



Exclusive: Belo Adds ABC's Live Well Network

The first non-ABC owned stations are on board with Live Well Network, as five major-market Belo outlets will launch the digital channel Nov. 8. WFAA Dallas, KMOV St. Louis, WWL New Orleans, WVEC Hampton-Norfolk and WCNC Charlotte represent the Live Well debutants.

The ABC-owned stations launched Live Well HD in the spring of 2009. The network has dropped the "HD" from the name, as not all the Belo stations will air the channel in high def, though the ABC-owned stations will continue to.

"Given the enthusiastic response Live Well Network has received from TV viewers, Web users and advertisers in all 10 of our local markets over the past 18 months, the time is right to begin rolling out Live Well Network nationwide," said ABC Owned Television Stations Group President Rebecca Campbell. "We're especially pleased to have these five outstanding Belo stations as our first affiliate partners, given the commitment we all share to provide compelling original TV and Web content for today's fast-emerging digital platforms."

Belo Senior VP/Media Operations Kathy Clements said the Belo stations are eager to air ABC's unique content on their digital tiers. "We look forward to offering our viewers fresh programming on our digital channels focused on lifestyle, home and health topics," she said, "and we are excited to work closely with the ABC Owned Television Stations Group to cultivate this opportunity."

The ABC-owned group is in talks with other broadcasters about airing the health and lifestyle channel too. "We're having very fruitful conversations with a lot of groups," says WLS Chicago President/General Manager Emily Barr. "We've gotten a very favorable reaction."

ABC has also relaunched the Live Well website, LiveWellNetwork.com, overseen by the group's executive vice president of digital media, Bill Burton, and named WCVB Boston Executive Producer Peggy Allen the channel's VP of programming. She starts October 18. "We needed someone with the experience and background to take it to the next level," says Burton.

Seven of the 10 ABC O&Os produce shows for the network. The Belo stations will not initially produce programs for Live Well. ABC would not share the financial details of the arrangement, but said it's a "low cost of entry" for partner stations.

Six shows are debuting this fall, bringing the Live Well total to 18. The newcomers include KABC Los Angeles-produced *Custom Fit*, a healthy-living program, and the fix-it program *Here's How, Right Now*, from WLS. The Live Well braintrust says station staffers are invigorated by the opportunity to create and executive new programs. "It's what our stations do best," said Campbell, who was named group president in May.

The channel is not Nielsen-rated. Besides being available on stations' digital tiers, Live Well can be viewed over the air. Advertisers include General Motors, Verizon and AT&T.

The ABC principals say Live Well is ready to live large after 18 months on the air. "We're enormously proud that we were able to launch and grow Live Well Network in a very bad year economy-wise," says Barr, "and see it develop into something financially viable and very satisfying for viewers and successful for advertisers. It's been a triple win."