

PBS Digital: Interactive and Businesses Updates Round Robin Meetings, October – November 2006

Station Broadband Video Player:

This fall and winter, PBS Interactive will be working with stations, producers, and other departments within PBS to develop and launch a broadband video player for stations to customize and implement on their local Web sites. PBS is developing the player in response to station requests for a turnkey, customizable solution that can significantly boost the station's ability to offer broadband video—including NPS content—as part of stations' evolution towards expanded multi-platform service.

NPS producers, too, have been interested in an expanded relationship with local station Web sites, and some (most notably Frontline) have been experimenting with broadband players particular to their individual program or series. PBS is seeking to work with a broad range of producers to develop *one consistent* solution for stations, so that station Web staffers won't have to familiarize themselves with dozens of different players tied to individual programs or series.

We're beginning with a needs assessment this fall, where we'll listen to stations and producers and gather their requirements for the broadband player. Following that needs assessment, we'll determine what we can build and launch in early 2007; the target launch date is early February, but it will depend upon what we learn during the needs assessment work this fall. There may be elements of the player that will roll in as a "phase 2" improvement later in the spring.

If your station is interested in offering broadband video on your site and you'd like to be part of our needs assessment and requirements gathering work, please contact Mary Kadera at mkadera@pbs.org.

PBS.org Redesign:

PBS Interactive is overhauling the homepage and "shell" pages of the PBS.org Web site this year, with a plan to relaunch in early 2007 (target is March). The overall goals driving the redesign of PBS.org include:

- Develop more effective promotion for both broadcast and Web (new media) content.
- Increase the number and quality of opportunities for local station promotion and content.
- Improve the usability of key site functionality.
- Introduce online sponsorship avails on the homepage and shell pages of the PBS.org site (Note: a "shell" page is any page, like "Search" or "About PBS," that is not directly associated with a particular program property.)

Over the summer and fall, PBS has developed wireframes and initial design concepts that it has shared with a group of key stakeholders for feedback. Those stakeholders have included national producers, local station representatives, and others within PBS (Businesses, Media Relations, Development, Brand Management, etc.). Special thanks to our station and producer advisors, who have included staff from CET, Detroit Public TV, KCET, KQED, KVIE, KWSU, OPB, Iowa Public Television, The Online NewsHour, P.O.V., WGBH, and Thirteen/WNET.

Of special interest to local stations: planned improvements to the top-level pages of PBS.org that will provide additional incentives for users to localize the site, and additional exposure for local station content and promotions. Among the things we're planning:

- Additional flexibility in the "Support" area, to include the opportunity for multiple links generated by the local station ("volunteer," "pledge" etc.) and also images (e.g., membership card)
- A space in the center of the homepage, within the feature area, for local stations to promote local content, events, etc. to users from their area
- The opportunity for stations to feature local content in the dominant "content showcase" feature spot in the middle of the page

- The opportunity for stations to develop special tune-in features for local productions, to be inserted into the TV tune-in area of the homepage (text plus images)

If you have questions about the PBS.org redesign, please contact Dan Wills (dswillis@pbs.org) or Mary Kadera (mkadera@pbs.org).

PBS New Media Newsletter

Across the system, we're trying to keep up with the dizzying developments in new media and the proliferation of digital content and distribution mechanisms. (Consider that it was only one year ago that Apple launched its video iPod... and YouTube did not yet exist!)

To increase awareness of the industry developments in new media, and to ensure good communication about PBS's plans and strategies in the new media space, PBS will be launching a monthly new media e-mail newsletter for stations in December. Many of you are familiar with our monthly "Education News" newsletter, and this new media communication would follow a similar format.

Elements of the newsletter will include:

- **Resources & news from PBS** -- PBS announcements like download-to-own distribution deals (e.g., iTunes); reminders about the various digital working groups in the system, and issues they are considering; major PBS.org site launches and a heads-up about significant upcoming sites; new tools available for local station Web sites; etc.
- **Local station new media-related updates** – Major local site launches, experiments with blogs, etc.—showcasing the work done across the system.
- **Roundup of major new-media news** – Links to selected articles, with brief summaries and links to more extensive information.
- **Resources worth checking out** – Miscellaneous blogs, sites, and applications that may provide good "food for thought" for our system.

Look for the first issue this December, and if you have any ideas or questions, please contact Kevin Dando at kdando@pbs.org.

PBS KIDS GO! MULTI-PLATFORM DISTRIBUTION

The decision to not offer a tiered PBS KIDS GO! linear service to stations has prompted PBS to explore alternate means of distribution. We feel it is critical to reach the school-aged audience, and given this age group's growing adoption of new media, we are considering three platforms: cable VOD, online delivery, and direct broadcast satellite. Based on the huge popularity of kids VOD content, we feel a GO! VOD package would have immense appeal to cable operators. Similarly, the development of a GO! broadband channel on public television websites would satisfy the school-aged audience's burgeoning demand for online video -- in a safe, educational environment. Beyond these on-demand offerings, we would also like to explore national distribution of a GO! linear channel on DIRECTTV and DISH.

Benefit to stations

- VOD: Service would be locally branded on the VOD menu.
- Broadband: Service would be built to allow member stations to feature the video on their local websites, while it is hosted and also offered through PBS.org. This syndicated approach permits PBS to manage the service while allowing for easy implementation and traffic-building on local station websites.

- DBS: Service provides nationwide promotional vehicle for GO! and potential funding for future GO! programming investments.

Next Steps

- VOD and DBS: Continue market analysis to determine the most favorable distribution model.
- Broadband: Seek CPB funding and begin development.

If you have any ideas or questions, please contact Andrea Downing at adowning@pbs.org or Leslie Rotenberg at lrotenberg@pbs.org.

PBS KIDS PLAY! (wt)

PBS plans to launch a premium subscription service (Summer 2007) that will deliver online content for early childhood learning at home. PBS KIDS PLAY! will serve preschool through first grade, will consist of educational games, creativity projects, animated stories, streaming video clips & music tracks, printables and other content primarily based on PBS KIDS television programs. The service will be built around a cohesive, standards-based educational curriculum, with a focus on self-paced, trial & error learning. Parents will be able to track their child's progress and will be provided with recommendations based on their child's interaction with the learning games and activities.

Benefit to stations

- Strategic benefits: An educational service that directly supports membership drives for the critical 25 to 44 demographic, as well as community and legislative outreach efforts. The support model will leverage local infrastructures and community relationships so that stations will play a fundamental role in the value chain.
- Promotional benefits: Participating Member Stations will own part of the digital real estate and have a co-branding presence on the online service. Subscribers will *automatically* be localized once they enter a billing address.
- Direct revenue benefits: Participating Member Stations that meet mutually agreed-upon promotional obligations will be entitled to receive revenues each fiscal year based on the number of subscribers paying for the service in their territory.

Next Steps

- PBS Businesses is developing a local-national co-promotion model in coordination with a working group of station representatives.
- PBS is engaging leading producers to build a line-up of programs in order to launch a service in Summer 2007.
- PBS will also begin to explore ways to provide free access to non-subscribers in certain public venues.

If you have any ideas or questions, please contact Ben Grimley at bgrimley@pbs.org.

Primetime Broadband Channel

Similar in concept to the GO Broadband Channel, we will develop a broadband video experience that allow visitors to pbs.org and local station websites to watch national primetime programming online on an on-demand basis. Similar to the approach taken by other broadcasters, programming will be made available soon after broadcast for a fixed period of time (per the windowing strategy referenced below).

Benefit to stations

- The primetime service will be built to allow member stations to feature the video on their local websites in a turnkey manner.

Next Steps

- Adopt content windowing strategy (see below).
- Develop support plan.

If you have any ideas or questions, please contact Andrea Downing at adowning@pbs.org or John Suydam at jrsuydam@pbs.org.

Content Windowing Strategy

As PBS contemplates a multi-platform strategy, it is important to balance our public service mission with our need to generate new revenue streams. This double-bottom-line approach will manifest itself in the form of a “free & fee” windowing strategy, which will establish a set timeframe in which NPS programming is available free to the consumer across multiple platforms.

Benefit to stations

- Clearly articulates how PBS content can be exploited across multiple platforms, and thus how stations can extend their reach and impact.

Next Steps

- Re-group with VOD Working Group in November to formulate recommendation.
- Present recommendation internally, as well as to CPB's Digital Rights Working Group.

If you have any ideas or questions, please contact Andrea Downing at adowning@pbs.org or John Suydam at jrsuydam@pbs.org.