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Hacking TV

Can 'building cool stuff' solve
TV's problems?

Archive goes e-

How to capitalise on your archive
in new media markets



Richard Kastelein is publisher of **Appmarket.tv** online, a partner at Agora Media Innovation and has lectured on the future of TV around the world. Now he is bringing hacking to the TV community – his first TV Hackfest saw creatives, developers, coders, and entrepreneurs "build cool stuff". Here is his report

While all current trends indicate that pay-TV and advertising spend are still vital components of the media marketplace, TV viewership does face a number of challenges, including fragmentation, technology-enabled time shifting, and the disruption of media stacking or mobile/tablet multitasking.

Developments in technology are impacting TV advertising effectiveness and the dramatic rise of connected mobile devices is leading to an increasingly distracted use of TV.

Digital technology has also accelerated ad avoidance through time shifting and on-demand viewing, and has enabled a significant amount of fragmentation due to sheer volume of content and niche. All these developments work together to degrade the value of TV ads and are deeply affecting the pay-TV industry as scarcity is removed due to IP delivered content.

HACKING FOR INNOVATION

Welcome to the new world of TV. These are problems that need solving. They need to be hacked. Hacking for Good? Hacking for Innovation? Yes, it's not hacking the Pentagon or MI6... On the contrary - creatives, developers, coders, and entrepreneurs get together, get creative and get to build cool stuff - that's what a hackathon is all about.

Hackathons typically start with one or more presentations about the event, as well as about the specific subject, if any. Then participants suggest ideas and form teams, based on individual interests and skills. Then the main work of the hackathon begins, which can last anywhere from several hours to several days. For hackathons that last 24 hours or longer, especially competitive ones, eating is often informal, with participants mainly surviving on food like pizza and energy drinks. Sometimes sleeping is informal as well, with participants sleeping on-site in sleeping bags.

Popularised in the USA, hackathons have become

HACKING TV

very popular in the tech sector – mainly around the web and mainly due to the enormous success that Apple, Facebook and Google have had with opening up their eco-systems to third party developers. And it's now come to the TV community. And we call it a TV HackFest.

DEVELOPERS ON SPEC

Who does not want a developer community like Apple, Facebook and Google? Each company basically has 50,000 developers on spec, driving innovation at the speed of light. Interestingly enough, many in TV don't, as the walls are still high and tight intellectual property ownership is the core of the business. But some forward thinking broadcasters are opening up their eco-systems with Application Programme Interfaces (APIs) – such as ESPN and Univision who work with the Mashery (<http://www.mashery.com>), as do companies like ROVI and The Guardian.

TV HackFests help open up ideas and innovation with not only the developer community but also the creative community as we bring them together and ignite new start-ups and innovation in a 24-48 hour brainstorming session which can include up to 150 people and scores of APIs and Software Development Kits (SDK) that are being made available more and more – even in the TV industry. We give them the APIs, SDKs and data and challenge them to code/design/engineer/make and break for a day, building their own prototype solutions or ideas.

At the end of each HackFest selected teams give a short presentation of their work to the group of fellow developers, sponsors, judges and the press. And then prizes are given during a post-session party.

When we ran the first TV HackFest in London in October 2012 the objectives were:

- To build examples of future video entertainment distribution formats, integrated with social media, gaming, interactivity etc;

- To show how future video entertainment could be delivered within an interactive multi-screen environment;
- To build commercially viable business models for the distribution and delivery of these future video entertainment formats.

TASKS

The recommended tasks included things like:

"...to develop a commercially viable video entertainment service (or app) that combines linear video, VoD (video on demand), social media, gaming, discovery and dissemination, personalization, new forms of advertising, community, tCommerce, multiplatform engagement and involves multiple screens, TVs, tablet PCs, PCs, games consoles, smartphones etc."

"...build a viable second screen advertising concept or platform by taking advantage of the rapidly growing two-screen multitasking behaviour among viewers. Consumer adoption of both mobile online content and mobile e-commerce provide an important opportunity to bring real-time interactivity to content."

Four key points were stressed at the event:

- Synchronization of the television and advertising content with a second screen device
- Incentives to engage on the second screen through awards
- Organized social activity around the engagement experience
- An accurate measurement and post-engagement tracking and reporting system

THE WINNERS WERE

Over 100 APIs and SDKs were offered from technology companies as well as content (briefs) from production companies, brands and agencies which allowed for competitors to create new "transmedia" experiences around Social TV, Playalong TV, Search and Discovery, Smart TV, Online Gaming and other Multiplatform and Multiscreen Engagement

Who does not want a developer community like Apple, Facebook, Google?



innovation.

And there were four overall categories for winners. Winners received cash/product prizes from sponsors and were given the opportunity to show their work to London-based VCs operating in the media technology space, and the broadcasting community worldwide.

The awards categories and winners at TV Hackfest 2012 were:

- Best commercial product concept - So Don't Tell Me
- Best design (tech/creative) - Tank Top TV
- Most Innovative - We make Awesome sh.it
- Overall Hackfest Champ - So Don't Tell Me

So Don't Tell Me was created by a team from ITV to help stop spoilers for content on Facebook – allowing automatic blocking of posts that give away show details. Tank Top TV created a second screen companion app that provided trailers to movies you are watching and We Make Awesome Sh.it came through with a number of hacks including using brain power to control TV and building a framework to create synchronous second screen engagement in real time.

ADVANCED ADVERTISING

In 2013, we have plans in place to run TV HackFests in San Francisco and London as part of www.apps-world.net and talks are ongoing to bring the concept to Amsterdam, Rome, Berlin and Paris.

In an analysis of the potential for the Advanced Advertising market, Merrill Lynch analyst Jessica Reif Cohen said in September 2010: "Advanced Advertising turns your TV from a one-way medium into a dialogue — in which you and your television talk to each other. This is a \$14 billion business by 2015."

Are you ready for the advanced advertising market? ■

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