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# MediaTechnology FUTURES

A WEEKLY BRIEF ABOUT TECHNOLOGY'S IMPACT ON MEDIA

Look, Ma, It's Digital!

by Lydia Loizides, Wednesday, May 24, 2006

**COMING OUT OF THE UPFRONTS**, one thing was clear: digital is playing a bigger role in trying to capture the interest and dollars of advertisers. Streaming full-length shows, playing games, sneak-peaks and communications forums for fans to interact with the content--it's all there. And you can advertise, too! You would think we are on the brink of something spectacular, something revolutionary, something that has never been done before. But please, don't make me open the "technology-meets content drawer of shame" to refresh your memory. Trust me when I tell you, we have been down this road before. The only difference is, this time we have critical mass. And by that I mean there is enough of a base--whether that is a platform, an audience, content, or what have you--to sustain an interest in and/or justify the investment.

What concerns me, though, is this: what happens next? With everyone, and I mean everyone, on the broadband, podcast and blog bandwagon, where is the next breakthrough touch-point? Which personal media technology will capture the next-generation user? Where should we be investing? How should we be looking at the future and not merely focusing on the manifestation of technology in its present incarnation?

**Maybe we should take our cues from companies like QuickPlay Media. QuickPlay has developed the QuickPlayer for BlackBerry, a streaming technology to deliver services like audiocasts from various media outlets, including international news, business, finance, and sports. The company claims that the experience will include a personalized audio service with enhanced visuals. What is interesting about this is: one, it is relevant content to the platform. I will make the assumption that the majority of BlackBerry users are business users, so making the content relevant to the platform, hence the user, is a refreshing change. Two, because we are talking about mainly business users, the service can be viewed as a business requirement and ultimately a business expense (don't discount the importance of this--WSJ.com was built on the ability of being able to expense the subscription). And, finally, it has the potential of tapping into a "high-value" target for advertisers in an old-media format they understand--radio.**



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Now, ultimately, the question becomes whether or not the service is valuable to the user. To be able to get the user to engage with the content is one thing; for the user to find it valuable enough to pay for, either through a subscription or by watching advertisements, is another matter. And this brings me back to my original question of what happens next? May I propose the answer? Services--relevant, targeted, valuable services that will drive user engagement. And that doesn't mean distributing video and audio through every distribution channel just because you can. It means creating services that answer a need, tap into a desire, create a relationship between the user and the content, as facilitated by the appropriate technology. It is not enough to create me-too services anymore. The race is on to see who can do it better, faster and with measurable results.

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