

Programming



Net2TV Gets Print and Web on the Same Page

OTT company is partnering with venerable media brands to innovate digital television

By Daniel Holloway



Wall Street Journal, *Popular Science* and others. In June, the company announced a deal with Time Inc. to develop shows based on *Time*, *People*, *Southern Living*, *Cooking Light* and *Inside Golf*.

According to cofounder, president and CEO Tom Morgan, Net2TV “came out of the idea of building programming that looks and smells like linear television with dynamic ad insertion in the middle of it, and is on these new devices.” Morgan spoke with *B&C* programming and digital media editor Daniel Holloway about bringing digital content to the living room.

WHY THIS MATTERS

With more viewers engaging digital OTT services through their televisions, brands creating video content for the Web have a better chance to reach TV viewers.

When the magazine *Field & Stream* was first published in 1895, it consisted of repurposed articles taken from other publications. The series *Field & Stream* premiered 119 years later—on July 1 this year—turning short-form videos curated from the magazine’s website into a 30-minute television show on Net2TV’s Portico TV app.

The model for *Field & Stream* has been relied on by Net2TV since it launched Portico, a free, ad-supported over-the-top service, in 2012 with shows built out of content from *The*

How did you develop Portico’s model?

Since all the smart TVs have app stores, we had to build a single branded entry point, because they didn’t really have a programming guide like most multichannel services have in the cable industry. So we had to have one button, and the objective was to get that button as close to Netflix as we possibly could. We were never meant to be in the consumerfacing, compete-with-Hulu kind of model, but we had to just get our channels into an app store, because there was no programming guide.

Are there advantages to working with traditional media companies with roots in print?

They represent 180 million monthly readers, with known brands. You know what *Sports Illustrated Television* is going to be as soon as I say it. And you know what *People TV* looks like, because it's a known brand, and, therefore, we can lead with brand development. So, yeah, we intentionally went after known brands that had one thing in common—they had never seen a cable carriage contract in their lives. They're not encumbered. They're free to innovate.

What are your partners getting through you that they would have a harder time getting without you?

What every media company is looking for is the premium television budgets that heretofore had been only available to the broadcasting and cable networks. They want to reach into those premiums because the CPMs are far better than the commoditized digital space.

How do you make the content feel like a 30-minute television show rather than a collection of Web videos?

The best example that I'm personally most proud of is *This Week in Time*. There's a host that comes on and says, "Welcome

to *This Week in Time*. Let me tell you about the show that we've got for you today." The host actually goes through and talks about it, then sets up for the first lead-in. We go into the first lead-in segment. Then he says, "Now, coming up after the break..." We work really hard behind the curtain to make what's in front of the curtain look like linear, long-form television. Most of Silicon Valley, they put an algorithm together, they try to think of it as Pandora. For us, that may work in music, but it does not work in television. We believe that someone has to pace it, look at it and build a show.

With deals like Disney-Maker Studios, do you foresee more short-form content being turned into long-form content to be consumed in a lean-back way?

Absolutely. I think that's where Kevin Mayer, who did the Maker deal at Disney, was headed. I would also point out people like Awesomeness, which DreamWorks bought. Maker, Awesomeness, a variety of the [multichannel networks] are where the new talent and the new brands percolate up. I liken this to September 7, 1979, the first broadcast of two softball league championship playoffs on this fledgling new network called ESPN. Or 1981 with the first broadcast of MTV—the same kind of era.