



RADIOPLAYER CONNECTED TV INTERFACE REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

NB : Please take account of our challenging timescales. Don't consider submitting a proposal unless you can turn it round fast, and you have development resource available immediately.

Introduction

UK Radioplayer Ltd wishes to hear from companies with extensive experience of designing, developing, and deploying connected TV apps. We aim to start rolling out on connected TV platforms in the first half of 2012.

Background

UK Radioplayer Ltd is a not-for-profit partnership formed by the BBC, Global Radio, GMG Radio, Absolute Radio, and RadioCentre. Its aim is to help grow radio listening on connected devices.

'Radioplayer V1' was launched on March 31st 2011, aimed at improving the user experience for radio on personal computers. This initial incarnation of Radioplayer has about 6.7 million unique users a month, and features live, on-demand, and podcast audio from more than 300 stations.

Following launch, we moved on to build 'syndication and discovery' features for Radioplayer V1, which capitalise on its common standards, and help grow listening. We have launched a 'Facebook Radioplayer' app, a Google Chrome extension, and an installable Adobe AIR app.

UK Radioplayer Ltd is also developing versions of the model for IPTVs, mobiles, tablets, and hybrid radio devices. This connected TV work is one of our highest priorities for the first half of 2012.

Outline brief

We are seeking a development partnership with a company specialising in connected TV apps. We are particularly keen to talk to firms with expertise in building rich media (audio, video) interfaces.

We are a 'content advisory partner' for the YouView project, and aim to roll out on that platform at its launch. We are also interested in other connected TV platforms with relatively high market penetration. This could include TV sets, set-top boxes, and games consoles.

Scope and style of work

We're already working on many of the 'back-end' elements that will help power Radioplayer on connected TVs. We're extending our metadata schema to include assets we know we'll require from our 300+ stations, and building structured databases alongside our existing search engine, so we can quickly configure data feeds.

We are therefore primarily seeking a 'front-end' technology partner, to help us design an innovative IPTV interface for radio, and ensure it can work across a variety of connected TV platforms.

This project forms part of a wider strategic vision for UK Radio, affecting the entire industry. We are looking for a company which has experience of working in partnership, in a collaborative fashion. We favour an iterative approach to development, based on brainstorming, wireframing and prototyping – rather than a long requirements-gathering exercise and exhaustive technical scoping.

Starting point

Through pan-industry workshops, prototyping of potential interfaces, and our experience with Radioplayer to date, we've developed some initial thoughts about the connected TV version.

We would seek to take this thinking forward with our selected partner, and quickly turn it into a list of features for launch. These could include (but are not limited to) the following list....

Potential navigation/recommendation features

- Search (across hundreds of stations and thousands of programmes)
- User presets
- A-Z image carousels of stations and on-demand content
- 'My friends like' via Facebook Connect integration
- 'Local to me'
- 'Trending on Radioplayer'

During playback of specific station/programme

- Audio stream
- Station name
- Programme name
- What's on now (track etc)
- Twitter feed
- Station logo
- Programme image
- Dynamic imagery (track on now, webcam)
- Video stream?
- HTML5 display of commercial / interactive assets?
- Ability for a station to 'skin' their playback page for a sponsor?

Commercial considerations

We're a non-profit organisation, 50% owned by the BBC, with a brief to grow digital listening across the entire industry. As such, we will be looking for technology partners who recognise that there is more to this development relationship than immediate financial profit.

We are also being approached by several overseas radio groups, some of them also with strong public service radio heritage, keen to explore ways of sharing the Radioplayer model via a licensing arrangement.

We own the rights to all Radioplayer front-end and back-end systems developed to date, and would seek to continue this principle when developing for connected TVs. However that doesn't preclude co-ownership, or joint exploitation, of the interfaces we develop together, and we are keen to explore innovative ways of returning value to those involved.

Next steps

This week: Contact UK Radioplayer for more information (contact details below).

By Friday 20th Jan: Submit a short (2-pages) proposal covering the criteria outlined below. Please send a pdf to michael.hill@radioplayer.co.uk.

By Friday 27th Jan: UK Radioplayer will contact shortlisted firms, and arrange further discussions.

By early Feb: Selection complete, agreement in place, development starts.

Criteria for selection of successful firm

- Understanding of specific commercial/partnership concerns, and ability to consider appropriate commercial model for app development
- Innovative approach to challenges of navigation and customisation, across hundreds of stations and thousands of programmes
- Ability to scale across several connected TV platforms in a cost-effective fashion
- Familiarity with audio and video metadata models, search engines, streaming protocols
- Deep expertise in 'user experience' development for connected TVs - including demonstrable technical understanding of YouView platform requirements, and proven experience of developing rich media interfaces for at least 3 connected TV platforms
- Understanding of the Radioplayer model, and the specific qualities of Radio as a medium

More information

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