



Tips for Success

The following compilation represents what the Bell Fund and its stakeholders have learned about creating interactive content associated with broadcast properties. These lessons are the results of interviews, surveys, producer's reports, and commissioned research. Collectively, they represent the experiences of Canada's new media and broadcasting community.

The data is organized along the same themes as the Fund's application form, and is intended to guide proponents in structuring their new media properties. While the lessons range in detail and relevance, together they represent what the community has learned, through trial and error, to be the optimum approach in creating successful broadcast related interactive content. Applicants are urged to take advantage of these experiences and are invited to contribute their own Tips for Success in the interest of growing Canada's broadcast and new media industries through partnership and collaboration.

This document is updated regularly. Updates from 2007 are highlighted in yellow.

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1. CONTENT

1.1. Positioning

- It is important to create a unique position for your property in the marketplace, and in doing so, consider these two extremes a) no one is doing it – which often means there is no market, and b) we can do it better – which often underestimates the costs of going head to head with an established competitor. A unique twist on a well recognized successful format is usually a good entry point for producers with limited funds.
- Don't reinvent the wheel – unless other products already on the market are truly ineffective, out-of-date or inappropriate
- Think about what is the purpose of your digital property. Is it to drive traffic to the broadcast component, to be an added revenue source or is it an extension of the brand? Although it is possible to reach more than one goal in one digital property you may lose focus on what you are creating. You might find other, more appropriate ways to reach some of your goals.
- Researching similar properties is essential from the concept stage through to production and can lead to understanding proven best practices as well as what not to do. Keep an eye on the competition as changes and updates can happen quickly. Also researching your target audience (who are they, what do they like to do online etc.) is crucial to understanding content popularity and demand.
- In a nutshell, content and demographics tend to shake out like this: games and community for the tweens and teens, comedy for 18-34 year old males, and information for adults.

1.2. Children's Websites

- Kids need direction, no matter what age. Yes they are more likely to click around, but like an adult, they will get frustrated if they don't immediately see anything interesting. Identify menus and navigation clearly. If it is a game, say it is a game.
- Place a higher value on spelling and grammar in children's properties. Taking the opportunity to model correct language skills is not only responsible, but appreciated by parents and teachers as well. Keep in mind that it is often the adults who drive the children to the interactive content.
- Today's international television marketplace requires that children's/youth programs have an interactive component. It is both a sales tool and a cost of doing business, as international television sales will be impossible without it.
- Children learn by exploring and the more there is for kids to discover, the more engaging they will find your site.

- Games are very popular with the 8 – 12 year old set, but make sure games and activities are age appropriate. This is not always easy to gauge, but one alternative is to have different skill levels to accommodate different ages as well as skill levels. Games should always be tested with the target age market to ensure that they work for that audience.
- Be careful about using chat functions with an audience under the age of 18. Older teens can self-moderate, but younger users are vulnerable to a number of influences. This can mean higher ongoing maintenance costs to keep a moderator's eye on the site. (Some broadcasters of children's/youth programming want nothing to do with chats while others have restrictive rules. Be sure to talk to your broadcaster during the planning stage.)

1.3. Community

- Online communities are very popular with tweens and early teens. Methods for building communities include, content to provoke discussion, chat, Instant Messaging, Bulletin Boards, and site-internal e-mail.
- It is more effective to build a community website after a community has been identified (for example, in the second season of a series or through pre-existing material such as a book or earlier series). A community is held together by common interests and it takes time for these interests to develop to the point where a viewer/user will act upon them.
- Community websites can be expensive to maintain if they require continual monitoring and fresh content. Ideally, the community will provide its own content, but it will take a while to develop a critical mass of contributors before the producer can ease back from providing the momentum. The producer should never abandon the community even when it is up and running as it will ask for new content, producer insights and provide valuable feedback.
- Consider the temperament of the demographic of your community when designing elements such as moderation. Do they need moderation? Will they consider it 'censorship'? Active communities of adults tend to self-moderate, youth need help and kids must be moderated.
- Try to involve cast and key crew in the discussion board as it is hugely attractive to fans to be able to interact with the cast and crew behind their favourite programs either in 'special event' interactions or regular involvement.
- Massive multiplayer online gaming (MMPOG) is very popular online with the 18 and over crowd

1.4. User Generated Content

- Never underestimate the power of the user – provide them with a way to be involved on topics they can relate to, and they will happily contribute. Message boards, contests,

and submissions (articles or other creative content) are a few ways to attract involvement.

- Consider your demographics (age, technology, experience, writing, drawing, and music skills) and expected audience size before basing a significant portion of your website on user-generated content. Some formats will work with some demographics but not all will.
- Be aware of ownership and copyright issues regarding user-generated content. Prominently post the site's policy. Teens are very savvy re rights issues and will be unlikely to upload content that the Producer will own if they have an expectation of future exploitation opportunities (i.e. user created music, video, creative writing).
- Introduce user-generated content only after a community has been established. Users will be reluctant to post material if they are unsure of who else will see it and how it will be reacted to, who will own their materials. Users require a very high comfort level before contributing personal creations, and you must not take advantage of submitted materials.
- Although message boards can generate excitement for a property, make sure that they have a focus. Consider using moderators to create top-level topics so that conversations stay on topic and fans are not spread too thinly. Consider using swear filter software, an email address blocker and an abuse reporting link, if necessary.

1.5.Success of the Broadcast Component

- Remember that your digital property will have no life at all, if it is fully dependent on the associated TV program/series. In case the program fails – develop a plan B for the possibility.
- Consider a pilot approach to developing your website, just as networks pilot their series. There is no penalty (in the eyes of the Fund) in proposing a less ambitious digital property in season 1 of a series or developing your property, and then apply in season 2 for a more comprehensive site if the series is renewed, and your site has generated interest and developed an audience. The pilot website should contain the core concepts and be able to engage an audience.

1.6.Coordinating with the Broadcast Component

- The most successful new media projects are developed alongside the television component – not as a “cool” afterthought.
- Keep the lines of communication open. To prevent delays, a mutual understanding by broadcasters and producers of the scheduling/timelines in each industry involved is crucial.

- Have the TV writers and new media writers work together on the content with regular input from the broadcaster's creative executives – it keeps the brand flowing smoothly, and in the case of dramatic programming, will help with continuity.
- Expect the unexpected. Sometimes it's not possible to share assets so be prepared to re-shoot footage for the web. Assuming that footage from the television component can be used for the web component is often not the case and can lead to costly delays.
- Spend time during pre-production to ensure that there is a flexible but clear workflow between TV activities and web activities. If web is dependent on TV assets prepare a contingency plan to respond to delays or failures of TV assets. Discuss technology (eg. editing software, digital formats) to ensure there are no conflicts.
- The site should always provide the broadcast times of the program and any scheduling changes, rebroadcasts, or end of season. Indicate if a series will be renewed (if possible) and when viewers can expect more programming.
- Walk the fine-line between being current and giving too much away. Web producers need to be aware of the issues presented by multiple TV season schedules and windows and storylines to avoid spoilers, while remaining up to date.
- If the success of the site requires users to have access to content before the air date (e.g.. call for participants in the television production) – ensure the new media content is available to them before that date. Also indicate when the series will launch and how (if at all) the site will change at that time.
- If a game is linked to episodes, viewers should be able to join a game in progress if they have missed the early episodes of a series. One approach may be to have a game bible (like a story bible) that will allow users to play catch-up. Another option may be an accelerated game or a "lite" version of the game, or start new games periodically.
- For a long-running series, explore offering time-released content, as it gives the user a reason to keep returning to the site. If there is a lot to do on the site, hardcore fans of the product will keep coming back to be entertained and informed, even when the show is not on the air.
- Ensure that your technology design is flexible enough to handle multiple broadcast schedules. This makes licensing of your property easier, and avoids confusion if there are staggered broadcast schedules in the same territory.
- If you have a large site with many components planned, consider phasing them in over the broadcast season. This allows you to focus on each component as it is built and encourages the audience to keep returning for fresh content.
- If you are building one site that will support audiences from different markets you cannot plan any content that is dependent on the broadcast dates as they will differ in every market.

1.7.Cultural Implications

- It is important to consider cultural factors when designing for diverse communities. Literacy, symbolism, iconography, have a range of implications that in some cases your site may be unable to accommodate. For example there is no written Inuit language – would English suffice or would pictograms be more suitable?
- When planning a bilingual site, engage the appropriate staff to both culturally adapt and translate content. Care should also be taken with bilingual packaged software that might not have French Canadian text. Involve French-language broadcasters early on with plenty of time for changes.
- Bilingual sites must also be ‘bi-cultural’ – a simple text translation is rarely enough to encompass the differences and nuances between different cultures. Applicants are encouraged to take bi-culturalism seriously, particularly with a youth audience.

2. BROADCASTERS

2.1.Broadcaster Relations

- Content is king: however, ensuring that your content reaches your audience is also critical. Broadcasters have a major role to play in this as they have an established relationship with the audience. Viewers have expectations of broadcasters as their content providers while broadcasters want to preserve their brand recognition. That is why content producers must understand the broadcaster’s requirements and make their digital properties fit into the broadcaster’s strategy.
- Involve your broadcaster early on in the development of your digital property; preferably at the same time that you are pitching the creative for the broadcast component. Encourage the input and involvement of the broadcaster’s sales, web, and creative teams. The broadcaster is your ally – if they like your idea, they will support you however they can (promotion, services, hosting, license fees, relationships in other territories). They know their market.
- Provide detailed proposals when asking for support letters and request them far in advance of the Fund’s deadlines.
- Throughout the production of the digital property, involve the broadcaster to ensure your output is consistent with the broadcaster’s needs and is in keeping with the spirit of the agreement. Whether a broadcaster has paid a licence fee or provided services or merely a support letter that triggers Fund investment they feel that they have provided value and expect in return that a site will be designed according to their needs.
- Waiting for broadcaster approvals may cause new media development delays. Try using materials based on the rushes, so that development can continue.

- Agree early with the broadcaster on hosting and the URL of the site. These arrangements can have major impacts on technological choices (see also “Hosting Arrangements” below) and marketing approaches. Many broadcasters want to promote their own URL.
- Before designing their technical architecture, producers should ensure that their technology is compatible with that of their broadcasters. Foresee the needs of different broadcasters when a program is broadcast on different networks and on a different schedule (time-slot, URL, technical norms).
- Obtain a binding commitment from the broadcaster outlining the services to be performed by the broadcaster and/or investment or materials to be delivered to the producer. It should also outline the materials to be provided by the producer, make reference to the creative proposal and identify the milestones. Even if there is no financial investment treat the broadcaster as a financing partner with a binding contract, reporting obligations and creative input.
- If a broadcaster (for example, one of the diginets or small specialties) cannot pay a license fee or spend money on promotion be sure to outline ‘no cost’ responsibilities that can have a major impact on driving traffic to the site such as linking from the broadcaster website and references to the website in the TV series. Active broadcaster support is crucial to the success of an interactive project.
- If the broadcaster hosts the site, the producer should ensure that the broadcaster will provide traffic reports and will maintain the site.
- Make sure your business model is acceptable to your broadcaster, as some commercial approaches, partnerships, or contractual agreements may conflict with the broadcaster’s rules and policies. If you are generating revenue, determine the respective responsibilities of producer and broadcaster.. For example the broadcaster may want to sell and share advertising revenues, or you may want to share email addresses and other user data.
- Producers should pay attention to broadcaster and sponsor identification on a project. It is especially important if the program is being broadcast by several different broadcasters.
- Determine the broadcaster’s role and responsibility for long-term site maintenance. In some cases, the broadcaster may wish to host and maintain the digital property even after the end of the TV show.
- Make a plan, and stick to it. Your partners have other projects as well, and they can’t always jump because you have decided to do something drastically different.

2.2.Hosting Arrangements

- Producers and broadcasters alike need to be clear about possible compatibility and security issues when arranging for site-hosting.

- There are three views on site hosting; one says the producer should host, another says the broadcaster should host, and a third option is a variation on hybrids of the two. Each of these arrangements has its pros and cons. The issues to be considered before making any decisions are:
 - Cost of hosting
 - Technology requirements of the site
 - Capacity and expertise of broadcaster to host the site with the required technology and to maintain it online 7/24
 - Control (and cost) of content, maintenance, promotion
 - URL according to broadcaster policies (i.e. <http://www.website.com> or <http://www.broadcaster.com/website> or both with a redirect)
 - Broadcaster's desired content vs. needs of foreign market
 - Broadcaster's investment or lack of investment
 - Broadcaster's creative involvement
 - Broadcaster's goals re web development

- One arrangement is that the broadcaster licenses limited or partial content from the producer, and hosts it on a micro-site within the broadcaster's domain. Meanwhile, the entire site resides at a dedicated URL owned by the producer. This full site is producer-branded and acts as a sales tool and a destination for users arriving via non-broadcast routes. The broadcaster can link to this full site or not, depending on the terms of the agreement. To the casual user, it appears that the producer owns the full site and the content while the broadcaster owns the microsite. The benefit to the broadcaster is that their promotion of the microsite sends traffic to their site, they have only the content they want and it meets any limitations they set up (i.e. no chat or ads) and they have control over how long they want to support the microsite. The downside is that some traffic will be lost to the producer's site. Meanwhile the producer has the sales tool that they need, can capture users separate from the broadcast and outside the broadcaster's territory, can have creative freedom, control maintenance of the content and can support the website as long as they want. The downside is that some traffic may not flow through from the broadcaster and that traffic may not see the rich content.

- Another arrangement involves the site being hosted by the producer who controls the content and technology. The site is broadcaster and producer branded and is reached via the broadcaster's main site or via the web in general. To the casual user, it may appear that the broadcaster or the producer owns the site and the content. The advantage to the broadcaster is that they can drive traffic through their main website, thus promoting their website, without the cost of hosting or maintaining the site. They have no concerns re technology which they might not otherwise incorporate on their site. The advantage to the producer is that they have a standalone site which captures traffic outside the broadcaster's site and territory and they have control over the content, maintenance and technology.

- Another arrangement is that the broadcaster hosts the complete site, with no other URL hosted by the producer. Some broadcasters prefer this arrangement as they can keep their relationship with web users and viewers and have control over the content, user's interactivity and databases, maintenance and technology. They also tend to promote the site more actively. To the casual user, it appears that the broadcaster owns the site and the content. Unless broadcasters ask for exclusivity, this does not prevent the site from being replicated on another broadcaster's site. This arrangement however may limit the

producer's ability to promote their property beyond the broadcaster's audience or to use it as a sales tool and may also limit the producer's influence on content and maintenance.

- Educational or public broadcasters have stringent rules regarding youth audiences, links, sponsorships, monitoring chats, etc. and may insist on hosting their own sites for those reasons.

3. DESIGN/TECHNOLOGY

3.1.Design General

- Sometimes big and flashy isn't as important as you think. Often, a pared down, easy-to-use digital property is more appropriate for your audience, for marketability, and for profitability, so long as creativity is not sacrificed.
- Rich online content is not always appreciated or used by web visitors. Ask yourself if your bandwidth usage is really worth it and if it is integral to the concept or goals. And although broadband access is quite prevalent in North America, this may not be the case overseas where you might want to license your content in the future.
- Large downloads are still a turn-off to many users – especially those who only have a passing interest in your site.
- Non-server based systems which require full downloads may be too demanding of the capacity of most home computer systems. Server-based dissemination may be essential.
- Allowing users to personalize their own environments remains a popular feature, more so with younger users.
- Allow users to have access to all of the content they are interested in, rather than channeling their interactions. You may be hoping to design an uncluttered route to information but, at the same time, you may inadvertently restrict other options.
- If you are designing both Flash and HTML sections of your site consider the design of the separation and be sure that it will not put off visitors or make it difficult for them to switch from one to the other. This is especially important if there if users might want to flow from one side to the other for different content.
- When developing a site alongside a broadcaster, be alert to the use of proprietary technologies, software, or processes that may make it difficult for you to adapt your property for license to another broadcaster.
- Think carefully about your choice of content platforms. Consider the target market and the types of platforms they use the most. For example, the use of SMS may be more readily accepted by teens as opposed to tweens. It is also important, in the case of SMS,

to foresee compatibility issues. While SMS is compatible with some phones and service providers, it may not work with others.

- Be aware of potential difficulties for your team when using unproven software, especially one with few professional experts to bring onto your team.
- Design use of bandwidth-heavy video to maximize its impact with the minimum use. Unnecessary bandwidth can be costly.

3.2. Flash and Animation

- Consider that Flash animation required for television may be too complex and too large for use online. Consider budgeting to revise animations for web use with smaller file sizes for quicker downloads.
- Flash pages are ignored by index–robots, so if your home page is Flash-based, it will not be listed by search engines. Create hidden mirror HTML pages corresponding to the Flash pages so that index robots can locate them.

3.3. Navigation and Usability

- Innovative navigation can be confusing. Try not to let aesthetics stand in the way of a user-friendly property.
- A non-conventional menu structure can sometimes hide interesting elements. No page should be more than three or four clicks away from home.
- If a plug-in is needed, make it obvious to users by inserting a small readable footnote and a link to the supplier.
- Usability testing is highly recommended and contributes a lot to the quality of navigation and structure.
- Minimize the use of text-only pages – privacy policies and legal statements should be the extent of them. Where the property features text content, ensure that the text has been written for online viewing (shorter sentences and paragraphs) and is visually interesting to retain attention.

3.4. Maintenance

- The project does not end with delivery. Maintenance and up-dating are an integral part of the success of a project and provide an opportunity for user feedback to be integrated into the project.

- Check your site regularly to make sure everything is working properly. You may want to randomly access your site and record download times for specific files as an indication of the quality of your hosting service.
- Run link checks regularly on your site (internal and external) to ensure there are no dead links or orphans, and that all external sites you link to, reflect your original intentions.
- Hosting your own site allows you to maintain control over maintenance. However if your deal calls for a broadcaster (or anyone else) to host your site, insist on a maintenance schedule and randomly check the site yourself for problems.
- Budget for maintenance and consider how that will be financed.
- Nothing kills a site like stale content – if you don't care, why should the user?

3.5. Generating Feedback

- You should begin generating feedback from focus groups even before your digital property is built. This research should have some professional help at some point, but for the most part, casual focus groups (i.e. not professionally designed but also without anyone who may be biased in favour of the property) will do. The important point is to continually focus-test elements as they are produced to ensure your user's interests are being met.
- Polling users by email after they play a game is a valuable and inexpensive method of generating instant feedback. Be sure to include a small reward for their participation.
- Periodically survey users by e-mail to determine their satisfaction with your site. You can also solicit suggestions, as well as float trial balloons on improvements that you plan to make.

3.6. Use of Tools

- Allow users the ability to search your site by key-words if the site is large or text-based. Internal search engines may not be necessary for small, flash-based or game-based sites.
- If your site is well indexed by search engines, it will be returned to users, regardless of the search language they are using. So if your site is in English, and someone is searching in French, all French references to your site (if any) will appear, then all English references will appear. This means that your site can be searched and accessed internationally, and can be viewed in territories where the broadcast component has yet to air.
- Be sure to include key words that will attract search engines on the primary pages. Conduct test searches periodically and review key words reported in traffic reports.

- Content management tools are expensive to license or to develop, and should only be used if you have a lot of data to manage or refresh. If you are considering such a tool, run the numbers to confirm that the cost of the system will be less than the cost of manually maintaining the site.

4. FEASIBILITY

4.1. Partnering

- Practice effective partnering. Get to know your partner before signing a contract to ensure compatibility in working style and creative approach. First, consider partners in the same region to facilitate frequent face-to-face meetings. Spend time together socially to make sure that you have compatible personalities and share the same creative and business vision.
- If you are a producer who is inexperienced in web production, or funding mechanisms, consider engaging an Executive Producer to help you with the proposals, budgeting, scheduling, packaging the creative, and arranging the financing.
- New media producers who have an equity interest in a property are more likely to invest additional time, labour, and money to ensure the long-term success of the project.
- Given the difficulties integrating contractors into a team, develop a bank of freelancers that you can call upon on a regular basis. Evaluators look for past working relationships when evaluating the potential for a team's success.

4.2. Project Management

- Develop a detailed work plan as part of the development of the property to ensure the timely delivery and launching of the digital property. Where the broadcast component and the site are produced by different companies, work together to ensure that production and cross-promotional activities come off smoothly.
- **Make sure you have all the crucial players on board from the beginning. A game with a story and visuals is not that different from a television episode – you still need a writer to write the story and an editor to ensure the visuals are appropriate and well-done. Both of these people should have been brought to the project as early as possible. Write the script before producing the content. And the earlier an editor is on board, the sooner the visuals are worked out so that programming can begin.**
- Use extranets and collaborative work tools to facilitate workflow and communication between all partners and team members. This is especially important when people are separated by distance. Schedule regular in person (where possible) or phone meetings where issues can be aired. Do not rely solely on technological interaction.

- Make a habit of notifying all partners and sponsors when milestones are reached (or not). Even if you are behind schedule, your partners will appreciate an honest report of the situation.

5. FINANCING/BUDGETING

5.1. Finance Research

- Research ALL funds before applying. The private funds are very aware of each other and their different structures.
- Look for funding everywhere – it’s a big economy, there are many options out there – in fact Fund evaluators look for creative financing arrangements as much as they do creative content.
- Think of your market. A good solid concept does not necessarily need to cost \$250,000. A very effective site can be produced with a modest budget. Be focused. Your site does not have to be all kind of things for all kind of users. Put the money where your market is. And remember that a modest site is easier to maintain after the funding period. Finally, take note that the Fund can easily recognize an inflated project with little market promise.
- Look for other avenues of partnership with portals like MSN, AOL, and Canoe for hosting or marketing opportunities.
- Think about funding to maintain or update your site over time, and be prepared to pay higher server costs (for higher traffic) if your site is successful.
- If you are using tax credits as a source of funding, always include the calculations to support your dollar figure.
- If you or your partners are deferring salaries, include a letter to that effect, indicating the amount and the terms of recoupment.

5.2. Finance Partnerships

- Do not make claims that cannot be backed up, for example, “Bell Mobility is on board” – where is the letter of interest or support? “Sponsorship of \$20,000” – who is your sponsor? It is important to get letters of interest or commitment. If it’s still early in the project, then provide a detailed list of who has been approached or contacted.
- Keep all investors and partners informed of significant changes in your project, positive or negative. Do this whether it’s a contractual obligation or not. Business is built on relationships and you should take every advantage to build relationships with your partners that will survive this project and many more to come.

- With sponsorships, don't just think about what the sponsor can give you (in terms of cash), ask yourself what can you give them? This is another opportunity to be creative and come up with a concept that your sponsor will welcome as a value-add.
- Ensure that your majority finance partners are given preferential credits in your site. Many new media funds and sponsors are providing grants, and logo placement is really all they ask for. Try not to bury them all in a massive logo farm.

5.3. Budgeting

- Your margin (some call it mark-up, others profit) should be contained in your Overhead line item and not distributed throughout your budget. The Fund is very familiar with the going rates for new media personnel and can readily identify where fees have been inflated.
- The same person's name appearing in different line items always looks suspicious. Avoid this if possible. At the very least, do not put someone's name in a management role and then later in a subordinate role. You cannot manage yourself. (At least not on a budget form.)
- Budget for focus testing throughout the development and production of the digital property.
- Always indicate the units you are budgeting for (months, weeks, days, hours). The budget form offers all options in the column title, but very few producers indicate the appropriate unit.
- Don't forget to amortize the cost of any equipment or software that appears in your budget. It is more than likely that a workstation or software package will still have some life in it after you are finished. This *terminal value* has to be subtracted from the purchase price. A good guide is to submit what it would cost you to rent the item rather than buy it.
- The more detail in your budget, the more faith it generates. Avoid large estimates and ballpark figures – you may be able to break the figure down in detail, but evaluators don't know that. Attention to detail is a virtue with the Fund's money.
- A cash flow pro-forma is always a welcome companion to a budget. Be sure to indicate where cash is coming from and where it is going, on a monthly basis. Don't worry about profit or loss in this document; if you don't manage your cash properly you won't be around to see either.
- **If there are multiple producers on the project make sure that you have budgeted and planned for the administrative support required to keep the flow of information, content and approvals going through the project.**

6. BUSINESS/MARKETING

6.1. Marketing Strategy

- Think re-branding, re-purposing, licensing, versioning, and micro-sites. Foreign broadcasters may not want your whole site, but might be interested in one or two modules, or one or two games. Non-broadcast sites or operators in other media (e.g. kiosks, CD-ROMs, intranets, book publishers) may be interested in licensing content if it is not television dependent. Remember the old business adage “You must learn how to divide before you learn how to add.”
- If you are producing a children’s site and hope to market it in the U.S., be aware of the requirements of the federal Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). And if you are producing a French-language site for the Quebec market you must comply with the “Loi sur la publicité destinée aux enfants”.
- Don’t restrict game playing to a specific run of the broadcast program – consider all options, PDA’s mobiles, kiosks, etc. Users will play a good game long after the television program is no longer on air.
- The educational market/distribution should be better known to producers. Producers should consider ways of involving educators in the financing of their projects. Consider an educational distributor if your material can be packaged as modules and downloaded, sold as CD/DVD’s or licensed to producers of support materials for educators.
- E-commerce and merchandising are dependent on large audience traffic. It is best to consider these options once you have established an online community and have enough traffic to make the investment worthwhile.
- Usable and relevant metrics are at the root of any good marketing plan. Be sure to track as much data as possible – visitors, subscribers, referring URL’s, visit length, content uploads, successful game-plays, attrition rates, etc. This information is easy and inexpensive to collect and may provide insights that you hadn’t considered.
- You don’t have to have one big national broadcaster to make a digital property work – think about all the little provincials – they in total will give you a national audience.
- Previous Fund projects have demonstrated that licensing content is a more viable strategy, than licensing technology.
- A savvy marketer might consider setting up the translations of a site and generating traffic prior to approaching a foreign broadcaster for a licensing deal

6.2. Revenue Generation

- Being able to fragment your property for various licensing opportunities is the key to generating revenue. This means licensing elements of your site to foreign broadcasters,

non-broadcaster sites, or offline customers. Smaller fragments are also easier for sponsors to support.

- Another source of revenue connected to licensing is to charge for the modifications required to adapt your material to your buyer's site (i.e. language, culture, audience or non-broadcast modifications).
- Be realistic in your revenue models. It is possible to earn revenue but unrealistic plans will hurt your application. For example, do not rely on merchandising when your property has not proven it has a sufficient audience. The best way to support revenue projections is to use concrete examples of revenues or sales for similar products.
- Develop an E-commerce strategy early on, but expect that it may only be integrated in the future. Incorporate products, contests and other E-commerce aspects only where and when appropriate.
- If you are planning on registration or subscription fees, ensure that parts of your property can be sampled and enjoyed before requiring a commitment on the user's part. Knowing when to ask for the sale is a key component of any sales effort.
- Draw a direct link between the revenues you expect to generate and the costs of keeping your digital property alive and supported. Knowing how much you will have to make to keep your project afloat is always instructive.
- Previous Fund projects have shown that many producers under-estimate how difficult it is to sell online ad space and how specialized a skill it is. Plan for help in this area if it is a key component of your revenue stream.
- Niche sites struggle to attract advertiser attention even when they speak directly to their demographic. Find an aggregator that represents other sites with a similar demographic than can entice advertisers by offering them multiple website exposures.
- Sponsors are unlikely to get involved with an unproven concept. They need to know that their 'investment' will pay off through a working prototype or mini-site. As they also want to know for sure that the audience is there, you may want to wait till Phase 2 or Season 2 of your site before developing sponsor-dependent content such as embedded advertising.
- Learn the needs of your business partnerships before finalizing the concept and applying to the Bell Fund. For example, common issues include sponsors who want to see a prototype and online music retailers who have concerns about security from an unproven site. Incorporate solutions in the early development stage rather than in production.

6.3.Promotion

- New media projects have a potential life of their own, as well as cohabiting with the television series. Find a way to promote the digital property separately from the

broadcast component, as well as together with it so that it may survive between broadcasts as well as after broadcast.

- Ensure that all your promotions have the blessings of your broadcaster and sponsors. These are usually large organizations with a number of corporate policies that you may not be aware of.
- Keep in mind that in this modern age, we have more options than posters. Think of viral e-mail campaigns, text messaging, blogs, newsgroups, and electronic press releases – there are now more ways than ever to inform your audience.
- Don't surrender your promotional campaign completely to your broadcaster. Granted they probably have the money and the experience to do it better, but you won't develop those skills yourself unless you are actively involved in the process. Their goals may not be the same as yours (i.e. driving traffic to a broadcaster microsite vs. to the larger producer hosted site).
- Brainstorm with your broadcaster to maximize the cross promotional opportunities that exist between your digital property and their program.
- Direct your audience! URL's at the end of the show are not enough. Audiences need to know what the site is about and what they will gain from the experience. On-air promotions are an effective way to produce initial contact from the audience of the broadcast component.
- Attempt to get bumpers to promote your URL on air. The web address may only appear in a flash, but the format is a recognizable one, and viewers will understand that the program has a site. Unless your URL is counter-intuitive, people will figure the address in a few tries, or will use a search engine to find it. However, recognize that bumpers are ineffective in children's programming where kids do not stick around for the credits and do not like to read their TV.
- Use Search Engine Optimization (SEO) services to ensure that your site is well represented by all the popular engines.
- Electronic newsletters and E-Zines are effective in developing audience loyalty.
- Spread the word about your project by syndicating specific elements from your site to other interested websites and receive income based on view counts.
- Consider submitting the site for all applicable design and interactive awards. Not only does it raise the profile of the creative work but it also drives traffic to the site and builds the audience. Plan an award campaign that integrates with the marketing campaign.
- All indications are that the site should launch before the broadcast component. This is especially crucial for one-offs. Advance promotion by the site helps build an audience for broadcast. The site should be online several weeks before the launch of the show. Typically a good launch date is when the press release is issued to announce the series.
- An experienced publicist is usually invaluable. Allowing an expert to handle the promotion of the project frees time for you to focus on other crucial aspects.

7. APPLYING TO THE BELL FUND

7.1. Before Applying

- Before you apply, call or e-mail the Fund with any questions or concerns you have about your upcoming application. After a deadline, the administration has a lot of work with the applications on hand, and any changes you request may not reach the evaluators in time.
- When reapplying with a project previously not approved – call the Fund. The administration is more than happy to provide feedback – maybe something needs more detail in your application or maybe the project isn't right for the Fund.
- If your project lacks major structural elements, you may be better off applying for development funding rather than production. Honesty is all-important. Don't make promises or commitments in your application that you can't honour.
- The more organized and complete your application -- the better your project will be viewed. It is frustrating to both administration and the evaluators when documents are missing, out of date, or disorganized. This definitely affects the project's chance of success.

7.2. The Application

- The biggest problem with applications is poorly organized material. If this is not your forté, hire someone to help you. It is frustrating for evaluators to page through reams of paper, coming across the same paragraph two, -- sometimes three times. Often there is contradictory data, often there is none. Learn to summarize while at the same time offering easy access to supporting detail.
- An online mock-up of a web page is better than a printed screen capture. A combination of both is best.
- Project management and technology are important, but so are creative, sales, and marketing – cover all these topics in your application, and strive for balance in depth and detail.
- Consider carefully the amount of documentation submitted with your application – evaluations are not based on weight. Be concise and thorough, but don't repeat or try to impress with documents that are not important to the evaluation process.

8. FINAL REPORTS

- When the Fund requests a Final Report on your site, for the most part what we really want to know is what you learned from the project that could be passed on to the community (like these “Tips”). There is no penalty for learning, so be forthright in what went wrong and what went right.
- If you went over-budget, show how the balance of the project was financed, and what obligations you undertook to secure that financing.
- It is alright if more elements were added to your site than originally intended. Similarly, if you ended up with less than you proposed; explain what the problems were, what you learned, and how you would do things differently next time. The greatest loss would be losing the benefit of what you have learned.
- How can you prepare a final report without knowing your audience response? People will want to know if your site was successful, user stats -- unique visitors, repeat visitors, visit length, site activity – game plays, message posts -- are really the only way to demonstrate that. These reports also help the Fund track its success over time. Do not submit a Final Report until you have these metrics or follow it up with traffic patterns and trends.
- Final Reports are used by the Funding Agencies as tools to create new benchmarks and priorities. We need to know what you learned from the experience to know how to better serve the new media and broadcast communities. For the Bell Fund’s Final Report Guidelines, see http://www.ipf.ca/Bell/Applications/Final_Report_Guidelines.doc .