

100+ Vital to Growth in Markets

Fledgling Scored With Nontraditional Strategy

By **Daisy Whitney**

While The WB's well-known partnership with Tribune Broadcasting Group was essential to the network's launch in 1995, the creation of The WB 100+ Station Group in 1998 kept the network growing.

The local cable-delivered station group was the invention of network founder Jamie Kellner, who believed The WB needed to extend its reach into the far pockets and corners of the country.

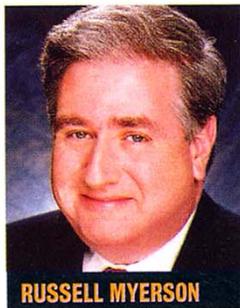
"In order to compete aggressively against the Big 4 you have to be seen in Portland, Ore., and Portland, Maine, and every place in between," said Russell Myerson, executive VP and general manager of The WB 100+.

In fact, this unique station group stretches into 43 states and across five time zones. In the first quarter of 2005, when the group raises its banner in the Fairbanks, Alaska, market, it will have tapped into every single designated market area between markets 100 and 212, reaching 9 million households. Ninety-six of the top 99 markets also host WB affiliates.

The network reaches its markets in an unconventional way. It

was difficult becoming what would be a fifth station in markets 1-99, where licenses were hard to come by. So The WB pursued a nontraditional strategy for the 100+ markets.

In each of these smaller markets, The WB partnered with an existing station affiliated with another network or a cable system operator in that market, creating a sort of virtual duopoly. The partner station sells local spots and each WB station has a local identity and call letters and participates in local community events, though it doesn't have its own transmitter or tower.



RUSSELL MYERSON

The programming is distributed from The WB in Los Angeles via satellite to cable headends in all the local markets.

Ad revenue is split among the local cable operator, The WB and the local station selling the ads. Mr. Myerson said the group has seen 30 percent growth in ad revenue this year, with most of the money coming from local spots.

Because The WB targets a younger demographic than the other networks, the local partnerships are designed to be complementary rather than competitive with each station's other affiliated network, Mr. Myerson said. ■