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Why Was Yahoo So Hot To Acquire iPhone App Maker IntoNow?

By Lisa Greim, PCWorld Apr 25, 2011 4:20 PM

Yahoo just paid \$27 million for iPhone app maker IntoNow.

What in the world is IntoNow? Why does Yahoo want this company, which launched 12 weeks ago and has all of seven employees? And why should anybody care?

Short answers first:

- 1. IntoNow makes an iPhone app that enables you to tell your network of friends about the cool TV show, movie, game or commercial you're watching.
2. Yahoo wants it because it dovetails into all the areas people are talking about right now: Mobile, video and connected TV.
3. You should care because it tells the immediate universe that you just watched an Audi commercial.

Personally, I would only be impressed with such a feature if it sent a brand-new, fully loaded Audi A6 up my driveway. Pulling a trailer with a pony. Driven by the Old Spice Guy. For free. But I digress.

Scripps Network's Wes Williams, who blogs at Interactive TV Today, described the IntoNow app as "like Shazam meets TV meets Foursquare." It picks up audio of the TV show you're watching, identifies it, tags it and shares the information on social networks. CEO Adam Cahan says the Yahoo cash will enable IntoNow to move into new parts of the world and extend the app to Android, iPad and other platforms.



The technology, a proprietary indexing system called SoundPrint, is genuinely cool. According to IntoNow, its database contains the equivalent of 266 years of indexed video, and its algorithms can identify programming "down to the episode" in 4 to 12 seconds, even if the show is brand spanking new.

You don't have to be friends with people to look at their profiles or see what they're watching. In fact, IntoNow runs a Twitter-like feed right there on its homepage that tells me Mario G. is watching "Sports Center" while Jim C. is watching "Good Will Hunting."

The "Why?" is more complicated. From the IntoNow blog: "We want you to connect with your friends to make television more social, engaging and personalized. It's what you're into, what you're doing right now, and there should be an easy way to share that with your friends. Along the way we hope you discover more shows you should be into... we certainly have."

Here Come the Ads

That's the consumer "Why?" The business why is more insidious, especially if you've been paying attention to last week's news that Apple iPhones and Google Android devices reveal where you've been. Several companies previewed automatic content recognition apps at this year's National Association of Broadcasters confab. One, called Vobile, said "Mobile applications that integrate with Vobile ACR technology will drive advanced advertising models and enable synchronization of content between TV and mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets."



Yes indeed! Advertisers will be able to push content to your smartphone or tablet, so you get the groovy cola game or coupon for pizza while the commercial is still smacking your eyeballs. It's everything an adman could want: Immediacy, reach, frequency, personalization, monetization and a whole bunch of other -ations that may or may not have anything to do with "making television more social, engaging and personalized."

Doesn't that make you want to run screaming into the night? It made Yahoo want to spend \$27 million.

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PesJ says: Tue Apr 26 08:52:25 PDT 2011 Follisimo said PesJ said There are enough things draining my phone's battery, I don't think constant audio recording will help. Also I'll do anything to stay away from TVCs. Who actually wants this?

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megazone says: Tue Apr 26 12:17:57 PDT 2011 PesJ said Follisimo said PesJ said There are enough things draining my phone's battery, I don't think constant audio recording will help. Also I'll do anything to stay away from TVCs. Who actually wants this?

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Are you going to make a point or just call me names?

I don't think he was calling you names, he was answering your question "Who actually wants this?" with "Attention w h o r e s."

megazone says: Tue Apr 26 12:23:44 PDT 2011 All of these concepts to combine social media and TV are great and all - but they seem to miss the growing use of DVRs. More and more people are watching content time-shifted, so we're not all sitting down to watch 30 Rock or whatever at the same time anymore. So any immediacy is lost. I suppose it may work as a kind of 'suggestion' engine to see what your friends watch and maybe check out those shows if you don't already watch them.

As for ads - what ads? Are those the annoying things I skip over in 30-second chunks via my TiVo? Yeah, what I really want is an app that helps me see more ads. (Make a good ad and I'll watch - I'll even rewind to catch an Old Spice add, my fiancée and I still laugh every time we see the Komodo one. "Ice cream? Okay!")

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