

# KIDS COMMUNITY

**Paul Robinson** has worked in public service broadcasting at the BBC, in commercial radio, rolling out kids programming for Disney Channel, and media consulting. Now he's come back to children's TV as Managing Director and co-founder of **KidsCo**. His aim is to form a fourth global children's network



**K**ids TV is a very rewarding business to work in because of the consumers you are working with. It's also a very enjoyable business to work in – and be paid for – as you are dealing with animation, cartoons and live action, lovely characters and toys. But I must admit I did not plan to come back into kids' TV having had a long run at Disney. I wanted to form my own business, which I did.

PR Media Consulting was pretty successful with very nice clients. One of these clients was Sparrowhawk Media headed by David Hulbert, the former president of Walt Disney TV International. He talked to me about creating a kids' channel as a companion to Hallmark Channel. So it all started as a consultancy project and as I got more and more into it I realised there was such a great opportunity and then they asked me whether I would be the chief executive of the business.

#### How long has KidsCo been going?

We launched on air in September 2007. But the gem of the idea actually started in late 2005 so a lot

“  
Our strategy is a global brand that's localised  
”

of thought and planning has gone into the company. We were determined if we were going to enter the children's space we'd do so in such a way that was different from Disney, Cartoon, Nickelodeon, to be within a chance of forming a fourth global network.

#### Which age group do you target?

We are focusing on boys and girls 6-10. It's an age group that's underserved and we are offering programming that is great quality, entertaining, story-led but is also safe.

If your child watches KidsCo they won't see anything inappropriate. So if a parent steers the child to KidsCo that's great, but ultimately the child's got to like it. So you have to make KidsCo a channel that children like.

#### What's your business model?

A lot of children's TV is still played out on tape and we decided we'd invest from day one in a digital network. So we can easily add new language tracks on when we expand into new markets. That's a very efficient way of moving content around at lowest cost. We have also gone for regional feeds so for example if you are watching in

France you'll get the same video as if you are watching, say, in Germany but in France the channel will be totally French and fully dubbed into French, in Germany it will be an entirely German channel. But you have the efficiency then of your fixed costs – your satellite costs and your line costs – spread over a number of different territories and customers, which means our break-even is lower. And we can then be very competitive on price compared to other channels.

#### What's your editorial mission?

Our mission is to entertain children, with good original series, exclusives and first-run shows, and classic content from the library. And those three strategies produce a very strong programme mix. TV is a great medium but I think TV is an even greater medium if it can stimulate children, either in terms of a conversation with an adult, another child, or to get up and do something. KidsCo is short for Kids Community, that's what we are trying to do, create a community of kids from around the world.

#### How do you source your content?

We have programme suppliers in ►

MediaGuardian

Edinburgh International Television Festival

27-29 August 2010

Register online at [mgeitf.co.uk](http://mgeitf.co.uk)

# DEFINING THE YEAR'S WATERCOOLER MOMENTS ON TV

The world's leading forum for media and television professionals. Full programme and delegate list available online at [mgeitf.co.uk](http://mgeitf.co.uk)

Major sponsors

BBC



the Farm  
group



sky

YouGov  
What the world thinks

Register today and join 2,000 international delegates at the must-attend media event of the year. Membership rates and other concessions may apply. Register online at [mgeitf.co.uk](http://mgeitf.co.uk)

the UK, Europe, Canada, the US, from Asia, Australia. For the classic content, we have a series of long-term deals with content suppliers like Marvista, BBC Worldwide, Sesame Workshop, Fremantle. Then we have the first-run content which comes largely from our shareholders [NBC Universal, Cookie Jar Entertainment and Corus Entertainment]. Other content we co-produce or commission, for example Boo & Me is a co-production with Inspidea in Malaysia. We look for the KidsCo value - whether the values of quality entertainment, good story telling, good characters and safe environment are imbued in the content.

#### What does your audience like particularly?

We have audience data only in some markets. We do get feedback via the website and via competitions and anecdotally. In terms of a few key trends, Sonic the Hedgehog is definitely a character that seems to resonate almost everywhere in the world. The adventures of Boo & Me, our original series about the orang-utan based in the jungles of Borneo is also incredibly popular, as are the classic adventures of Paddington Bear. And then you get great CG modern looking shows like The Future is Wild. All those things fit under our brand. So you get a multiplicity of voices and styles.

#### Where is your audience?

We are now in 83 countries. We are in Vietnam, in Korea, in Thailand, in Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and Mauritius and Sri Lanka. We are in Australia, right across the whole of Africa and in May we also launched in South Africa. We are across the Middle East including Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, we are in Eastern Europe and Russia, and we are across Western Europe, with the UK set to launch later on this year. New territories yet to launch will include Scandinavia, Latin America, and Japan.

#### What do you offer for VOD and mobile?

VOD enables a child to delve

deeper into the library and look at content that is not available on the linear channel, or to watch things again.

For example with ONO in Spain or OTE in Greece we have a full localised channel, but we also have a VOD service to accompany it. We have a couple of mobile services currently in Asia, this gives the KidsCo brand a presence outside the home. We think it's very important that KidsCo has a presence on any device that children may choose to access their content. Interactivity is enabled by the website where there's lots to do.

#### Do you want to compete with the Disneys of this world?

I worked for the Walt Disney company for a long time, and Disney is a fantastic brand. But they are focusing largely on live action and on tween girls with shows like High School Musical, Hannah Montana, Suite Life of Zack and Cody, whereas we are targeting younger children, primarily with animation. And of course, we are a much smaller operation than Disney. What we can do is provide an alternative and cater for an audience otherwise uncatered for and in that sense we are complementary to Disney.

#### You broadcast in different languages - is dubbing a problem?

We spend a lot of money on dubbing, but it is a very important component of what we do. It is critical that children have content in their own language to relate to, so localisation is very important. Many markets though welcome English as well and in fact we offer multiple languages in certain markets.

#### How do you handle advertising?

Advertising is very much a secondary revenue source for us that sits on top of our main revenue stream which comes from carriage fees. It's limited amount of advertising on air and tends to be bigger brands, advertising movie releases and such like.

“ We think it's very important that KidsCo has a presence on any device children choose to access their content ”

www.kidscotv.tv

#### Tell us about your joint venture with NDTV.

India is a fascinating and challenging market, with lots of platforms, lots of languages. NDTV will represent us to satellite and cable platforms, negotiate any deals for us and be our ears and eyes on the ground in India. We are working with them as partner to secure KidsCo's launch in India which hopefully will be at the end of this year or beginning 2011.

#### What else is in the pipeline?

There will be at least a dozen more launches between now and the end of 2010 into existing and new territories. We'll also expand our non-linear services and we're about to relaunch our website with a whole new look with enhanced games, interactive features and full motion video. That'll keep us busy.

We are having a great time, and KidsCo's growing very fast. There is such an appetite for what we are doing.

Paul Robinson, thank you.

