

# we write about the things we build and the things we consume



written by Chris Jackson on 31 March 2011 in ideas, interlinking

## what tv can learn from radioplayer

Radioplayer launched today in the UK. It's just a first step, but already the UK radio industry has put in place an excellent foundation for the future. They have built:

1. A simple 'acceptance mark' brand that promises easy access to good radio
2. A handful of common technical standards
3. Some tiny shared infrastructure, mainly around ensuring unified search

I've written before that this seems the best way to run cross-industry initiatives. It's what Visa has done for years, and it works well for them. So, here's a plan for a TV broadcaster, in the era of TVs with network sockets in the back:

## things to do with other broadcasters

1. Form a likeminded group of broadcasters that is big enough to be of interest to major TV manufacturers. That means not just one European country, because alone you represent less than 15% of the global market
2. Define a simple standard for sharing live and on-demand content to TVs via the Internet. Technically, maybe: a profile of an MRSS feed or something simple like that, and a profile of H264, with some simple measures to limit access only to manufacturers who agree with your terms
3. Call each feed a channel. People seem to like those, and they use them for an average of at least three hours per day
4. But allow people to skip back and sometimes forward to watch shows on-demand
5. Include ads and trailers in feeds, as well as programmes
6. Make a simple 'acceptance mark' brand which says 'you can get high-quality TV over the Internet on this TV'
- 7.

Strike simple agreements with TV manufacturers that say 'you can use our brand if you stick to our rules'

## some rules for tv manufacturers

1. By default show all channels, in popularity order, as specified by the central group (unless the viewer says otherwise, of course)
2. Don't mess with our feeds—display them to the user as we sent them to you
3. Present a simple interface that allows skipping channels, and also skipping between on-demand programmes. You know, like pretty much every digital TV interface worldwide
4. If we say 'don't skip this' then don't skip this. People have to watch thru the ads if we say so. Sorry, but this is where the money comes from. If they don't like it, they can watch another channel
5. When you request feeds and programmes send a unique ID of the TV. The ethernet **MAC address** would be enough. Maybe: a mechanism to optionally send per-person IDs, too
6. Support some kind of simple "syncing protocol" for talking to devices on the local network, so we can do clever things on laptops, mobile phones, specialised remote controls

## some things to do on your own, as a broadcaster

1. Start logging all the data properly, linking viewing back to the device it was viewed on
2. Personalise the feeds, probably using the data from #1. I don't watch your lifestyle programmes. Maybe I should get the last episode of that documentary at 7pm? Regardless of my preferences, I should probably get that big live event at 9pm though. Personalising adverts is an obvious possibility
3. Consider how ads (and trailers/promotions) should work. Are they part of shows, or are they separate unskippable blocks. There's a spectrum of options, and distinct pros and cons for advertisers and for viewers
- 4.

Build a 2-screen strategy, using the "syncing protocol". This is probably a big deal for advertisers, and for delivering engagement with your content

With sufficient will, this plan would create a better environment for viewers, broadcasters, TV manufacturers and advertisers:

- Viewers get a simple route into on-demand content, and seamless helpful personalisation
- Broadcasters get direct access to user data, and a chance to personalise for better engagement, and more effective ad campaigns
- TV manufacturers have a very attractive, simple, understandable feature to lead sales of new units
- Advertisers get much more control over their campaigns

It needs a tiny (~5-10 person) central team, with a very limited remit. That said, what aspects of this have I not considered?