

# iWay Newsletter

## Perspectives on Interactive TV



### Making iTV (really) work

*Greg Thomson, Senior Vice President of Product Management and Business Development, TVWorks*

*In the modern interactive television marketplace, **Greg Thomson** has just about seen (or done) it all. The former Liberate Technologies executive is senior vice president of product management and business development for the TVWorks Applications Division, the joint venture between Comcast and Cox Communications that's devoted to developing interactive TV platforms and services.*

*In May 2008 TVWorks and itaas announced an agreement that enables itaas to support developers creating applications for the TVWorks platforms. Here, Thomson and itaas president and CEO **Vibha Rustagi** talk about what's in the works from TVWorks – and how itaas is supporting the cause.*

#### **What's the elevator pitch for TVWorks?**

Thomson: Simply put, we enable new

experiences and business models on TV. We develop platforms and applications across all set-top box types, covering both tru2way and ETV. We also support the developer community by providing tools and support to developers so they can build apps for Cox, Comcast and other MSO systems.

#### **What's an example of an application you've developed that's getting deployed?**

Thomson: One of the leading apps is Caller ID to the television, something we've deployed with both Comcast and Cox. It represents cable's ability to reinforce the bundle, and since we're physically connecting the phone service with the TV, it adds

### 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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muscle to the marketing. It's one of those little things that people just love.

### **Why do common platforms and specifications matter to developers?**

Thomson: A national platform for developers is essential to unlocking the flow of applications and thus the business opportunities. And so we've been driving towards technology that the cable operators can deploy on their legacy and tru2way set tops that gives us that national platform - the footprint for developers so they can deliver valuable services to all those TV subscribers.

Rustagi: Build once, deploy to many is the core of most business models, especially in new young verticals. That's certainly true for the Canoe project and it's the same for app developers. Creative developers need ubiquitous deployment standards to ensure an interactive television application can reach enough eyeballs to support a financial model. You need the assurance that you can reach 10's of millions of homes, not a couple thousand homes. This is the beauty of the TVWorks ETV platform; you know right away that technically you are good to go for a majority of the MSOs. Our support of the ETV/ tru2way platform can accelerate the creative process.

### **How close are we to that dream of a single platform?**

Thomson: I think we are finally at the beginning. The technology

itself, the platform level technology itself, is finally feeling solid and seeing the light of day. And once that happens, and once the MSOs get comfortable with operating that technology in their headends, then you'll see through next year that it's really going to be widely distributed and widely deployed. And that's the beginning of an environment where whether it's a tru2way box or an ETV box, developers can start building and deploying things. And that's actually what creates the business model.

*“A national platform for developers is essential to unlocking the flow of applications and thus the business opportunities.”*

Rustagi: We are seeing some really serious numbers. At the CTAM panel Mark Hess said that by end of 2009 Comcast will have over 10mil EBIF boxes, and Time Warner said they will have EBIF in all their digital boxes next year. These numbers make it very exciting!

### **What message would you share with application developers today?**

Thomson: We all understand it's hard, and we want to make it easy. That's why we're here and why we're doing things like setting up itaas to provide a developer program. It really helps developers. People can go to itaas and get a



picture of what it takes to develop on Comcast and Time Warner, and that's a huge amount of the subscriber base. It's not quite time yet to throw a toolkit onto an open Internet site and say 'go at it,' but that's where we're headed.

Rustagi: We are so close to having a national footprint in place; it's a very exciting time to start creating those iTV applications that were just ideas before. It's time to leverage or build relationships with companies that really understand the needs of service providers and technology partners so that you can build it right the first time. As a community committed to iTV, we can facilitate the process of moving the iTV world from one of promises to one of reality.



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