Chapter 4

The Second Screen

Enhancing TV with Synched Content Experiences

Olen Weaver, age 37, started his career in his home state of Oklahoma as a sound engineer designing audio systems for major concerts across the country for over 19 years. After his son was born, Olen wanted to make sure he stayed close to home; so he turned another one of his passions, photography, into a full-fledged local business. When shooting photos as a hobby, Olen uses his Nikon D300 to photograph picturesque landscapes inspired by his childhood obsession for *National Geographic*. In contrast, his professional studio focuses on capturing *people* through portraits as well as candid moments from weddings and other events.

In June of 2010, Olen purchased an iPad despite his trepidation as to how useful a device it would be for him. Today, he cannot imagine life without it. His beloved tablet has become embedded in every aspect of his business, from invoicing and client bookings to sound level measurements and portfolio showcasing.

One day, while using The Weather Channel app to check his local forecast, Olen saw an advertisement for a new TWC show called *From the Edge with Peter Lik*. After watching a few preview video clips online, Olen became hooked on wanting to see more from the world-famous photographer and immediately set his DVR to record the TV series. Along the way, he discovered that The Weather Channel was also offering a free iPad app to act as a real-time synchronized "second screen" companion to the television broadcast. He immediately downloaded the app and has since watched every episode of *From the Edge* as a two-screen experience. He views the main programming from his big screen television, which is complemented by extra content that gets pushed out to him on his iPad.

Given his background in sound design, Olen appreciates how the *From the Edge* app uses the iPad's built-in microphone to detect audio from the television broadcast and delivers exclusive content that is timed with specific

in-show events. He remembers one particular episode where Peter Lik travelled to Yosemite National Park. Although there was a little bit of interaction with the park ranger during the TV broadcast, the iPad app delivered a much more in-depth human interest back story as to how he came to develop a lifelong love for Yosemite.

Another feature that Olen really likes are the interactive polls that appear during key moments of the on-air broadcast, which often showcase a choice of photos that Peter Lik captured during the episode, and ask the audience to vote for their favorite. The instant gratification that Olen gets from seeing the combined results from the second screen app's user community adds a compelling dimension to his overall television experience. While he mentioned that many television networks may post extra content for their TV shows on their websites or Facebook pages, he is not apt to go hunt it down. Instead, Olen loves the way in which content comes to him through his iPad as an extension of his television set.

Even though *From the Edge* is his first experience using a second screen companion app, Olen believes this is the future of television, as social media is a growing and powerful force that connects TV audiences and allows them to interact directly with the show *and* each other.

Welcome to a Multiscreen Television Experience

For decades, the ecosystem of TV was simply the familiar television set: a box with only one screen that displayed video and graphics accompanied by sound. Whereas people used to just watch television, nowadays, they *experience* it. Evolving technology and human behavior have given birth to television's second screen, adding a parallel and synchronized layer of interactive companion content to the TV experience.

It all started with the laptop; specifically, when Nielsen reported back in 2010 that 60 percent of Americans use the Internet simultaneously while watching television.[1] Networks began to examine potential ways to capitalize on this behavior as a complement to watching a TV broadcast. In Chapter 1, we highlighted the MTV Video Music Awards' visualized backchannel and the 2010 Emmy Awards' backstage live streaming as two specific tactics that television networks utilized to produce synchronized second screen experiences for their viewers.

The rise in smartphone and tablet devices has additionally brought what many refer to as the "third and fourth" screens to TV. Though we hinted at mobile second screen experiences in the previous chapter, that was just the tip of the iceberg. The accessibility and interoperability of mobile has opened up a

whole new range of companion television possibilities.

To keep things simple, the phrase "the second screen" as used throughout this chapter will encompass all companion television screen devices including laptops, smartphones, and tablets.

It May Seem That the Second Screen Is TV's Enemy

We know through all of our research that more and more people watch TV with another device near them. And as the world has migrated from desktops to laptops, that has changed more. As we migrate from laptops to tablets, it will take place even more frequently. You have to fight for people's attention and hope that they're interacting with your content while they're watching TV—not somebody else's.

—Julie DeTraglia, SVP, Strategic Digital and Broadcast Marketing Research at NBC

In May of 2011, video ad network YuMe published the results of a video "Distraction Study" it had conducted with the help of Interpublic Group (IPG).[2] YuMe and IPG were hoping to learn more about the top behaviors that pull one's attention away from watching TV (and online video) ads. They were also researching the degree of ad avoidance that occurs beyond active DVR ad skipping, based on their calculations (using data from Magna Global) that only 2 percent of all TV spots are DVR skipped.[3]

The study took place on March 15 and 16, 2011 at the IPG Media Lab in Los Angeles. Forty-eight local individuals, who were recruited to watch television for an hour, were chosen through a survey that screened candidates who watch both TV *and* online video. Fifty-two percent of the participants were male, 48 were female, and over half were employed full-time. Only 23 percent of the sample had children under 18.

Participants in the sample, who were pretty evenly distributed across an 18- to 69-year-old age bracket, were asked to bring in any supplemental items (a.k.a., "distraction media") that would best re-create their particular TV viewing experience. In addition to some obvious diversions, one individual brought his electric guitar.

Upon arriving at the lab, participants were outfitted with a biometric bracelet that measured their temperature, stress, and "emotional condition." As they watched TV using a DVR (that happened to be loaded with their favorite shows), three cameras recorded their every move. A facial tracking algorithm measured "intellectual engagement" by synching a subject's eyes when viewing the TV screen with the exact time stamped content they were watching. This

was then correlated to when and by what they became distracted.

YuMe and IPG found the biggest source of TV viewer distraction to be the mobile phone. Over 60 percent of their sample looked away from the TV screen to use their phone; not necessarily to make or answer calls, but to browse the Web, text, and check e-mail. Thirty-three percent were distracted by a laptop. The study's findings report summed this up by saying, "Smartphones are a persistent companion to video content."

The key word here is "companion"—meaning "in addition to," not "a replacement of." Mobile certainly is not television's enemy; it is instead an opportunity for broadcast networks, cable companies, equipment manufacturers, app developers, and advertisers to enhance the TV experience by connecting one medium to another.

Mobile and TV Are Like Two Peas in a Pod

Though there's been so much money and effort invested in interactive TV over the past 10 to 15 years, it's never been able to scale. Smartphones and tablets have come into the picture, thereby enabling an entirely new world of interactive TV that we call the second screen. Taking an easy-to-use mobile device and tying it to the television unlocks a tremendous amount of potential.

—Cory Bergman, Founder of Lost Remote

In July of 2011, Cory Bergman of popular social TV blog *Lost Remote* made the case for the mobile second screen experience. He cited a report from rich media ad network, MediaMind, on mobile advertising that included insights as to what time of day mobile users click the most on ads—which happened to be during prime-time television hours.[4] Mobile usage is at its heaviest between 7 to 9 pm. The question then becomes: are these individuals in front of the television *while* they are on their mobile devices?

In early 2011, Yahoo partnered with Nielsen to interview over 8,000 Americans between the ages of 13 and 64 years old. They found that 86 percent of the group used mobile while watching TV, and 24 percent of that group browsed content related to the television show they were watching. Twenty-three percent use their device to get more information about a TV spot they saw.[5]

While tablet penetration is still only in the single digits,[6] Nielsen reported in May of 2011 that the place where people use their tablet device (i.e., iPad) most frequently is in front of the television.[7] A survey of 12,000 Internet-connected device owners revealed that 70 percent claim to use their tablet while watching TV. And 30 percent of the time they spend on the device is in front of the television—which represents the tablet's top situational activity (using it

in bed was second at only 21 percent).

Second Screen Applications Push Related Content Directly to You

There's a better way to get information about a TV show. Right now, people go to Google and type something. We did a survey of about 7,000 of our users and found that only five percent of people go directly to a TV network's website to go get information. And, by the way, there's tons of good stuff there. Instead, they skip the network site and go to places like Wikipedia or IMDB.

—Somrat Niyogi, CEO at Miso

The springboard that propelled the idea of second screen applications as a companion for TV is based on a simple principle: we are naturally curious human beings who are compelled to feed that curiosity. Since most of us have some form of an Internet-connected second screen handy while watching TV, we have instant access to seemingly boundless information about a show as a means to help gratify our inherent curiosity.

Think about the number of times you go online to search for information related to a TV show you are watching. What is it that motivates you to do so? Perhaps you just started tuning in to a series and want to learn more about the show itself, such as how many seasons it has been on, episode synopses, and any back story. Another popular trigger is that you either recognize one of the show's actors or want to seek out more information about him or her. Perhaps you think they are attractive, and are curious about how old and tall they really are, where they were born, whether or not they are married, and any other gossip about them.

Instead of making the TV viewer constantly play Sherlock Holmes by having to search, filter, and mine through data to uncover the information they seek, applications on the second screen can, in theory, deliver relevant companion content directly to viewers during pertinent times as they watch TV. The potential to create resonant television experiences across screens is limitless. Finding the sweet spot where form, function, and content appeal to the masses, however, is the Holy Grail for second screen success—and the nut has not quite yet been cracked.

The challenge that application developers must overcome is that not every user wants the exact same information at the exact same time at the exact same frequency as every other user of the app. While there are some commonalities, second screen experiences are not ubiquitous—a situation that causes TV networks and tech companies to maintain a test and learn

philosophy while trying to solve for many competing variables and behaviors.

Television Coviewing Apps Come in Many Flavors

Since 2010, TV networks have produced a barrage of coviewing apps that are predominantly centered on televison's prime second screen device: the iPad. We have categorized these apps into three main buckets.

Viewers can download *series*-specific apps for a particular show and use them over the course of the series' run. *Event*-specific apps are typically downloaded and used once or very infrequently for major tentpole television broadcasts, such as awards shows. *Network*-specific apps work across a set of shows for a given television network, thereby providing companion content for particular TV series without the need to download multiple applications.

The benefit of the last category is clear: a network need only convert a tablet user to download their application once, thereby eliminating one of the barriers to future usage on other shows within the given network. On the other hand, the argument in favor of offering series-specific applications is that TV viewers generally identify with a television show's—not *network's*—brand. By having a much more customized (versus templatized) second screen experience for a given show, the companion content can be that much more unique and, arguably, compelling. But it often comes at the expense of higher development and maintenance costs.

The universe of companion iPad applications provides many other ways to further differentiate the various uses for these features. For instance, the series-specific category gives networks the opportunity to design apps for scripted shows, reality TV, sports, or news—giving each one different nuances from a content-and-features perspective.

The technology used to power the apps is another way to categorize them. Some of the current companion iPad applications use audio fingerprinting or watermark technology (explained in the last chapter) to truly synchronize what one is watching with the exact moment during which companion content is pushed out. In this case, users will have a consistent and repeatable second screen companion experience—whether or not the show is watched live, on demand, or via DVR.

Other apps opt not to employ any audio synching technology, and instead promote live tune-in by simply releasing companion content to application users during a given TV show's original airtime. Using this method can create a user experience that feels somewhat similar to the audio synched apps, presuming the user is watching live.

Regardless of the application's flavor, its intent is to provide television

viewers with an enhanced content experience that drives tune-in, loyalty, and sharing—and offers advertisers another place to reach and engage with their target audience.

The First Broadcast-to-Tablet Synchronized Apps Appeared in 2010

ABC's short-lived *My Generation* premiered on September 23, 2010. The "mockumentary" style show followed the lives of nine students during their senior year at fictional Roosevelt High School in Austin, Texas. Set in the year 2000, the group was comprised of the conventional high school archetypes: the jock, the beauty queen, the overachiever, the punk, the wallflower, the nerd, the brain, the rich kid, and, of course, the rock star.

The show's plot twist came when the same film crew caught up with the former students 10 years after their graduation to see how their lives turned out. The series was a constant switch between the past and present and compared the former high school students' hopes, dreams, and ambitions to the realities and unexpected turns of life.

As part of the fall premiere, ABC promoted its *My Generation* companion iPad app, which garnered quite a lot of buzz. As the first of its kind, it used Nielsen's brand new Media-Sync technology to listen for audio watermarks within the broadcast in order to synchronize the first screen (the TV) with the content served on the second screen (the iPad).[9] Nielsen's Media-Sync platform works similarly to Shazam and IntoNow's respective audio fingerprinting technology, both of which were featured in the previous chapter.

Launching the app revealed a stunning and clean user interface with a big red button on the bottom right of the screen prompting users to "Sync with Show."[10] Clicking this button initiated the Media-Sync routine at any point during the live or time-shifted broadcast. As the iPad's built-in microphone captured a sample of the TV broadcast to create a position match, the ABC logo slid down on the second screen display to expose a moving audio-wave "listening . . ." indicator. After several seconds, a message appeared in place of the synching indicator saying: "You are now synched with this episode of *My Generation*. Stay tuned to get bonus info, trivia, polls, and more during the show!"

And that is exactly what happened—the first of the content extras was pushed out during the show's opening credits, introducing the viewing audience to the Roosevelt High School seniors. A poll appeared asking, "What were you like in high school?" and listed the various stereotypes as possible answers. An indicator in the lower left-hand portion of the screen counted down the remaining time users had to lock in their answers. Choosing an answer—for

instance, "The Overachiever"—revealed how one's response stacked up against all of the other users' responses as a percentage.

In order to avoid iPad users having to keep looking away from the TV screen, wondering if another piece of companion content was pushed to the second screen, a nonintrusive audio notification served as an alert. As new content appeared, old content moved down on the screen. One could easily use the iPad's swipe feature to scroll and review all previous content that was, essentially, a stack of discrete modules.

Unfortunately, *My Generation's* low ratings caused the TV series to be cancelled after just two broadcast airings—a reminder to all that technology alone is not able to draw mass television viewership. An audience's anchor always starts with resonant content. While the second screen experience may be compelling, it is, after all, still just the *second* screen. However, all was not lost, as ABC went on to use the *My Generation* iPad app's design, learnings, and architecture to create a similar companion application for season eight of *Grey's Anatomy* in 2011.[11]

Are Scripted Dramas Lean-Forward Experiences?

People approach different TV shows in different ways; it's a much richer spectrum than lean-forward lean-back.

—Robin Sloan, Content and Programming at Twitter

My Generation and *Grey's Anatomy* are both scripted dramas and therefore, arguably, a much more immersive television viewing experience. It was interesting that the third major series-specific iPad companion app deployed was also a drama: Fox's *Bones.* The app launched on February 10, 2011, midway through the program's sixth season. However, one significant difference between ABC's and Fox's app is that Fox does not employ Nielsen's Media-Sync technology. They instead gather time zone information from the user's iPad during live viewing and cascade content based on the clock versus a true synch to broadcast execution using audio cues.[12]

Those who choose to watch a given *Bones* episode time-shifted versus live can press a button when the show begins which tells the app to start the clock and pace out the companion content based on predetermined time intervals. In addition, Fox embeds the social media backchannel directly into the iPad app, and provides a list of songs from each given episode's soundtrack with direct links to download any of them on iTunes.[13]

Since it is still in the early days of this kind of technology, the question remains as to whether or not synched second screen experiences will attract

mass audiences. ABC Vice-President of Digital Media Rick Mandler makes a very important point:

> *When you're watching a scripted drama, you're transported into the magical world of that drama. And every time we ask you to interact, to pull out of that magical world and get into the real-world, it's not as nice or as much fun as it is in the magical world. And then you have to re-engage with the magical world, which is a huge cognitive load. To let go of a narrative to engage with something that's in the real-world and then pick the narrative thread back up again is asking a lot from a television viewer.*

Therefore, it is not a question as to whether or not people will engage on the second screen during dramas; it is a question as to how many people will choose to do so. Then again, all dramas may not be created equal; for as Twitter's Robin Sloan purports, "What could be more immersive than an HBO show? It has an incredibly high production value and engrossing storyline; yet HBO is even celebrating the fact that people are tweeting the craziest, most demystifying moments from their shows."

The key for television networks during this nascent period for social TV is to continue to have an appetite for trial and error. And part of being open to this is to test across different types of shows and audiences—and being comfortable with the failure that produces productive learning and insights.

From Drama to Reality, the Second Screen Expands Its Horizons

The third companion app to employ Nielsen's Media-Sync platform is The Weather Channel's first foray into original programming with its TV series entitled *From the Edge with Peter Lik*,[14] hosted by the well-known Australian photographer. The show, which premiered on March 31, 2011, chronicles Peter's journey across the United States as he searches for the most "dramatic landscapes."[15]

You may wonder what the show's tie is to The Weather Channel. Peter has to brave the weather as he travels from one place to another—which is severe at times. The 13-episode series seems ripe for a second screen companion experience, especially when compared to a scripted drama. There is a natural inclination to want to learn more about the locations featured in the series as well as interact with the photographs that Peter captures.

And that is exactly what differentiates the *From the Edge with Peter Lik* iPad app from the others in its category. Yes, it has the synchronized polls and quiz formats architecturally similar to its second screen brethren; however, it

also provides pertinent behind-the-scenes footage as well as close-ups of the many photos taken within each episode. Since the show is based on Peter's photography, it is a great way to use the second screen to bring these photos to a more tangible life. The TV screen tells the story about how the photos are taken, and the second screen literally puts them into viewers' hands.

The Second Screen Enables Sports Fans to Play Along

> *Certain kinds of programming are going to be conducive to a second screen experience and some will absolutely not be. Sports represents a massive opportunity whereas the nature of the interaction is such that people will want more information at junctures that are appropriate. Sports are not like dramas; there's a lot of downtime—time that could be used to review statistics or additional information which is hugely of interest to sports fans.*

> *— Andrew Wallenstein, TV Editor at Variety*

While we could write a whole other book about social media's impact on the sports industry, we would be remiss if we failed to give a brief nod to the innovation that is taking place on the second screen while watching televised games. Major League Baseball's *At Bat* companion app—available across smartphone and tablet devices—gives users real-time stats, player cards, and video highlights.[16]

Baseball is not the only sports genre to exploit the second screen. The 2011 NBA playoffs gave fans access to the free *NBA Game Time* iPad app[17] that interactively displayed information about on-court players, scoring percentages, and a visual mapping of made and missed shots—all in real-time.[18]

While MLB's companion solution supports the entire season (similar to a TV series), NBA's iPad app falls into our event-specific category of second screen applications joined by other tentpole events such as awards shows, ceremonies, and miniseries.

The Kennedys Miniseries Turns the Second Screen into a Giant History Lesson

After a bit of content controversy, *The Kennedys* finally made its television debut on April 3, 2011, when it landed itself on ReelzChannel. As the title suggests, the eight-part miniseries depicts John F. Kennedy's rise to the White

House, his presidency, and his tragic assassination.[19] Using flashbacks to tell a story within a story, viewers see a portrayal of the Kennedy family beginnings with Joe Kennedy Senior at the helm.

ReelzChannel offered viewers an iPad app to accompany the series that creates an interesting juxtaposition between an acted-out portrayal of events broadcast on the TV screen versus content from corresponding actual events served on the second screen.[20] When users first launch the iPad app, a splash page featuring the main characters of Bobby Kennedy, Joe Kennedy Senior, Jackie Kennedy, and JFK displays a prominent "JOIN THE CONVERSATION" call-to-action. Upon clicking, *The Kennedys* iPad app reveals a three-paneled user interface.

The first panel is a social feed on the screen's left side that lets users toggle between Facebook and Twitter. The tweet box comes prepopulated with #TheKennedys hashtag, making it effortless to contribute to the miniseries' backchannel conveniently displayed, in real-time, directly underneath. Embedding the backchannel into the iPad app itself eliminates the need to switch back and forth between Twitter (or Facebook) and the companion app— thereby providing a much more cohesive user experience.

The application's middle panel is a visual timeline of key events displayed as a set of thumbnails with dates and short descriptions. Clicking the oval-shaped "SYNC WITH REELZ TV" button at the top of the timeline displays the current runtime of the live broadcast, and re-sorts the timeline of events based on what is currently being aired on TV. As key events take place, they are stacked onto the timeline with their supporting media displaying in the right-most panel.

For instance, in the first episode of the series, John F. Kennedy comes home to the family's compound in Hyannis Port, Massachusetts, after sustaining injuries by rescuing the crew of the sinking Navy vessel PT-109. As the events unfold within the television broadcast, the timeline feature of *The Kennedys* second screen app updates itself with "JFK Awarded Purple Heart" and displays a photo along with a short description. A series of "resource links" bring users to supplemental curated Web content including YouTube videos, photos, and other online information.

The two-screen experience of *The Kennedys* makes for a rich history lesson because of the way in which it was executed across second screen devices (including the laptop and smartphone) by connecting a very relevant content stream to the TV broadcast and its backchannel. Best of all, the companion experience is packaged in such a way where everything cleanly displays upfront.

A TV Event without a Second Screen

Experience Is Like a Zebra without Stripes

Very few tentpole television events take place these days that do not include some sort of second screen experience. For example, NBC's coverage of the Royal Wedding included an iPad app fraught with content—including a visual tree of the royal family complete with detailed bios, as well as an interactive map of the wedding procession with context about each of its surrounding landmarks.[21] The iPad app had over 200,000 downloads with over 26,000 occurring the day of the wedding.[22]

Additionally, the *2011 Oscars* Backstage Pass iPad app let users switch back and forth among nine live streaming camera feeds to accompany the show's broadcast. The app exhibited a map of the stage and surrounding areas that indicated where each of the cameras was placed by showing a play button. Pressing "play" would then activate the live video stream for the chosen camera among options that included a Backstage cam, Press Room cam, and the Control Booth cam. A similar experience presented itself during the live Red Carpet as well as the Governors Ball party.

While we addressed MTV's innovative use of the backchannel for the 2009 Video Music Awards in Chapter 1, the 2011 VMA second screen experience was extended to the iPad and included a "Hot Seat" feature that, when selected, pulled up a seating chart of the Nokia Theatre where the VMAs took place. Each time a celebrity tweeted from their respective seat, the chart would indicate through a pulsating beacon from where in the theater and whom it was coming. Users could then interact with the visualized seating chart to drill down into specific celebrity tweets in real-time.

Do TV Viewers Value a Second Screen App More Than the Native Backchannel?

The most important thing about these products right now is that we can create a curated, important conversation with people of influence versus some sort of fire hose that provides a less meaningful conversation.

—Lisa Hsia, Executive Vice-President of Digital Media at Bravo

Bravo was yet again the first TV network to launch a second screen iPad app. "Bravo Now" made its debut on Apple's App Store in August of 2010 to coincide with the season finale of *Bethenny Getting Married?*[23] At its core, the app serves as a companion to Bravo's linear television programming, enabling users to view, interact, and share additional content while watching certain Bravo TV show premieres and finales live.

Bravo enhanced its popular "talk bubble" for the iPad experience, with a

timeline toward the top of the live events screen on the Bravo Now application. As the live show airs, a series of talk bubble icons appear, each of which denotes a particular media type relevant to the episode's content at a given moment. A talk bubble can be either a video clip, photo, poll, "fun fact," or a post from one of the "Bravolebrities."

Additionally, a real-time social stream appears along the entire left side that defaults to Twitter (and Facebook) posts from "Bravolebrities" who are live tweeting during the show, thereby granting users access to the insiders' live commentary. If they wish, viewers can toggle to the entire backchannel conversation from all who use the app to comment through an embedded Twitter and Facebook client.

Integrating the backchannel into second screen applications brings up an important question and point raised by *Lost Remote's* Cory Bergman:

> *Why wouldn't I use Facebook or Twitter proper to converse with my friends about a television show, instead of using a second screen experience that uses a Twitter client or a Facebook client that is not nearly as easy-to-use? In this case, you've got to make the second screen experience better by offering something else that's really exceptional—like a filtered community, insider knowledge, or a celebrity that's tweeting along with you. There has to be some unique hook.*

The "hook" for Bravo Now includes access to synched companion content via its Talk Bubble, as well as a curated real-time social stream with filtering that allows for easy following of the commentary from the show's talent.

Each Network Approaches the Second Screen from a Slightly Different Angle

NBC's spin on its second screen companion app is the notion of a *host*, an NBC moderator who helps keep the conversation going by answering fan questions and adding live commentary. "NBC Live" was launched in May of 2011 and was enabled for four shows during the fall 2011 season. NBC's hope is that the app will help to drive original airtime viewing. In fact, 47 percent of respondents of an NBC Live Tracking Study indicated that they are more likely to watch NBC shows when they first air because of the NBC Live app.

The Discovery Channel launched an iPad app in March of 2011[24] and re-released it to include a second screen coviewing feature on July 31, 2011 to coincide with its ever-popular annual Shark Week.[25] In addition to exclusive interactive content, the Discovery Channel HD app includes a location-based TV schedule that automatically serves up show information based on one's physical geography.

Other second screen apps within our "network-specific" category include MTV's Watch With, HBO Connect, and USA's Character Chatter that lives on the network's website as well as certain USA series' Facebook pages.[26] While television networks continue to build and enhance their own companion applications, other players in the market are developing solutions that work across networks. It is too early to tell which is better, and *Variety* magazine's Andrew Wallenstein raises the question that stakeholders in the space continue to ask:

> *Is there going to be one central hub for these experiences to play out or is it going to be sort of like a Tower of Babel that provides thousands of apps that all essentially deliver companion experiences but on their own respective shows or networks? Everyone is struggling with this question right now, and there is no easy answer.*

As is the case with all new media, the space tends to get very crowded and more complicated before clear leaders, standards, and interoperability truly emerge and take hold.

The Social TV Space Continues to Blend

Social TV app Miso—which we discussed in the last chapter in the context of TV check-ins—announced a second screen partnership with DirectTV in September of 2011.[27] DirectTV customers can now use the Miso application to interface with their DirectTV receiver to automatically display the show they are currently watching on the second screen. As the television viewer flips through or changes the channel, Miso automatically updates itself to deliver a synchronized companion TV experience.

Their first major deployment using synched content happened on October 2, 2011, during the season six premiere of Showtime's *Dexter*.[28] iPhone Miso users who watched the show via DirectTV benefited from a synched stream of enhanced content, including Wikipedia articles about actors and guest stars when they first appeared, as well as quotes, trivia, and other lean-forward content that utilized Miso's Pick 'em functionality. Miso times a piece of content to be pushed out against the exact moment within the show's storyline in order to increase the content's relevance. By leveraging native iOS push notifications, Miso is able to alert its users each time they deliver a new piece of content during the show versus adding to the distraction away from the main television screen.

In May of 2011, Miso released a report detailing the company's findings from a second screen experiment it conducted with Boxee (a connected TV device we discuss in Chapter 9). "Miso Sync," as it was called, delivered *Pop-Up Video* style experiences to TV viewers watching content through the Boxee

Box. The experiment sought to answer three questions: Do people want information while they watch TV? What type of information do they want? Is the second screen a passive or active vehicle?[29]

The experiment ran for four weeks and used a cross-section of six second screen-enabled TV shows varying in genre and length. One of Miso's most substantial findings—based on its user sample's behaviors and feedback—is that every type of show requires a unique second-screen experience in terms of the companion content's type, frequency, delivery, and timing. For instance, Miso found that the kind of information to which users responded most powerfully for reality shows was gossip and candid images delivered at a high frequency, mostly during the show itself. When it came to dramas, on the other hand, users wanted to see high-quality images and memorable moments at a much lower frequency before and after the show, but not as much during (with the exception of commercials).

Miso's perspective is that all TV shows can have a second screen experience as long as that experience fits with the show's tone, pace, and style. And as more and more companion platforms are created and gain momentum, they become increasingly valuable to advertisers.

On the Second Screen, Content and Advertising Can Work Really Well Together

The Holy Grail for all this has been, for so many years, to have a feedback loop with television. So that when I'm watching something, I am able to not only interact with the TV show; I can also interact with the ads. That's always been what interactive TV has promised, but has never delivered on. When that happens on a truly scaled basis, there will be so much new value creation in this business that it will really be the second coming of television.

—Cory Bergman, Founder of Lost Remote

TV networks are experimenting with different advertising models built into their companion applications. For instance, the ABC *Grey's Anatomy* application is sold as a single sponsorship with 100 percent share-of-voice and allows for a trivia question module or information (video) module that appears, in-line, during commercial breaks of the show. In contrast, the NBC Live app serves up clickable banner ads and also runs interstitial video ads that are timed to appear as the TV show that is being watched cuts to a commercial break. The NBC Live virtual host will also post right before or right after an ad runs about the given sponsor.

Each of the network apps offers slightly different opportunities that

continue to evolve based on application enhancements and ad performance findings—which is why advertisers must always adopt a "test and learn" attitude when approaching the second screen. As *Variety's* Andrew Wallenstein explains:

> *I don't think the second screen companion experience is truly anywhere near critical mass. But it's very much in the interest of the networks to encourage usage; not just because it deepens the experience but because the true brass ring is the ability to serve ads on more than one platform. It changes the nature of the ads because they will be interactive on the second screen. While I think that is something that could be a huge game changer, I don't think it's "in the bag" by any means. Advertisers have the potential to be the straw that stirs this drink. If they can drive the innovation, there's no question that the programmers will get on board. But from my vantage point, I see the programmers trying to get the advertisers on board.*

Brands who evaluate the scale and reach of a companion app solely by itself fail to consider how people experience media. The second screen is a great opportunity for advertisers who look at their television media buy as an integrated cross-channel experience where each component (or screen) works together—thus making the advertising much more impactful.

A great example of this is Verizon's sponsorship of *The X Factor*. The show's creator and lead judge, Simon Cowell, is featured in Verizon Wireless TV spots, during the show's commercial breaks, that promote the "Xtra Factor" second screen app which is also "presented by" Verizon.

The iPad version syncs with *The X Factor's* on-air broadcast with interactive content, trivia, and the ability to rate each contestant's performance. The Android version of the Verizon-influenced app enables users to cast a legitimate vote for their favorite contestant with merely a single click.[30]

Verizon approached its media buy with Fox not as a traditional television *watching* advertising strategy, but instead as a television *experiencing* strategy. The result is an "everywhere brand" in that Verizon transcends all of the media channels wherein viewers experience *The X Factor*.

The Next Evolution of Second Screen Advertising Is Synched Ads

> *We are pioneering a new advertising medium called the sync ad. In essence, you have a TV spot on the first screen doing what it does well— which is to provide a sense of emotion and immediacy—and then at the same moment, you have on the second screen a digital ad that does what*

digital ads do well—provide interaction, transactions, and data collection.

—Seth Tapper, Founder and CEO at SecondScreen Networks

Advertising group SecondScreen Networks is looking to be the modern day DoubleClick for the social and companion TV space. They are seeking to power second screen experiences in a truly synched way as viewers engage with television.

The company's technology essentially watches TV through its server-side automated content recognition platform.[31] When an advertiser's commercial begins airing, the platform sends a notification to all second screens that comprise the ad buy to run the appropriate synched digital ad, which appears within a quarter of a second of the broadcast spot's start time.

For example, on September 14, 2011, USA Network partnered with SecondScreen Networks to run a Lincoln-Mercury branded synch ad during the season one finale of *Necessary Roughness*. USA Network created the rich media "polling" ad, which was served on its Character Chatter companion app at the exact moment Lincoln-Mercury's TV spot aired. SecondScreen Networks reported early results that showed the Sync Ad garnering engagement rates at "an order of magnitude" higher than traditional (nonsync) ad units.

In all likelihood, the two-screen synched ad experience has a higher audience receptivity rate, given the companion reinforcement of the broadcast message. The key factor in making this work, however, is establishing a very large base of second screen partnerships within the ad network in order to increase the chances of the synched scenario playing out. It is a bit of a chicken-and-egg scenario, as Seth points out:

> *There is no second screen experience that really has a substantial audience. The advertisers who are relevant in the sync ad space are advertisers who buy television commercials—which means they are looking for mass reach. On the other side of the coin, none of the second screen experiences have anything like mass reach yet.*

In the meantime, SecondScreen Networks is laying the infrastructure for synched ads across devices and websites, as companion application audiences continue to grow and the space matures.

Buy or Build? Some Brands Have Built Their Own Second Screen Experiences

On April 26, 2011, Heineken launched its "StarPlayer" iPhone app, which acts as a branded second screen companion while watching UEFA Champions League matches on TV.[32] The concept was inspired by the fact that over a billion people worldwide watch soccer. The application, which can also be played

online, is based on the premise of predicting scores and other events during a given soccer match. For instance, a user who thinks their team is going to score within the next 30 seconds can click a "goal now" button. If the team scores in time, the user earns points and can compare their real-time scores with others who are playing along.

Built-in Facebook integrations within the Heineken app enable users to share their activity; the beer company also serves up bonus trivia questions during slower periods of the match. The app is a powerful way to sustain a constant stream of branded engagement over the course of a 90-minute match. In June of 2011, AKQA—the agency behind the application—won a Gold Lion at the 58th Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity in France, one of the most renowned advertising competitions.[33] It is simply yet another example of the rapid innovation that continues to take place within the second screen space.

TAKE ACTION: THE SECOND SCREEN

When audiences engage with television in a lean-forward manner, they use the second screen in a way that puts them in a much more active state of mind. The following are three ways to reach your target by leveraging the second screen with your television media buy.

1. *Embrace the distraction.* It is important to acknowledge that not everyone is watching your TV spots during commercial breaks. If you are able to recognize the distraction, you suddenly open the doors to an unlimited amount of resonant cross-channel content possibilities. You need not sacrifice your goals on the main TV screen when incorporating the second screen into your creative concepts.

2. *Let the two screens have a "play date."* The power of the second screen is that it acts as a companion to the main television broadcast, thereby making the whole experience greater than the sum of its two parts. This should be no different for your broadcast advertising. Work with the television networks or second screen ad providers to let your TV and second screen ads "play nice" together to create a unified and synched cross-channel branded experience.

3. *Ask; don't tell.* The primary television screen is a one-way messaging system (although even that is beginning to change). The second screen, however, is two-way and interactive. Simple banner ads and video preroll are just more methods of one-way telling. Your brand's second screen content should be designed for the medium on which it is displayed. So *ask* people to engage with your brand by giving them an inviting reason to do so.

Distraction Is Not Going Away

In fact, distraction to advertising will only intensify as technology (especially mobile and tablet devices) continues to evolve. The irony in all of this is that

some of the companion experiences with which television networks are experimenting to help increase tune-in are actually fueling the distraction *away* from their commercial breaks. The key is to capture and harness this distraction to ensure your brand is making a resonant impact on all screens.

Scan for More

Scan this QR code using your mobile device for videos and visuals of the examples and cases referenced throughout this chapter.

Don't have a smartphone with a QR reader app? No problem. You can access companion content directly by going to http://www.socialtvbook.net/tagged/chapter4.

Notes

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