

iWay Newsletter

Perspectives on Interactive TV



A World of Possibility: Travel Channel's iTV Itinerary

Adam Sutherland, Vice President of Strategy and Business Development, Travel Channel

The Travel Channel's interactive TV strategist **Adam Sutherland** sees new possibility emerging in the iTV space as the cable industry rallies around common frameworks for presenting enhanced TV content. With a schedule of programs that seem well-suited for viewer participation and commentary, Travel Channel is working now on its first trial deployment with former parent Cox Communications. Here's how Sutherland, vice president of strategy and business development, sees the landscape developing.

What's driving your interest today in the iTV space?

One, obviously, there seems to be a lot of interesting stuff we could do that we're currently not. And a second reason or

motivation is that our president is from London. He's very keen on us getting in on the platform as early as possible, knowing what goes on in the U.K. and some of the success they've had there.

What makes enhanced TV potentially a fit for Travel Channel?

The things you see Bravo doing with polling and quizzes, for example. There are a few of our shows that lend themselves to that.

From the Editor

Thanks to new technology specifications and a renaissance of creative development, a new era of interactive television on cable has officially begun. In this premier issue of iWay, the itaas online newsletter that covers creative and business issues behind iTV, five executives who are deeply involved in the sector share opinions and ideas about what's now and what's next.

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There's also a lot of opportunity for us to work with tourism boards. There's sort of the fulfillment angle – "Press green for a package on tours to Vegas."

Other applications?

Say you're watching a show on the Queen Elizabeth II cruise ship. You click here for a virtual tour of the QE II, and then you can go in and telescope for more background. So you can say, "Click here for a map of Barcelona." And when you click there the map comes up, and maybe what's highlighted are all the places that (Travel Channel host) Sam Brown went in Barcelona. It's going from a linear experience to a non-linear, where you watch a clip on the Gaudi Museum that was part of the show, but you watch it as a part of a map experience as opposed to a 30-minute show.

How do new standards like EBIF support your vision?

We do know and hear, from (cable advertising initiative) Canoe and other things going on, that where before there were maybe 15 different ways to do this, we'll be consolidating down to two or three, and in the long term to one. So where it was prohibitive before, because there were just so many things that you have to cover, we're getting to a point where it makes sense to put in the extra effort, because you only need to talk to two people, instead of 10.

When will you start?

With Cox as our partner and our parent, they have about 1 million people in their interactive footprint at this point. So that's a great place to test it. It's part of the family, and we can all learn together. And when we have some data, hopefully make that part of our upfront presentation to the advertising community next April, and say, 'Hey guys, this is real, and we did it...and we can do it for you too.'

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What might inspire a broader rollout?

Our approach is going to be, a smallish investment in a test, and then the impetus to pull the trigger will be driven by the commercial viability of it. So it will be a Disney or an American Express saying absolutely they want to do this, and they'll pay the price we're asking, so that we can do it and make the margin that we need. We don't see any reason to be necessarily the pioneers in this space. We can be the fast followers and be happy with that.



When we convince the advertisers and they say they're going to pay, we will release the hounds.

Final question: What makes interactive content worth the investment?

We want to make it easy for people to consume as much of our content as possible. If somebody would prefer to watch in their living room on a TV screen, let them do that. If they'd prefer to have a laptop open while they're watching, let them do that. It's not for us to decide. We'd like to be able to say, "You can do it however you'd like, and here it is."



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