

GLOBALLY VISIBLE

Philippe Rouxel joined **France 24** soon after its launch four years ago to oversee the international news channel's global development strategy and operations in his role as Vice-President Worldwide Distribution. His mission: to make France 24 a globally visible brand, embracing all multimedia applications. His wish list for 2011 is modest: to have France 24 available in every single country of this planet. What's his strategy?

The strategy of France 24 is very clear – three prongs: multi-territory, multi-lingual and multi-media. First of all – and that is definitely my mission 100% of my time – we need to be visible with France 24's content on a global scale. If you are not visible, you cannot be seen. The second point is very much part of the philosophy of France 24, it has to be multi-lingual. We now have three complete 24/7 linguistic versions – three distinct services in French, English and Arabic, sharing a common editorial line. We are very proud to have achieved that in less than four years. The third point is about multimedia - we need to be pioneers on all the different platforms, be it mobile, the web, all the new kinds of tablets and connected TVs of the future.

How and where are you gaining viewers?

For the first three years of operation France 24 has very much focused on establishing and strengthening its presence in Europe, Middle East and Africa. In that we have been quite successful – today we have the same level of distribution as for example BBC World News. Gaining global distribution is a race against competition, a race for eyeballs and it's a never-ending story. In 2009 we

decided to go beyond the EMEA footprint, starting with Asia Pacific.

Since launching the 24/7 English feed on the AsiaSat platform, we have concluded a series of carriage agreements, notably in HongKong but also in Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia. We have now obtained the broadcasting licence in India as well as South Korea, we are about to do the same for Vietnam and we are entering Japan with a mobile application for the 24/7 English feed. And we are in the process of concluding new deals for Australia and New Zealand. Definitely part of the road map for 2011 is trying to enter the US and Canada and also tapping into Latin America.

The US market is a very complicated region, it's a headache to find the right triggers to enter this market. Even the BBC has a painful ride to get into the US marketplace. It is the most protectionist market of all – the cable and satellite operators know they have a huge market, so in a way they can dictate the terms.

What's happening in mobile for F24?

We are seriously multi-media. We launched first on the web, and the web today is key with something like an average of 6m unique visitors a month on our france24.com website. Our demographic targets are the present and future opinion leaders of this world and we want

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to be visible and accessible not only in the comfort of their homes but also when these opinion leaders are on the move and using their phones and other devices.

We developed an application with the French company Mobiclip which allows the phone user to download from any application store available – Apple, Samsung or others – the free of charge France 24 application directly to their mobile. This gives the user three live feeds – French, English, Arabic, 24/7 – with the five key pillars of France 24 content which are news headlines of the day, international weather and sports, business news, and culture/lifestyle. Right now we know that 1.2m users worldwide have downloaded the France 24 application, either on their iPhone or on their Nokia or on any new smartphone that is coming to the market. What is interesting is that when you look at the breakdown of this figure it shows a worldwide mix. We can see where the user is based when they download the application – we have downloads from China, Burma, North Korea.

The web can get censored but the mobile is more complicated and that's how the mobile is allowing the content of France 24 to travel live. Parallel to that, France 24 has also developed another specific iPhone/iPad app and works hand in hand with new tablet manufacturers



such as Samsung and the like.

What about charging – how can deals be structured that benefit FTA channels like France 24 and mobile operators?

We position the channel as part of what the mobile operators call the "basic offer". We don't charge them, but they will charge the subscriber a minimal amount to be part of the basic package. The standard offer in the basic package is definitely what we want to achieve because our number one goal is to be visible in front of a maximum number of eyeballs.

Model number two – which we are experimenting with – is sharing the revenue for more premium applications. Where the operator offers the France 24 premium option for the subscriber who is interested in delving deeper into world news, this subscriber will then have to pay a little bit extra and this will be shared between the operator and France 24. But this type of application remains to be tested because it's about news – and news is now more and more available in a free to air fashion. It's complicated though to monetise news effectively.

What would you like to see happen in terms of mobile functionality?

News needs to remain very accessible, and if the content that

you are looking for is more than two clicks away, then you are dead. The development of technology in the mobile world needs to improve the speed and ease of access to the core content, to be as easy and as user-friendly as possible.

What are you doing in Japan on the mobile platform?

NTT Docomo reaches an estimated total universe of more than 50m mobile users in Japan, and we are offering them the possibility of watching the live English version of France 24, as well as some on-demand elements. It's an interesting proposition for us to enter a new territory via the mobile phone door - it was very much easier to enter the Japanese market with the mobile platform rather than traditional TV distribution vehicles.

How do you track users who jump from the web to the mobile and your broadcasts?

We have very precise figures about locating the users who are downloading our different mobile applications. However it is very difficult to track the behaviour of an individual through a multiplicity of different screens. We can clearly go deeper into the analysis of the traffic, platform by platform or screen by screen, but there are no sufficiently efficient research tools available to-date that can measure

▲ France 24's headquarters and studios in Paris

the different fluxes between web, mobile and TV. This is exactly what we would love to find out – how is our demographic behaving and what are the balances between web, mobile and TV.

What about HD and 3D?

3D is good for the industry but I don't think there is going to be a huge 3D revolution. I think it is something exotic that looks a bit sexy but that's going to be that. As for HD, it's not a question of if, it's a question of when and how. HD is the way to go. For example in Asia Pacific more and more platforms are actually jumping directly to HD and they want HD content. And it's a problem when you are not an HD format channel to enter some platforms in those markets. In Latin America and some Asian markets, when they migrate towards digital, they want the latest technology, meaning HD immediately. They leapfrog. In Europe you can still be an SD channel, especially in the news segment. For us HD will be very much on the agenda for 2011 across all three channels.

And your personal wish list for 2011?

To have France 24 available in every single country of this planet. If you don't have ambition then you might as well stay asleep and live in oblivion.

Thank you, Philippe Rouxel.

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