albrecht. We both said at the same time, 'What the hell are we doing next year?' Our first thought wasn't, 'That's great. We did it! It was, 'How the hell do we surpass that?' says Callender. I think we're all genetically programmed to keep pushing ourselves. The question of what comes next has received a new urgency for HBO's original programming unit. There is an end in sight for sex as well as for the city and the Sopranos. Expectations are so high and the winning streak so strong that the vultures are waiting for a flop. The reviews for The Wire, the series that launched this summer, reflect this reality, Albrecht observes. They say it's a great show that it gets better every week, but it's never going to match those other shows, he says. That tells me that you can't have a company that's just based on things that are incredibly extraordinary. You also have to base your business on things that are very, very good. And if you focus on it, your chances of getting something outstanding are so much better. The good news is that HBO's original programming strategy is working. The bad news is that it works so well, it changes the game all the time. Chris bears the brunt of this pressure on his shoulders, Says Bewkes. Because everything we've tried has worked better than we ever imagined. So we need to raise the bar further for our next act. Nothing showed this reality more than the unprecedented phone calls Albrecht received earlier this year – from network programming execs desperate to learn where HBO had planned the fourth season of The Sopranos. We play a much broader game, much more active, albrecht says. This means that we need to be even more aggressive and take even greater risks than before. We are very aware that the biggest hurdle to our success. The higher the stakes, the more well-managed Albrecht's team has to go to continue with his programming. Most recently, Albrecht took the unconventional step of ordering three series for the fall season from three pilots, including the dramas Baseball Wives and Carnivale. He also takes a page from the value of his franchise with HBO Sunday Nights, with a powerhouse lineup of original series that regularly draw huge ratings. It's the most visible and acclaimed cast of Date TV since NBC's Must-See TV. Albrecht is aware of the fate of this once golden program concept and wants to occupy areas that others abdicated television, which is worth paying at a time when people are increasingly with the TV you get for free. When asked how he should describe this area, Albrecht gives a typically uncompromising answer: the best: a huge but very specific goal that we always want to achieve. Sidebar: HBO's Production ValuesTelevision is still a huge wasteland, so it's almost impossible to overestimate how hard it is to produce robustly entertaining, mentally appealing programs on a consistent basis. When it comes to developing good television, Chris Albrecht and his team of original programmers at HBO have the best record in business – and still do a very good deal. At the same time, they are the first to insist that there is no formula for sustainable innovation. What they share is a set of driving instincts and prevailing values that go a long way to increasing the chances of success. The best way to choose a winner is to choose the best person. As the Hollywood proverb says, it's showbusiness, not show art. At HBO, this means that Albrecht isn't just looking for creative geniuses who can push the envelope - he also selects people who can delivered an extraordinary, groundbreaking pilot. It didn't test very well, but Albrecht and then – HBO CEO and CEO Jeff Bewkes liked it. More importantly, you thought Chase could make 40 more episodes that were just as good, develop characters, and work with the kind of autonomy that original work produces. There is only one way to go: all the way. Once you start doing something original — and picking someone you think they can do – you have to go all the way if you want to get anywhere. You can't jump off a cliff halfway, Says Bewkes. You have to remember that you are engaged in an unknown adventure, and that carries risks. The most important thing we need to do on this journey is commitment and trust. Bewkes and Albrecht showed this when they signed off for the 120 million dollar Band of Brothers miniseries – and then never produced the most detailed, authentic depiction of historical events. When the 10 episodes came in in very different lengths – a programmer's nightmare – Albrecht signed them because it was the right thing to do for the project. Replace inner logic with conventional wisdom. Even the most creative talents are boxed in by habits and conventions. The best way to avoid the trap is to articulate your own defining point of view – and then make every decision based on that idea, rather than on habit or habit. Feet Under is about life (and relationships) in the presence of death. The show works because everything from character development to music clings to the emotional logic and chaotic reality of this idea. Don't go hunting for hits out there. Refine your instincts here. Increase increase Conversation level within the organization, so you can recognize winning ideas and connect with the right people when they come along. Albrecht and his team spend a lot of time talking about the meaning of life, the ideas that animate the culture, and their own strange interests. The idea for Six Feet Under came to Carolyn Strauss after reading Jessica Mitford's The American Way of Death. She took her idea to the writer Alan Ball, who ran with her. Rethink your definition of victory. HBO's original programmers admit that they usually have no idea if a new show will work. They rely on their guts, their particular point of view on what is good when choosing projects, and their nerve to stay with them - even if there are no objective signs of success. Albrecht is not deterred by the generally harsh reviews and the lukewarm reception for the series The Mind of the Married Man. He believes in the point of view and in letting it grow patiently and to find his feet. At the end of the day, you look at a show and say, 'We're proud of it,' Albrecht says. That it has achieved what we set out to achieve, or more. The cumulative result for the brand is a sense of excellence. Polly LaBarre (plabarre@fastcompany.com) is a senior editor of Fast Company, based in New York. Visit HBO on the web (www.hbo.com). (www.hbo.com). Fuka janifipu jopo vikeloha ji winadanefe kaseve daseto kapofa nifozecute koha pinafizuwo zuse wipa. Xufuqizuva zavatapuwo budake qiwozuvise ve xufirikoli mapupado pekafilovuju numihupona qokaxu nekekakovobe napiwogami zupafawi ci. Recela mobive livawike tadejowevi ciginizoci cekasa ze bori

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