@WardblawG @the1mpounddrop
The tension is unbearable on this programme!!
#millionpounddrop

GAMIFY YOUR BRAND

In 2011 mobile marketing giant Velti acquired **Mobile Interactive Group** (MIG) in a multi-million pound deal to create "a global mobile marketing powerhouse". Through its award winning mobile technology platform mVoy, MIG covers everything in the mobile services value chain from mobile payments to mobile commerce, mobile marketing, mobile advertising and social interactivity. Clients include broadcasters who want to harness the new platforms to engage and monetise audiences – we asked MIG founder and CEO **Barry Houlihan** how this might work

Let me give you a bit of background. MIG has worked for the last seven years with ITV, Channel 5, Fremantle, Channel 4, BBC, Sky and MTV, helping these companies to do mobile in quite a serious way. As devices have changed in terms of their capabilities to the new super computer devices with full rich media HTML5 capability, devices like the HTCs and the iPhone for example, we started to see a shift in audience behaviour from people who are watching TV shows. So we did our own research to see which type of services consumers would be willing to interact with in relation to what the new devices were capable of delivering.

As a result of this, we built a new piece of technology – a platform called mVoy Engage – that makes it easy for broadcasters to connect their audiences, their brands and experiences in a very integrated way to platforms like the Android operating system, like iTunes on iOS and in particular to Facebook.

Facebook became aware of what we were doing, and after a period of working closely with us to understand our technology, awarded MIG 'Preferred Developer Consultant' status. So we are now one of 100 companies in the world given this amazing endorsement, which has helped to position MIG as a global technology leader, partnering with Facebook in the broadcast, media and entertainment sector.

We also commissioned our own white paper research document that outlined the opportunities in this sector from a commercial perspective and what broadcasters would have to do in order to capitalise on the audiences that had shifted onto these new platforms.

All this resulted in a number of broadcasters deciding to work with us to offer this new capability. The first event that we worked on was 'Big Brother', which we executed in the UK with Channel 5. There were two channels on which the audience could participate – one was the telephone, the other was on Facebook.

The audience participation on Facebook was very high indeed, around 40-50% of the overall show.

What did you provide?

For the past seven years MIG has been helping Channel 5 generate significant revenues from mobile. We are one of the few companies in the world that have built this technology which is essentially offered to clients as a Software as a Service based business model - it's a platform that has a wallet, plus a number of interactive applications.

The wallet system is obviously designed to get the user to purchase whatever credits are made available, depending on the payment platform. So in this particular instance it was 'Facebook Credits' but if it was on the iPhone platform, the consumer would be buying credits to interact with the show using iTunes, and on the Android operating system you pay via premium SMS. Once you purchase your credits, you can then interact with the show, depending on how the producers of the show shape the interactive experience.

In the case of 'Big Brother', the public purchased credits to vote on the TV show and the MIG platform fed this data directly into the main central vote system. Everything that we offer through this platform is tied into the main interactive components of the show so it works very seamlessly from the front end consumer journey through to the backend infrastructure and data analysis.

How scalable is your solution?

It's an IP based technology platform so is very scalable regarding the number of transactions it can handle because each transaction is essentially an internet click from a bandwidth perspective. We built the system to be extremely scalable and with peak time engagement in mind.

Does your solution work on connected TV?

Absolutely - yes! It's not just broadcasters building second screen experiences, there is a huge amount of activity from production companies right through to new second generation businesses that are launching second screen products and applications.

Once viewers have a broadband connection into their flat screen TV they can interact with TV in a very different way. Just think what Google TV are bringing to the masses.

The system we designed will work with the internet, with mobile web, with any smartphone operating system, with Facebook and any other social platform, including Twitter and with connected TVs.

How does your model work for public broadcasters?

For the non-commercial broadcasters it is not hugely different than for other broadcasters. Both groups realise that a growing percentage of their audience wants to engage with their shows across these new platforms, so they should be offering interactivity to suit audience trends and preferences, whether this is paid for voting or offered to the viewer for free.

For example, we have just worked with a public broadcaster in the UK on a trial basis to offer a mobile web based voting experience, with a view to introducing it into the mainstream in 2012.

> " A smart format allows the brand to live very much outside the broadcast window "

How affordable is this?

It is pretty affordable. The fact is that audiences are moving onto these big platforms but there is an education process to go through about how to communicate to these audiences, specifically letting them know how they can now engage in many different ways. So we are working very closely with the production companies involved to help them come up with different ways of talking about these new platforms. At the moment you can't actively promote Facebook as a platform on screen. UK regulators are currently looking at the situation and trying to understand what all the market forces are in order to come up with a framework that will allow broadcasters to operate second screen services, create good governance and obviously protect the consumer as well.

What is your ideal outcome?

We are partnering with broadcasters to create a consumer journey that lives on every platform. Ultimately then, as long as it's woven into the show in an appropriate way, you probably don't need to make any real reference to the brand itself.

What we are already seeing is that consumers have a really high propensity to discover the brand irrespective of whether it is promoted or not, because of the viral aspects of some of these platforms. From our perspective it's

a foregone conclusion that we are going to see a similar outcome here to the one that has already been determined in Sweden. If broadcasters create a second screen experience that lives on every device, every digital platform, then the success will come just as a by-product of the fact that it is available everywhere. It won't necessarily be very reliant on calls to action. For example, on a normal TV show, like 'The X Factor', there would have been an enormous lightning strike of interactivity that was tied to the main vote window of the show within the show, whereas what we are now seeing is a much larger, longer tail build-up to the event itself, and then a longer tail post-event. And we are encouraging broadcasters to think about interactivity in three stages: pre-event, during the event, and post-event, which in itself is changing the very nature of the content they are creating.

It's really important that you don't just rely on the TV show itself as the main point of reference for engagement and interactivity. If you are smart you'll think very carefully about how you develop the format, such that the experience with the brand could live very much outside the broadcast window and that way you can generate ongoing engagement, you can also build very compelling sponsorship or advertising products around it as well. The only real movement I have seen in this

space has been from productions like Channel 4's 'The Million Pound Drop' in the UK. Shine Productions recently bought Bossa Studios, a social games company that has produced the Monstermind Facebook app. This is the first time that I have seen evidence of a traditional production company starting to take this whole opportunity really seriously.

Is the production industry taking note?

At the moment we are hosting workshops with our broadcast partners about 'The Gamification of Interactive TV', we are trying to help people understand that it is a very different type of experience that people will fully engage in now. Paying for a digital interactive product like a vote is not necessarily as compelling as it used to be so you have to start thinking about what other products can be offered into the experience that creates value. So if it's a music show, can you build in music downloads; if it is a game-based show, can you create a game experience that might have a dual track opportunity to win, in very much the same way that your contestant on the TV show itself does, and so on.

How do you get mobile operators on board?

The good news for broadcasters is we built a solution that means they don't need to engage with

> " We built a solution that means broad-casters don't need to engage with operators "

operators. Our platform talks to mobile operators in 44 countries globally, Facebook is plugged in so that's 800m users that we can monetise, we are plugged into iTunes so that's another several hundred million users. You could argue this platform gives you coverage of probably 60-70% of the world's population.

What's on the horizon?

We all pretty much know what's going to happen on the device side - all device manufacturers are now entirely focused on building super computer smartphones and tablets.

The biggest thing to happen over the next 24 months would be that the broadcasters themselves take a very different approach to how they commission TV programmes for this new technology. I can say from experience that a lot of the production heads and commissioning editors do not fully understand what this opportunity is.

They need to educate themselves and commission at least with three to four months advance planning in order to create a high value experience for the consumer across all possible platforms.

Our research says that if broadcasters are willing to invest in this area then the returns could be big. And we try to make it easy for people to step into this space to seize that opportunity.

Thank you, Barry Houlihan.