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By: Luca Oprea, Video news editor

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[CSI's Creator/Producer in a Bid for Attention](#)

At Nab 2008, Anthony Zuiker talks about the new challenges of CSI

CSI is a franchise. With a world-wide audience of 2 billion people and a hunger for everything CSI, the brand has given birth to computer games, comics, novels, websites, toys, a magazine, and even an exhibition at Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry. But as the show's creator, Anthony Zuiker, is finding out, his franchise may not be running the risk of over saturating the market with CSI products anytime soon. During a conference at the NAB 2008 show, he suggested that the public has an unprecedented need for highly varied CSI-related content, and if that need is not fulfilled, it may start looking elsewhere for entertainment. "I lost 8 million viewers on our premiere last season. Where are they? They're on the Web," Zuiker stated. "People are consuming more and more content on the Web." Eight million may seem like a small number when compared to the global audience, but it's a lot by US television standards, so much so that Zuiker calls it "hemorrhaging viewers". And who does he blame it on? "The web has abducted a lot of our viewers". And his best assumption about his viewers' whereabouts involves "consuming content on social portals." In a recent episode of CSI, Zuiker made the choice to cast nine goth girls from a social/scene portal called 'sucidegirls.com'. Without even mentioning its web address on the show, membership and traffic for the site were up by 60% for 8 hours afterwards. That reinforced his conviction that there is a strong connection between the traditional medium of television and the web/mobile experience, and that it is a connection that he must take advantage of in order to drive viewers back to the small screen. "If you don't take care of television ... the laptop will dominate." So Zuiker came up with a concept he calls Cross Blending Storytelling. "The days of just watching a show from 9-10 (p.m.) are over." Zuiker emphasizes the need to build upon the audience interest generated by CSI. A one hour slot on television is expensive and a show's scripts must keep the action focused on the main and secondary plot lines and the recurring characters. Much of the atmospheric locales and the one-off characters are left unexplored. But these similarly secondary details of the show can be expanded into content for the web - short films and interactive websites and games - creating an experience that is at the same time more immersive and more expansive. Television benefits from the psychological impact of knowing everyone is watching the same thing as you are, at the same time as you are. For the audience, this is relaxing, and it is exciting, and it is comforting. But while television, or its future equivalent, will always be the one-stop home of sleek, big-budget content, it can no longer afford to be over-protective of its programming. The value and star-factor of its content must be allowed to populate the web, and flow into the more intimate aspects of people's lives, where they can explore the world of their favorite shows at their own leisure."People like myself and my staff will be building story lines into the script -- launching new characters, launching new story lines, launching things you can enjoy beyond TV in one hour," he continues. "You have to make content specific to the device."