

5 MILLION CHANNELS AND NOTHING'S ON: DISCOVERY AND RECOMMENDATION IN AN INTERNET VIDEO WORLD

by Chris Brogan, *Video on the Net*

Telelevision is no longer a single box. It's no longer a single tuner. It's a combination of everything your video service provider offers plus everything available via the Internet today. Add to this various set-top box content offerings, like the Apple TV, and you'll see that the battle isn't for your living room; it's for your attention.

With hundreds and hundreds of potential viewing portals for Internet TV content (YouTube, Google Video, Metacafe, PodTech.net, Veoh, Blip.tv, Revver, Brightcove and Joost are a few of the better known portals), it's suddenly become extremely difficult for viewers to find the good stuff, and for producers to build relationships with an audience. Further confusing the issue is that distribution, not exclusivity, is the new gold standard for independent video production. If you're a producer, pushing your show over twenty platforms is much more effective than sticking to one Web destination, because there are more chances for people to view your work.

So, how do consumers find the good stuff? One answer is content networks – groups of producers or companies that build content around a theme or at least a set of production values. Examples of content networks are Gimp.TV, Next New Networks, and PodTech.net. But these are still pockets of content. They do

a great job of promoting their own productions, but they might not help you find the next great thing to watch after you consume their short-form video (most Internet TV is still short-form).

A New Breed: Meta-Aggregators

Today, a new breed of video company is forming. Call them meta-aggregators. They aren't hosting sites, but rather companies with an interest in a particular niche of content. I do some work with one such company, Network2.tv (www.network2.tv), which focuses on long-tail Internet TV – primarily shows produced by independent producers, and/or shows that don't have a mainstream analog.

Sites like Network2 (another would be Tilzy.tv (www.tilzy.tv), and another style of aggregator would be Magnify.net (www.magnify.net)) exist to help viewers find great shows no matter what platform they're on, and help viewers build relationships with those shows.

How? One way is to allow the community to rate, review and recommend shows. Another is to make it easier to port a video show that you like onto a portable device or into your Apple TV box for the 10-foot viewing experience. Some sites make it easy to view content via mobile service.


The revenue model for meta-aggregators hasn't been fully defined. One option would be to build advertising relationships between distribution points and the content creators. Others are pursuing distribution relationship and guide



“Meta-aggregator” sites are helping users find the Internet videos that appeal to them.

licensing deals. It's a fairly young space, and these models haven't fully been fleshed out.

In all cases, finding the good stuff (and “good” can be defined by the site, by friends, by trusted sources) seems to become a necessary task when sites like YouTube report they're hosting 140,000 new video uploads a day. In a world where channels are no longer defined solely by cable TV or telephone service providers, guides – especially online guides and recommendation systems – become an important part of the landscape.

And hey, when you find the good stuff, always share with friends. There aren't huge marketing budgets for these shows, so we need a healthy word of mouth, plus maybe meta-aggregators, to help each other find what's worth watching on the Internet. 

About the Author

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Chris Brogan gave a demonstration of Network2 at last month's Killer App Expo & Conference in Fort Wayne, Indiana.