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Product placement is all the rage on broadcast and cable television. But not on Home Garden Television.

HGTV has drawn one of the strictest lines between editorial content and advertising in the TV business. There's no product placement — nothing Scripps Networks thinks will get in the way of the HGTV brand and its equity. It is virtually alone among its competitors — and doesn't mind a bit.

"We're very careful with this brand. People really respect this brand, they believe when they come to it that they want it to be worth their time. They don't want us to have any other motives than great takeaway," HGTV senior vp programming Michael Dingley says.

HGTV takes pride in its credibility with viewers. The network declines to trade its credibility for a product placement, and Scripps' research has found that not allowing that kind of in-show advertising actually makes the 30-second spots that surround the programming resonate better with viewers.

"What has made HGTV so strong is the relationship that these brands have with their audiences. After all, advertising trades on that relationship," says Steve Gigliotti, executive vp ad sales and emerging media at Scripps.

"You have to look at their heritage," says Ray Dundas, senior vp and group director of national broadcast at ad buyer Initiative Media. "Scripps Howard is a newspaper company, and there is a definite church-and-state line with all newspaper publishing groups that they have extended into their cable entrees."

Advertisers, who in an age of TiVo and other ad-zapping technologies have become enamored with product placement, say they respect HGTV's desire to keep its brand distinct.

"I don't think it really hurts them," says Bill Cella, chairman and CEO of New York-based ad buyer MAGNA Global, which has a long track record of product placement. "They've got a very strong brand. They've had exponential growth in 10 years, and skyrocketed in a very acceptable environment for advertisers."

HGTV says accepting money from one company means their rivals may end up being excluded. There is one exception to HGTV's strategy of no product placement — with its Dream Home giveaway, now in its ninth year, where a custom-built \$1 million home is up for grabs. (The 2005 Dream Home will be built in Lake Tyler, Texas.) So, instead of using product placement, HGTV has brought in sponsors, including this year's presenting sponsor: the GMC Division of General Motors. The advertisers get to help build the home and have their brands showcased, and those brands are clearly marked on air and online so that the viewers know exactly what's going on. Viewers love it too — there were 36 million entries in 2003.