By Gena McCarthy

I'm not an artificially generated android, but apparently, I could play one on TV when I get excited by an idea.

I've been told, occasionally by my patient husband and often by tolerant colleagues, that when I hear something that sparks an internal creative reaction, they can see the binary code processing in front of my eyes and hear the actuators and gears whirring as if I was an automaton. (My husband sometimes adds cartoon SFX for emphasis.) They collectively call it my "Terminator Mode" – not in an aggro way, but because they know that the multiple paths of content creation, monetization, and IP exploitation are popping and exploding with potential in my brain.

When I ran unscripted divisions for networks, that thought process was always helpful. Now, as the head of my own production label, I have to sometimes turn that internal voice down, depending on the situation. But to be honest, I'd never want to turn it off – it's part of who I am. And I'm very happy to say that the skill set required to launch a start-up label is very similar to what's needed when you build a content platform: you just have to select which strand of your genetic code to deploy.

Let me explain. It's exciting to see how fluid the lines between buyer and seller can be, with talented people migrating from one side to the other seamlessly. Ideally, when executives share that genetic code – the collective experience of making decisions as both an unscripted producer and as a platform executive – there is greater empathy to brainstorm new business solutions that benefit everyone. Success on one side doesn't mean the annihilation of the other. If we tap into the right parts of our shared DNA, good things happen.

For me, I have to sometimes pull hard on my programming background reins ("Whoa Nellie, slow down!") when pitching. Who cares about all the spin-off potentials when the thing doesn't exist yet? Just make the sale, dude.

You never want to be that smug jerk who pitches a network exec and then lectures that exec about what you did when *you* sat in the buyer's chair. If you're listening to buyers when they articulate their needs and have done your research, then hopefully the concepts you're sharing are at least in their target zone – even if they're passes. Sometimes it's best to simply listen and learn. The biggest thing I wrestle with now as a seller is based on my ex-programmer DNA: I probably worry *too much* about whether the concepts we pitch will perform at a high level for buyers. I admit it's really hard to mute that part of my brain and experience, but I don't want to pitch people crap.

Our goal at Unconventional is to create franchises that will run a long time for our partners, and for us, I do tap into my network DNA to be really honest and thoughtful when we bring our ideas to market. We want long-term success for everyone, so trying to balance a quick sale with a content pitch built to last is part of our process. We want to build trust.

As a seller, once we get a greenlight, the key motivation is to make the first season as amazing as possible. So while it is really hard to mute that inner franchise voice – please, buyers, do forgive me for possibly sharing a spin-off idea or monetization thought prematurely – I'm now concentrating on growing the genetic strand that marks this side of the line now, and focusing on that first season order to make it stellar.

Gena McCarthy is the president and founder of Unconventional Entertainment, a part of Sony Pictures Television.