

The Life Channel

Breathing life into community engagement

Scala software facilitates sophisticated, flexible and relevant digital communications from The Life Channel.

A POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE: ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY THROUGH OUT-OF-HOME TELEVISION



The Life Channel is Europe's largest community-based, digital out-of-home television network. It supports strong sustainable communities by delivering tailored programming via strategically placed TV screens designed to support community initiatives and promote community engagement. It does so through venues that reach out to viewers in education, healthcare, business and leisure environments.

The Life Channel has become a key conduit for local, regional and central government agencies to deliver messages directly to the local population as they go about their daily lives.

This community positioning has enabled The Life Channel to successfully engage with a wide variety of government agencies, brands and service providers who have recognized the benefits and opportunities for their communications strategies. In only the last four years, the channel has grown by a minimum of 120% annually, peaking at over 300% in 2006.

This growth has been powered by the channel's ability to reach out and deliver sometimes complex messages in a recognizable and understandable format which has proven to be highly effective by independent research conducted by government agencies.

In 2008, the UK's new Department of Health campaigns successfully used The Life Channel, incorporating the cross-government social movement "Change4Life," to promote the re-launched NHS Web sites NHS Choice and NHS UK.

In the same year, a significant number of new Primary Care Trusts contracted with The Life Channel. The Life Channel currently has contracts with over 50% of the UK Trusts with the balance expected to join the network during 2009.

That same year, many significant initiatives, charities and healthcare brands were launched, including No Smoking Day, British Heart Foundation, Sanofi Pasteur, HoMedics, Help the Aged, Learn Direct, Direct Gov, DWP, Thomas Cook, SAGA, Macmillan, Pfizer and Astra Zeneca.



The diversity of The Life Channel's estate is part of its strategy to provide its clients with reach, both in a geographic area and by the type of venue, thus ensuring that either the whole community or specific audiences within that community can be reached and communicated to effectively.

Today, The Life Channel Group is able to claim to be the largest out-of-home television business in the UK, with contracts in place for a total 4,000 venues reaching over 8 million viewers per month right across the UK.

The Life Channel network is one consistent brand with two primary networks: Life Channel Surgeries and Life Channel Schools. Each of these two primary networks supports

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several playlists which are tailored to reflect their specific environments. At the time of writing, The Life Channel Schools network had more than 1,200 sites contracted with playlists tailored for Primary, Junior, Secondary and Tertiary Schools or Colleges. The Life Channel Surgeries network is contracted in more than 2,000 GP surgeries (doctors' offices) with additional tailored versions in Sure Start and children's centers, opticians, pharmacies, dentists and community retailers.

Additionally, The Life Channel's sister business, Life Channel Communications (previously Storecast Media) also operates BPtv and Tesco Screens networks on behalf of Hughes Network Systems, which both also use Scala to provide central and local content management services.

"The combination of the flexibility, functionality and control Scala provides has been a contributory factor to the growth of The Life Channel by enabling us to scale into new areas of the community and offer ever higher levels of localized content and user interactivity to our clients," said Phil Austin, CEO, The Life Channel.

"The upwards compatibility of Scala means that over the six years of working closely together, we have several variants of their systems operating seamlessly within our network. Together we have worked on developing new

services for the benefit of our customers whether they be users, hosts or communication partners. I look forward to working closely with Scala in 2009 as we expand and engage more viewers in the community through a variety of refined and targeted channels."

Facilitating growth: scaling up and broadening out

Given the considerable diversity in The Life Channel's estate, which is driven by its community positioning, how does The Life Channel manage its output to ensure that the brand can operate effectively across all sites and yet retain relevancy to each type of venue and audience profile?

As a brand that operates in many different parts of the community, where some require a different approach to the core programming strategy, The Life Channel operates a sophisticated programming and commercial strategy that aligns the channel precisely to the needs and interests of the community it is being broadcast into.

In this regard, The Life Channel operates as the master or "super-brand," built to allow for "brand stretch" or the creation of several sub-brands and sub-variants. From an operational perspective, these take the form of specific playlist variants of the master brand. Content from the overall Life Channel brand is adapted to be relevant to the

Super-brand	Sub-brand (playlists)	Sub-variant (sub-playlists)
The Life Channel	Surgery Network <i>Emphasis on health & community</i> TLCSA	Surgeries Sure Start/Children's Centers Pharmacies Opticians Community retail outlets Dentists (from April 2009) Surgeries in South Africa
The Life Channel	Schools Network <i>Emphasis on education, health & community</i>	Infant Primary Junior Secondary
	The Life Channel Ireland	Secondary

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individual sub-brand, the environment in which it operates, and the community to remain relevant to the viewer at all times.

This means that in each of the many community environments where The Life Channel operates, a version of the core program flexes as many of the component parts as necessary to ensure the channel meets and exceeds the criteria required by its clients and its viewers.

To enable the business to operate with this level of flexibility, The Life Channel has developed sophisticated internal mechanisms using proprietary technologies and methods that enable the businesses to manage the process of creating new variants of the core programming strategy, implement it efficiently across its channel portfolio, and manage all from within the same Scala content management platform.

Managing diversity

To service the considerable requirements of the network in providing fresh, up-to-date, relevant content for a wide range of sub-brands and viewers, The Life Channel publishes over 800 pieces of content to the network every month, ranging from bespoke films, well-known, relevant broadcast programs, and health and well-being messages

to national and local advertisements.

In order for The Life Channel to generate, manage, schedule and facilitate the transmission of this content, it has its own internal production department and a dedicated network and content management team, all of whom use a suite of Scala products for:

- Scheduling content
- Playing region- or site-specific content and messaging
- Providing play-out reports
- Showing localized information (news, weather, etc.)
- Conditional playback across all networks

This team is further backed up by a large customer service and help desk team to ensure The Life Channel can provide a high level of customer care.

So sophisticated is the network and content management process that you could have a piece of content playing on the network within hours. This provides many clients with the opportunity to use the network not just to communicate planned messages but also urgent messages where a

Super-brand	Sub-brand (playlists) <i>Unique broadcast items produced per month</i>	Sub-variant (sub-playlists) <i>Unique items produced per month</i>
The Life Channel	Surgeries Network <i>Emphasis on health & community</i>	Surgeries Sure Start/Children's Centers Dentists 12
	Surgery items published: Editorial incl. news & weather 60 Ads & Campaigns 300 TLCSA 60	Pharmacies 12 Opticians 6 Community retail outlets 12 Surgeries in South Africa
The Life Channel	Schools Network <i>Emphasis on education, health & community</i> Editorial incl. News x 6 variants <i>equaling 80</i>	Infant up to 15 Primary up to 15 Junior up to 15 Secondary up to 15
	The Life Channel Ireland	Secondary, reversioned for Ireland

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same-day necessity exists, such as emergency broadcasts, missing children notices and alerts.

The Life Channel content is primarily broadcast as high-quality video content by virtue of the significant levels of bespoke filming that the channel undertakes for itself and its clients. This approach is appropriate to the way in which audiences view many of the channels, given that in many instances they are seated or queuing and have a good opportunity to see the content for a considerably longer amount of time than they might in a retail environment, for example.

Often this wait can be up to 30 minutes in a surgery, 20 minutes in a pharmacy and so on. The duration of broadcast items, overall program lengths and refresh rates are all based on the balance between providing each viewer the opportunity to see each item once versus more than once (repetition). This balance is constantly tested through primary research and informs regular reviews of programming and playlist strategies across the entire network.

Creating engagement and ownership through local-ization and personalization

Scala is used by The Life Channel to provide a comprehensive content design and scheduling service to facilitate the opportunity for local control within the framework of the overall managed service.

Scala Designer is used to create specific messages that aggregate images, video and text together using design tools and templates to enable The Life Channel team to compose engaging animated messages quickly and efficiently. These are the same tools which are also available to customers who may wish to create and upload their own content to The Life Channel.

Scala is also used extensively by The Life Channel to provide a wide array of content management services, from the creation and composition of playlists using existing content to the provision and addition of "dynamic fields."

The Life Channel uses dynamic fields extensively across the surgery and school sub-brands where, for example, regular news updates are taken from RSS feeds into

templates created in Scala. The surgery sub-brand also features regional weather forecasts and opportunities exist to localize other content relating to events, messages, bulletins and so forth. For example, every surgery has the capability to display a set of tailored surgery information items, such as opening hours, doctors and staff, clinic details, nearest pharmacy and any other relevant notifications. These are produced as templates and then text files of relevant information and photos are dropped into the templates to give each surgery a personalized feel.

The localization and personalization of content elicits a high degree of goodwill from end-users as it provides them with an opportunity to engage with the channel to enhance their operations and in doing so, creates a sense of ownership and responsibility between the user and "their channel."



The flexibility of the Scala platform provides other opportunities for The Life Channel to offer up to the network an "all-site" piece of content which in turn is also made locally specific by virtue of customizing fields within that content. For example, The Life Channel produced a message for Flora margarine, which promoted a Healthy Heart Roadshow, that ran on all screens across the network. The Life Channel created adaptations of an end-frame for each region that was specific to the time and place of the roadshow in their area. In doing so, it made the content relevant to the viewer.

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The ability of The Life Channel to provide site-specific messaging as part of a wider campaign or broadcast is a sophistication that many clients are eager to use. It ensures that both the big message and any local variant retain relevance to the community into which they are being broadcast.

User-generated content is now child's-play

The Life Channel offers a wide variety of national, regional and local broadcast options across a variety of different brands across its estate. Go one level deeper and it becomes really exciting, where users are given the opportunity to create their own content and publish it to their own Life Channel network.

Take, for example, The Life Channel Schools network, where 1,200 sites reach over 500,000 students and teachers every month. Each of these schools receives relevant Life Channel content plus school-specific information on the curriculum, teachers, student clubs, upcoming events, awards and so forth. The content produced by The Life Channel Schools Network is localized at the point of broadcast to create a channel unique to each school.

Furthermore, all schools have the ability to create and upload their own content and to facilitate this, The Life Channel provides a team of trainers to visit schools and educate users on how to use the network to encourage them to fully utilize all its functionality.

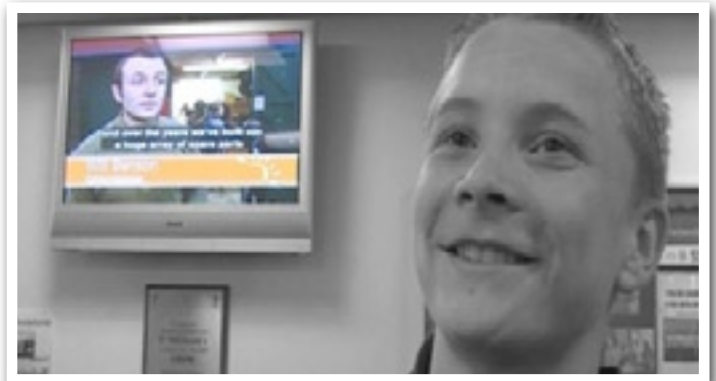
Offering schools the opportunity to create and publish their own content can generate over 1,000 playlists across the schools network, all of which are moderated and managed by both the school and The Life Channel through a combination of editorial control and careful playlist management courtesy of Scala.

"We have found that in providing our clients with the ability to showcase their own messages and content they start to care about what we put onto the screen and it stimulates what they in turn wish to say to their customers, visitors, pupils and staff. The importance of this cannot be underestimated because the channel then begins to take on a look, feel and purpose unique to that venue as relevant, tailored programming is created, in many cases by viewers themselves, and it can't get more democratic than that," said Joy Salisbury, Director of The Life Channel.

2009 and beyond

With the imminent launch of The Life Channel's dental network, expansion into Northern Ireland and South Africa, plus existing rollouts throughout the healthcare, education and community sectors, The Life Channel is strategically positioned to capitalize on its growth. Its profile, audience and proximity to the community are helping it become more appealing to government agencies that wish to reach into the community and to brands that want to do the same within the structure of the existing network offering.

High-profile clients signing up for 2009 include the Department of Health (Change4Life), Food & Drink Federation and GR Lane, and renewals from 2008 clients



include Tesco (pharmacy), Food Standards Agency, Pfizer and Astra Zeneca, to name but a few.

"In economic times dominated by a lack of financial and consumer confidence, The Life Channel stands proud as a business which has grown significantly and bucked the trend. It has developed into the largest digital out-of-home enterprise in Europe in terms of venues and media revenue, and consequently is the European market leader in terms of its community outreach. This is the product of several years of hard work developing and refining the business to ensure it was capable of meeting the needs of clients today and able to explore opportunities in the future. I am very pleased that Scala has been part of that journey, and we continue to support The Life Channel in facilitating further developments and offering customer value in the future," said Oscar Elizaga, VP Sales & Operations, EMEA, Scala.