

## Product Integration

---

While product placement has existed for decades in the United States, we have recently seen considerable growth in product integration. This blurring of the line between content and commerce has prompted concern in the talent community.

- **Product placement:** The use of real commercial products as props on TV and movie sets.
- **Product integration:** The practice of weaving commercial products into the plot of an entertainment program, making the *product* a *part* of the storyline.

### Product Integration Facts:

- According to Nielsen Media Research, in 2006 **audio-visual placements** increased approximately 17% to **4,608 integrations** in network primetime television from the previous year.
- Global product placement (including integrations) jumped 42% from 2004 to 2005 to reach \$2.21 billion.<sup>1</sup>
- The U.S. represents by far the largest market for product placements and integrations. With **\$1.5 billion in paid placements and integrations**, it constitutes 68% of the global market.<sup>2</sup>
- Product integration has even crossed over to local news broadcasts in the United States. Over a ten-month period, Video News Releases (pre-packaged "news" segments) were created by corporations and distributed to TV news outlets, who then broadcast these fabricated reports to 52.7 percent of the U.S. population.<sup>3</sup>

As the practice of product integration grows more prevalent in scripted programming, we believe it is necessary to protect consumer rights and secure writers creative rights in the product integration process by:

- **Early and Ongoing Consultation**
  - Given that writers are responsible for the implementation of integrations and the continued success of the program, writers should be consulted about potential integrations for their show and give approval in order for an integration to be included in the story.
- **Integrity of Story Content**
  - Concerned that content can be overrun by product integration, writers should have the right to refuse an integration if they determine it will harm the integrity of the story. Writers should have the authority to determine the prevalence and prominence of a product that is integrated into a program.

---

<sup>1</sup> PQ Media. "Global Product Placement Forecast 2006." August 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Farsetta, Diane and Daniel Price, "Fake TV News: Widespread and Undisclosed," Center for Media and Democracy, 4-2006.

- **Consumer Rights**

- **Disclosure:** To ensure that consumers know they are being advertised to, the industry should adopt specific language that will adequately disclose product integrations and ensure that disclosure is legible and held on the screen long enough for viewers to read.
- **Limitations:** The industry should explicitly ban product integration in news programs and children's programming.