

## **Coming to a Second Screen Near You: The Immersive Viewer Experience**

*In the world of entertainment, advertising and software applications go hand-in-hand, and content is the great enabler. If you're an advertiser looking to increase mindshare – not only in traditional channels, but in new media – a Second Screen application is the vehicle for it, providing a platform for delivering a well targeted ad, game or contest. Each provides revenue potential for the advertiser and the show creators, backed up by valuable content that can inform and enrich. But success on the Second Screen hinges on grasping and immersing the consumer. With so many options and so much "noise" to distract consumers, that's never been a greater challenge. All the more reason why creating an immersive experience for the consumer has become an art and a science in itself.*

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Content creators, producers, and advertisers are rethinking the value of the Second Screen. Where the Second Screen was once used solely to enhance the viewer's experience, today it could even justify the production of a show or movie: the advertising and e-commerce components can increase revenue projections sufficiently to green-light a production that would otherwise not get off the ground. A Second Screen app can even recruit "intenders" to purchase movie tickets, or to buy or rent the film. What's more, the Second Screen has proven to be an effective vehicle for mounting cost-effective mobile and viral marketing campaigns.

But how do Second Screen app developers keep the consumer immersed in the app – and therefore incentivize the consumer to not only view advertising but also respond to it? Here are five fundamentals that smart Second Screen developers are putting into practice.

### **Principle #1: Allow Content Creators to Become More Sophisticated than Their Shows**

Advertising on the Second Screen works, but only if you can keep people immersed in the Second Screen application. To keep viewers immersed in the app, you have to provide them an enriching experience, striking a delicate balance between immersion in the advertising and immersion in the show itself. Shakespeare said that "The Play's the Thing." Updated for today's world, "The Show's the Thing."

Here's the idea: In many television shows, the first season is used, in part, to set up the back stories for the characters, allowing those characters to "unfold." For example, in the recent series premier of the DirecTV show "Rogue," we meet a mother who is on a vendetta. Immediate questions arise: What happened to her in the past? Why is she vindictive? Why did she become a police officer and go undercover? What is her history of vengeance and violence?

A Second Screen app can let that information unfold during the first season, eliminating the need for flashbacks that would interrupt the flow of the show.

Bottom line: The programming allows people to get far more into the show itself and to become part of it. What's more, app developers can immerse viewers by allowing them to learn the back story on their own time.

The commitment of the app developer is to unfold scenes and places, and even to use side stories or "mini episodes" – additional content that viewers could not have known without the benefit of their Second Screen.

### **Principle #2: Involve Viewers the Right Way**

One goal of the Second Screen developer is to get viewers back for the next episode, without fail. But that involves moving beyond trite techniques such as cliffhangers.

Every episode must come to an end, and a certain amount of suspense is to be expected. Rather than resorting to cliffhangers, today's producers are instead opting for longer shows that allow plots to be unraveled. But will that bring back the viewer next week? Producers are betting that it will. How? By using the Second Screen.

Savvy producers and developers imbue the second screen with push notifications that allow viewers to become more deeply involved with the show and develop a loyalty to it. Producers and Second Screen developers are betting that loyalty will trump curiosity nine times out of ten – and industry has plenty of examples to show that they are on the right track.

But Second Screen developers are not stopping there in their quest to build viewer loyalty. Smart developers provide previews, regular reminders about the next episode, and even notes to let viewers know what they have *not* seen. Their bet: viewers will come back because they've been treated as intelligent participants in the unfolding of the plot – and not consumers to be manipulated by cheap tricks.

Second Screen developers can even take that approach to the next level, alerting viewers to reruns or special features relating to the show.

### **Principle #3: Integrate Social Networking and Social Media**

The traditional "model" for incorporating social media into entertainment and Second Screen apps relies on viewers tweeting about a show. While that's a start, Twitter takes viewers away from the show and into the Twittersphere. And keep in mind that, for every insightful tweet about a program, there are typically countless additional tweets that don't add a lot of value to the ongoing commentary.

The new line of thinking is an about-face from the old. It involves enriching the viewers' experience by encouraging them to create communities and new friends – all while remaining "glued" to the Second Screen.

Smart Second Screen app developers know that most platforms connect with Facebook, some even hosting large social communities of their own. The common denominator for all platforms is that the back-end infrastructure must be built in so that app developers are not forced to create “one off” apps, but can instead create apps that link not only to Facebook, but also Pinterest, Instagram, and other social media. The new generation of Second Screen platforms provide the rich social media back-end to link to those social media applications, making the app developer’s job easy while ensuring that the platform is extensible for new social media tools yet to be created.

#### **Principle #4: Monetize the Experience**

Any Second Screen application can provide access to ancillary content that gives viewers an enriching experience. However, an application without a monetization component defeats one of the purposes of the Second Screen: to target appropriate viewers, engage them, and incentivize them to interact with the app and respond to ads within the app, thereby providing advertisers a new revenue stream.

Developing and integrating a single banner ad into a Second Screen application is not complex – although placing the ad within the synchronized timeline of a show is more challenging. Moreover, making the ad relevant to both the content of the show and the person watching it can be frightfully difficult to achieve at scale.

As an example, it’s trivial to reach out with a banner ad positioned to attract a single viewer based on his known likes and dislikes, preferences, online habits, and purchasing history. But using a first-generation Second Screen platform to accomplish that task for thousands of viewers is virtually impossible. Those platforms typically lack an engine powerful enough to serve a customized ad to three or four distinct consumer segments – clearly defeating the objective of targeting the “right” viewers.

Today’s Second Screen apps are built on advanced technology underpinnings. Second Screen platforms today allow developers to create software development kits (SDK’s) and application programming interfaces (API’s) that developers can use to build code snippets into their applications. With those code snippets, they can capture information such as:

- Verification of which users viewed an entire ad (a “play through”)
- Click-through rates
- Purchases

In short, today’s platforms are also built to integrate with highly interactive ads: the Holy Grail of the app developer. The greater the interactivity, the longer the viewer remains immersed and the more the viewer is likely to respond to incentives by advertisers.

#### **Principle #5: Incorporate Analytics**

The final component in building an immersive viewing experience is analytics. The goal? To allow the developer to:

- 1) Create a database to profile the behavior of each viewer, and of viewers as a group

- 2) Draw meaningful inferences from the data
- 3) Feed that information back to advertisers and content creators, who can then use data on consumer habits to modify and improve their ads, and to add content that can make the ad more immersive, or “sticky.”

Note that the analytics tools within the Second Screen platform need to be able to parse both structured and unstructured data in order to draw accurate inferences, and that the inference engine needs to be built into the Second Screen platform.

But the rewards of analytics are rich: With a powerful analytics engine built into today’s Second Screen applications, content owners can derive such information as:

- How the application “performed”
- How each viewer became and stayed involved
- How many viewers were actually engaged by the ad
- How long each viewer viewed an ad
- What other online behavior patterns each viewer exhibited
- Aggregated statistics of behavior by classes of viewers

### **Summing Up**

The Second Screen is a powerful tool in the hands of smart application developers. With the potential for building incremental-revenue streams and for retaining or increasing viewer loyalty, developers are in the driver’s seat. And both the creative industries and the viewers of their creations reap the rewards.

*Author Bio: Thomas Engdahl is a pioneer and early day entrepreneur of technologies ranging from telecommunications and cable to Internet-based content and video delivery. He has established, built and led technology companies to financial health by conceptualizing and executing strategic marketing and business development campaigns that consistently delivered strong revenue gains. His ability to raise capital, turn around struggling endeavors, and establish joint ventures and strategic partnerships has led to IPOs and profitable sales of a number of companies. Prior to Magic Ruby, Tom launched, operated and expanded many successful established businesses including: Radiance Technologies, Pathfire, Inc., Applied Digital Access (ADAX), and Alopa Networks. As a start-up entrepreneur, Engdahl has also built teams and successful businesses for Comcast and Arris International. In addition, Tom has held key positions at companies such as M/A-Com Linkabit, Northern Telecom, DSC Communications, and Pacific Bell. He holds six patents for telecommunications and video-cable products and has been active in setting standards in the M&E and telecom industries since 1984.*