



Get with the Paltalk program

IM On Steroids With Audio And Video

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What if there was a cool and relatively new technology to add to your radio station's arsenal? One many of your listeners already use that costs practically nothing and will make you an instant hero at your company because you introduced a new revenue model and helped grow the ranks of your PIs, too? Well, it's not only possible, it's real, and it's called Paltalk. Brought to market eight years ago by CEO Jason Katz, Paltalk (paltalk.com) is a free downloadable, instant-messaging technology that adds audio and video

capabilities. The only cost you incur is within the application's ability to view other people's video streams via a subscription.

In short, the application has morphed into a group-chat environment that is less focused on communicating one on one with people (as you do with AOL, ICQ, Yahoo and other IM applications) and more about connecting an audience on a topic they care about.

"It takes place in a multimedia environment where all participants are able to listen, talk, type, read and share their video stream and see others do the same," Paltalk president/COO Joel Smernoff says.

Downloadable for PCs (sorry, no Mac application yet), Smernoff says the largest chat room they've seen so far is 3,000 simultaneous users. "They could go up to 10,000," he says.

Other things to know about the application: As a user you can go into any chat room and participate with Paltalk's 4 million active members. "There's 50,000-75,000 users at any one time on the service in about 4,000 chat rooms," Smernoff says. And those chat-room conversations, set up and monitored by the room owner/moderators, could be on anything from music to Wall Street suits chatting up financial issues.

Paltalk also takes advantage of advertising opportunities within the application, but

Smernoff says it's "very light."

"It's just for the free users. There are small banner ads, and we try to keep it unobtrusive, but it does allow us to monetize the service. There are real costs when you use this amount of bandwidth."

The Paltalk application is already used in radio, for one, by XM Satellite Radio/CBS Radio syndicated morning personalities Opie & Anthony.

"Anthony, who is somewhat of a techie, discovered it from what I understand," Smernoff says. "He had the idea to participate in a chat room from within their radio studios using webcams to show the audience what was happening while they were on the air and to participate with them in a two-way dialogue."

Thanks to O&A talking about Paltalk on the air and on their Web site (opieandanthony.com), Smernoff says that there are 500-1,000 O&A listeners going to the duo's live-streaming video chat room every morning.

"It's like taking radio from a one-way broadcast to a two-way dialogue. Listeners can talk to the talent and each other and comment on the show in real time. This is where radio is going. Instead of just listening, you can now participate with radio. Owners and programmers can now open up their stations to the whole world and not just be limited to their own local signal handicaps."



Smernoff says that Paltalk is now in discussions with a variety of other media as well as radio about becoming involved with the application for revenue generation.

"They are all starting to realize that they have to start doing something with the Internet and two-way communication," Smernoff says.

There is one obvious negative involved with using this application, which centers on the content of what's going on in the chat rooms (both audio and video) and the potential reservations that an advertiser may have about becoming involved with it. Smernoff says it has

that covered, too. "We've worked very hard to keep it a clean environment. It's important to us that people feel comfortable."

To accomplish that the Paltalk brain trust has empowered all chat-room owners and their deputies to have room-monitoring tools that give them the ability to take down video, take away a microphone and kick a user out for inappropriate behavior. "It's not the Wild West," Smernoff says.

Another way Paltalk makes its chat rooms more enjoyable is with a 250-person group of trained volunteers who form a neighborhood-type watch, standing by 24/7 worldwide. The group is able to communicate in nine languages and can be invited into a room to moderate disputes.

Making the Paltalk experience even more intriguing for radio is a new "Super IM" Messenger 9.0 version coming out in December that will allow multiparty and multimedia for up to five people in an IM window.

In addition, Smernoff says, "In a couple of weeks we'll have the ability to put chat rooms right on radio station Web sites so listeners can spend more time on those sites and give stations the ability to monetize the experience because of the video element."



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—Joel Smernoff