

# iWay Newsletter

Perspectives on Interactive TV



## Playing Around with EBIF

*Sangita Verma, Founder and CEO, Tag Networks*

*Sangita Verma thinks television could use a little more play time. Actually, she thinks it could use a lot more play time. As the founder and CEO of Tag Networks, the video game industry veteran has raised more than \$20 million from private equity investors to pursue her vision of a new sort of television network – one that's all about playing games. Verma talked to iWay about the serious business of video games over an iTV platform.*

### **What's the vision behind aligning casual video games and television?**

Everybody from about the age of 35 on down has grown up with games as part of their media mix. Yet the No. 1 programming device in people's homes is still their TV. And TV does not offer a compelling games experience. That was really the vision in starting up Tag Networks. We want to create the next big television network. We

think the programming is games because currently it's just not being addressed in a compelling way on TV today.

### **Where does your business stand today?**

So far, so good. We've had some great response to our product. In the markets we're deployed, consumers have loved it, have played, and have played a lot. And I think the operators like what we're doing as well. The ability to have differentiated

## 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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programming that keeps the subscribers at the TV longer works well with operators. And the other things we've built in – the ability to create community, to go across TV, Internet and wireless platforms, and to also do targeted dynamic advertising, kind of mirrors the MSOs' own initiatives.

### **How have you dealt with the peculiarities of making content for an interactive cable platform?**

One of the things we discovered – and our vision has always been to create the best consumer experience possible and create a mass-market offering where the content looks exactly the same everywhere – was that in the cable industry you really have limitations set by the set-top boxes. And so we've built a system that plugs into the two-way VOD cable infrastructure, and delivers our games as an MPEG stream. But with all those boxes you still needed to have a small client. And that was like all of a sudden hitting a wall. Those boxes are already packed with so many things. You've got a tiny little client that has to go in, but you have no ability to actually get it in.

### **How does EBIF help?**

What we're really excited about is that the application structure of EBIF works really well with Tag's thin client style. So the ability to work with EBIF to deliver the client to the box, where it doesn't always have to stay there, makes a lot of sense. The other beauty of that client in the way that Tag in

particular uses it is that we're now able to bring the power of much more powerful servers to a set-top box. You're not limited just by the set-top box any longer. You're using EBIF, and in the future tru2way, as a way to bring more power to that set-top box.

### **How has itaas contributed to your work?**

itaas has been a fantastic partner for a number of years. They have actually done quite a bit of our development work on the client side. They've created (Scientific-

“You're not limited just by the set-top box any longer. You're using EBIF...”

Atlanta) clients for us, they've done a back-end integration for us, and now we're talking about the EBIF client as well.

### **What makes itaas stand out?**

Because they've worked on so many different projects and have such a deep understanding, they come up with creative solutions. And so when you have a project that's a little out of the box, which frankly Tag in an EBIF client is, they're really good at saying, 'Well, what if we do it this way?' So their expertise is being able to apply things that someone else might not traditionally think of.

### **What's your hope for Tag over the next two years?**



## TV AND GAMES

I'm hoping in two years that Tag is a much more well-known entity, that it's deployed widely enough so that consumers know us, and that you turn on your TV and Tag is there. That really is the goal, and I think EBIF is going to help us get there.

### **Final question. Personal preference: Bejeweled or Tetris?**

Personally, I like Bejeweled. I say that because I love Tetris, but I'm not a very good player. It's a great game; I just can't play it very well.



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