



Tips for Success 2009/10 *version 3.0*

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Tips for Success 2009/10 is a follow-up to the original **Tips for Success** last updated in 2008. Rather than adding to that document, we have prepared this *new version 3.0* compiling all the lessons learned most recently by Bell Fund producers and broadcasters – and repeating a few that should not be forgotten!

1. CONTENT

- It is important to focus on what can be done versus what you think can be done.
- Sometimes users/fans do not necessarily gravitate to the expensive features (such as the games or webisodes) but the simpler (blogs, photos).
- If the script is not totally validated, stop production until it is, to avoid loss of time and money.
- The use of educational consultants on children's content is important – but may cause delays. Be prepared.
- Know your demographic and what they do online.
- Consider different levels of challenges to hook users.
- Do not require registration before users can sample a site.
- Lock deliverables prior to production.
- Experienced writers help prevent the common error of putting too much emphasis on style and not enough on the user experience.

2. BROADCASTERS

- To avoid potential conflicts and lack of support, plan promotion and cross-promotion strategies in advance with all stakeholders
- Be prepared for changes in personnel amongst all partners. This will likely be very disruptive to your schedule and process.
- There must not be a disconnect in communications between the web producer, tv producer and broadcast partner
- Enforce broadcaster approvals and sign-offs on content, graphics, etc. to eliminate delays and revisions
- Pad the broadcaster approval schedule!

- Be aware of broadcaster privacy policies as these may limit content and community activities.
- If the broadcaster is using your interactive project to attract a new demographic to their programming, ensure that appropriate visibility and promotion is provided by the broadcaster. Be sure that you understand the intentions of the broadcaster.

3. DESIGN/TECHNOLOGY

- It always takes longer than expected to create simple, easy to use interfaces. Development and preparation are crucial.
- Thoroughly research and test new technology/engines in the development stage to ensure they will provide the desired outcome and avoid changing mid-stream.
- Some applications and functionality are easier to buy than to develop yourself.
- When creating content that involves new technology there is the danger of going too far ahead of the curve, going past the 'cool' factor into the 'ignore' factor. In the end, if it's too hard to do, or understand, it could be a big turn off. Keep it simple enough so that everyone can participate.
- Don't forget to include coding and compression expenses in the budget.
- Design the site so that you can re-skin it for other purposes and/or locations.
- The home page design is critical to engage users to interact with deep sites
- Freelancers require supervision and strong communications. Document programming code for accessibility. Production documentation serves as an important reference and orientation guide to all who are working on a project.
- Remember that design changes may impact the intended technology.
- Develop the content database first in order to streamline the content management process.
- Invest in appropriate site architecture to ensure performance, stability and scalability of web services.
- Ensure that your HD videos are also accessible in SD for users who do not have the appropriate versions of Flash

4. FEASIBILITY

- Allocate funds and time for usability testing as early as possible (even at the wireframe stage)

- Ensure that the key decision-makers are in the loop regarding timeframes to manage potential delays in the approval process.
- Develop a good working relationship with the TV production team and try to be involved as early in the TV production process as possible particularly when web elements are directly tied to the Television product. Be a true transmedia producer.
- Plan on more time than anticipated for a co-production (approvals, reviews, decisions etc)
- Consider one ultimate decision-maker, who must be available at all times. Record all approvals.
- Game testing requires a budget and time. This is not the same as usability testing of a site.
- Ensure that your partners commit the appropriate time for the project, and do not have other priorities that could adversely impact it.
- Ensure that service companies and sub-contractors can provide what you need, when you need it. Keep in contact with them regularly and regularly check the work that is being undertaken.

5. FINANCING/BUDGETING

- If fees are being deferred, try and keep deferrals to a minimum so that you can have more cash in hand to work with.
- Tax credit management is a specialty of its own and requires careful management. Caution re interactive tax credits (OIDMTC) that disqualify sites with more than 50% streaming video.
- Carefully review the cost and time assumptions for design and production labour as well as the audio/video elements (if any) to ensure they are consistent with the web design as described in the application
- Be sure to budget appropriately (time, people, costs) for video shoots. Know union issues up-front.
- Interim financing and cash flow management are important.

6. BUSINESS/MARKETING

- To encourage return of Users, try to update profiles and content as well as interact with new users through online community. Increase traffic by broadcasting user created content
- Include a “Call to Action” during broadcasts
- Know the dates of the television broadcasts, and plan accordingly.

- Be realistic in your estimates: a small or niche television audience generally means an even smaller web audience
- Do not cut marketing budgets to pay for other overages.
- Check your traffic metrics daily (or at least regularly) as they may indicate important issues that need to be resolved as quickly as possible. Be responsible for your site traffic.
- Be prepared for challenges and authorizations required and delays when working with transactional providers (such as Pay Pal).
- Serious online promotion takes human resources, time, money and savvy. It's a full-time job to do it right. Twitter, Facebook, Youtube are free social networks, but you need to assign someone to update these regularly.
- All stakeholders should participate in the marketing and promotion of the project. Do not leave it to any one partner.
- It can be difficult to design an online space at the level of current and changing expectations of Social Media, and particularly difficult when relating to a young user base. Maybe a Facebook page is sufficient.
- Plan for a web presence after the broadcast is completed. Have a v.2 homepage ready for when the series is no longer being broadcast to allow shifting of key non-broadcast elements.
- Develop a revenue model, from the beginning, to ensure that the project can be maintained and updated, even after there are no further broadcasts of the associated television program
- Ensure that the portal can be easily revised/changed to accommodate foreign language opportunities and other partner needs
- Ensure that the development ties in with a well researched business strategy.
- A team is needed to refresh and expand content.
- The introduction of micropayments after the development begins requires a change in the strategy and game play as it requires that the game be played longer and requires additional items to help move to various, more difficult levels.
- Think about how to include brands within your content throughout development, to encourage sponsors.
- Sponsorship is more difficult than expected. It is a full-time job.
- Submit the site for online awards to promote the site and attract traffic.

- SEO and google searches may be very limited if the site is hosted by the broadcaster. Develop alternatives.
- Consider “open” principles and technology and share content on multiple platforms and applications via a creative commons licence.