

The iAd Network: Personal Digital Signage

Written by Gary Kayye
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We are about to witness the largest deployment of digital signage in history.

That's right - the largest deployment of digital signage technology, ever.

How big?

Well, well over 100 million (yes, million) people (translation: sets of eyeballs) will instantly be part of the world's largest digital signage network tomorrow (July 1st) when Apple launches iAd on the iPhone, iPod Touch and, one assumes, the iPad.



Apple has laid out its plan with iAd and it's pretty simple - advertisers can embed "interactive" ads inside Apps (I also assumes that eventually - although this hasn't been addressed directly by Apple, yet - ads could be embedded into other services that Apple includes on all iPhones (e.g., Mail, Text Messaging/MMS, Safari).

However, these aren't just banner ads, the ads are interactive such that you can run the ad totally inside the App itself and when you finish the ad, go back to where you were in the App. May not seem like a big deal, but one of the biggest complaints of banner ads is that they take you somewhere on a website that you may not want to go - thus, many people never click on them.

Through iAd, Apple can track everything from how many times the ad was viewed, how long the user stayed on the ad, whether or not a purchase was made from inside the App (yes, you'll be able to purchase in an ad WHILE staying in the App that contained the App the entire time).

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So, over 100 million potential targets for ads. And, using Apple's stat that the average person uses Apps 30 minutes per day, that translates to more than 1 billion potential impressions a day. Since we're in the DS market are all in this to grab eyeballs and help advertisers get their messages heard through the clutter, we should see the value in this network - and it's only getting bigger (Apple's not even the biggest provider of SmartPhones, yet).

This is the beginning of the personal digital signage network.

This may not seem like a big deal to you reading this today, but bookmark this issue or log this date in your calendar to read this again two years from today and you'll see the impact of this was astonishing. And, the world's first personal digital signage network will look a lot different in 2012 - here's why:

In the near future, the iAd Network could literally give marketers the ability to send ads in all sorts of ways (text messages, embedded into Apps, via GPS-location-based tracking and, even actually, e-mail) and, believe it or not, users will LOVE it.

OK, OK, I can hear the naysayers out there now - what about "personal freedom" and "privacy"?

Well, in this case, Apple's got something we all wish we had - a set of evangelical users (iPhone lovers) out there who'll gladly give up personal freedom to save a buck and try this out.

Why? Well, here's an example of how it will work - you tell me what you think...

So, you're at your local mall and you're walking by Starbucks and just then, your iPhone in your pocket starts to vibrate. You pull it out and, voila, you've got a text message from Caribou Coffee offering you a \$2 off coupon to skip on by Starbucks and head over to them for a pick-me-up beverage. Or, on a larger scale, imagine you're at the local BMW dealership and you get an iAd message from the local Lexus dealer that says he'll give you two round-trip tickets to Disney World if you'll come test drive a Lexus before buying that BMW. This is targeted advertising at its finest.

How's this all work?

Well, for years (for three years to be exact - the time Apple's had the iPhone in the hands of their clients), Apple and AT&T have been building the ultimate database about you: where you live, how many phone calls you make, who you call, when you call them, where you browse to on the Internet, where you shop (remember, this phone's got a GPS inside of it), where you stop for coffee every morning, etc, etc, etc. Until now, there's nothing they could really do with that information other than, well, just store it.

But, in the future, they can leverage it - and you'll let them! Why? Well, free stuff, that's why!

We clip coupons, we compare gas prices as we come to a corner with three stations, we carefully book flights using the cheapest routes in most cases, we've moved to buying many items online just to save the tax or shipping costs - so, why don't you think iPhone users (and buyers) would allow iAds to invade their iPhones when, in this case, it's targeted, it's timely and it's PERSONAL?

We will, just watch. And, the best part about it? As I said earlier, it's going to be the largest deployment is Digital Signage in history (something we will all appreciate when we see it).

Editor's Note: We're with Gary 100% on this one, but there are always some people who are sceptical. Here's their side of the iAD story...

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