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## Can 'Project Runway' still make it work?

The reality TV show "Project Runway" moves to the Lifetime channel after a nasty court battle that freed it from NBC-Universal's Bravo channel. Bob Moon reports on whether the big price Lifetime is paying for the show is a winning strategy.



Mannequins wearing the designs of Leanne Marshall, Project Runway's Season 5 winner, are seen at an event for the 61st Primetime Emmy Awards in Los Angeles on July 25, 2009. (Charley Gallay/Getty Images)

TEXT OF STORY

**TESS VIGELAND:** Project Runway is hoping its hems are straight and stray threads snipped after a messy off-season move to the Lifetime channel. The reality show hit finally left Bravo after a nasty courtroom fight with the channel's parent company, NBC-Universal. It debuts its sixth season tonight, from Los Angeles instead of New York.

We asked our Senior Business Correspondent Bob Moon to perch on his stool and judge whether Lifetime's pricey takeover of the show is not only haute couture, but a winning strategy.

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**PROJECT RUNWAY AUDIO:** One of you will be named the winner, and one of you will be out. Let's start the show.

Lifetime reportedly is paying close to a million dollars an episode, compared to the \$600,000-per-show deal that Bravo started with. And at the University of Buffalo, pop culture expert Elayne Rapping says that makes this a big gamble, since it's much harder for a network to buy brand loyalty these days.

**ELAYNE RAPPING:** You know, in the old days, people would turn on NBC, and there would be a flow of programs, and they would just watch the whole night and know what they were watching. That isn't true anymore.

On the other hand, NBC-Universal chief Jeff Zucker testified during the court battle that Project Runway was "one of the most central programs" to his entire company.

That doesn't surprise Robert Thompson at Syracuse University's Center for Television and Popular Culture. He says a show like this can be make-or-break.

**ROBERT THOMPSON:** Look what South Park did for Comedy Central, look what Queer Eye for the Straight Guy did for Bravo. I mean, half the people didn't even know they had Bravo on their cable boxes until that show got so much attention that they found the show. And then they saw promos for other Bravo shows and all the rest of it.

Essentially, Thompson argues, Lifetime could use the show to sell its other programs, but it had better have good shows

lined up now. And given that this is Project Runway's sixth season, there's something else to worry about.

**THOMPSON:** The question is, is Lifetime getting Project Runway just at the time that we're reaching the end of the runway?

**PROJECT RUNWAY AUDIO:** In our Project Runway tradition, make it work!

In Los Angeles, I'm Bob Moon for Marketplace.

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