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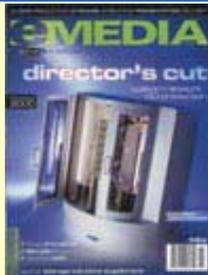
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Staking and Making a Market, the Old-Fashioned Way

Marla Misek

November 2000 | Inventing the wheel, splitting the atom, putting a man on the moon...each holds a rightful place among mankind's greatest achievements. Decades--and even centuries--later, they are talked about, revered, and symbolic of what people can accomplish when they set their minds to it.

In the little slice of the world we live and work in, great things happen all the time. Though they may not rank with DNA mapping as life-changing scientific discoveries, they certainly qualify as life-enhancing innovations. First came the CD with its whopping 650MB of storage. Then the Internet appeared with all of its time-sucking, mind-blowing, knowledge-inducing wonder. And, of course, along came DVD. The new frontier of digital technology, as it's widely touted, is now not only staking its claim on the storage and entertainment markets, but encroaching on the World Wide Web itself.

Known in as WebDVD, Multiplay, or hybrid applications, the DVD-Internet one-two-punch has found its way into commercial and professional markets alike. One variation on the theme comes from iMMERSION New Media, which brought "Event on a Disc" to market in February 2000 following roughly eight months of development. Described by the company as a "hybrid, Web-enabled DVD-Video that combines the rich media content of DVD with the immediacy and transactive nature of the Web," Event on a Disc is a content-delivery vehicle for advertisers and content producers. It's also what iMMERSION president and CEO Joseph Matheny calls "the equivalent of a narrowcast network for the Internet." Unlike broadcast networks, which, Matheny says, "imply one source signal through which everyone sees the same thing," Event on a Disc offers "a multitude of assets waiting to be used by different users in different ways, based on their unique profiles and specific needs."

Indeed, Event on a Disc's applications are numerous and its user base diverse. Matheny cites two core user groups among its dozen-plus clients: the entertainment industry (specifically, the music industry) and the corporate market, which includes presentation and distance learning segments. Company literature identifies six specific applications, which can be combined on a single disc, depending on the client's individual needs. They include film and music, ecommerce, distance learning, epublishing, business to business, and data storage and cataloging.

For clients from the entertainment industry, Event on a Disc serves as a means of delivering event-oriented discs containing music video, hotlinks to record company and band sites, tour dates, and ecommerce opportunities. Clients in the presentation market look to Event on a Disc for capturing key company information (such as a CEO's keynote at a meeting or intranet content) for delivery to staff or customers. And clients in the distance learning market use Event on a Disc to facilitate online company training and education for both new and veteran staff. Says Matheny, "Personalized advertising, ecommerce, and multimedia delivery are among the key applications we offer" and the most popular with clients.

Perhaps most importantly, Event on a Disc--like DVD itself--is portable. Because



it can be operated on a set-top or PC playback device, Event on a Disc is always accessible and flexible. According to Matheny, clients can tailor their discs to be relatively simple or extremely complex, based in large part on their content delivery needs and budgetary constraints. "The lowest-end project we did cost about \$3,000. It consisted mainly of taking source material from video, turning it into a DVD, and wrapping it with Web technology." Conversely, the highest-end project iMMERSION developed cost the client a half million dollars. "That included building everything on the back-end," Matheny explains. Besides going through the regular development process, this particular project "had animations and gave the client access to a story server publishing environment."



Of course, the final price tag also depends on how the disc will be used. "All projects are presented on a disc to the client or on a master that can be replicated and distributed according to the client's needs," says Matheny. "The one thing we don't do is distribution. Our clients can hand it out to their employees, sell it to their customers, whatever. If it's a one-time disc and they're not utilizing any back-end features (such as server-side data capture, analysis, and reporting or user profiling), then they pay for production and it's a done deal." However, if clients "want statistical analysis, on-the-fly publishing, or one-to-one pushed advertising banners with much higher click-through ratios, they sign an agreement and pay based on how long they'd like to use our services," he adds.



In the nine months since its market introduction, Event on a Disc has been awash in industry buzz. "For a long time, I was stuck in a catch-22 because we had the technology and the method for delivery, and yet, there was no market for it," Matheny recalls. "It was tough at first, especially in the first couple of months. I kind of felt like a prophet wandering in from the wilderness. But I decided that instead of waiting for the market to emerge, I'd plant the flag and start making it myself."

Spoken like a true innovator.

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