

Notes from the Mediascape: SocialSamba brings TV characters to life

by [Jennifer Horn](#) Email/Share ✓



Just when we thought “befriending” actors on social networks was exciting enough, in comes SocialSamba and its software that creates scripted and personalized dialogues for fans to converse with fictional characters of a TV show.

The US-based company’s software enables content creators to fulfill fan desires to follow and experience the lives of their favourite characters in real-time, Aaron Williams, co-founder and CEO, SocialSamba tells *MiC*.

[SocialSamba](#) creates Facebook fan pages, or customized microsites, that mimic a chat room. The comments from TV characters and the user are fed onto the page in a Twitter-style format

and the user can respond to questions directed at them, with the characters mentioning them by name. They have the choice to either share their back-and-forth conversations with friends and family on Facebook or keep them in private.

Users can leave the page and when they return, the conversation starts up again from the last comment that was made. Each time, a portion of the story is told by the characters with the users interacting and following along.

While the company is still in its infancy (launched late last year), SocialSamba has already racked up a number of big name clients including USA Networks’ *Psych* and *Covert Affairs* as well as Warner Bros’ feature film, *Dolphin Tale*.

For the detective comedy-drama *Psych*, the company created a [site called #Hashtag Killer](#). The story told in the feed spanned over seven episodes of the show and allowed fans to aid in the capture of a killer. There were crime-solving puzzles with videos and photographs to add to the interaction.

The site garnered more than 13,000 unique visitors in the first 12 hours and of those visitors, 10,000 signed up to play the game. Average time spent playing the game was more than 12.5 minutes.

Williams says that the choose-your-own-adventure platform can not only be used by entertainment creators but also by brands in the form of sponsorship, product placement or even by creating their own interactive conversation.

For instance, he says, Nike could take advantage of the NBA off-season and use star basketball players to play out a story. The narrative could follow the journey of each player searching for a pair of Air Jordans only located in a shop in Omaha, for example. The users can tag along on the adventure through posted photos and video clips of the characters en route to finding the lucky shoes “that will help them win the season,” Williams says.

It can even go as far as creating a situation that allows users to physically participate in the adventure, adds Williams, using Starbucks as another example.

“You could receive a tweet from Jack Bauer from *24* saying that he just found a bomb in a local Starbucks and that you have to go to there to decode it,” he says. “You get there and you can use augmented reality to see the bomb sitting on the floor in Starbucks.”

While the company has not yet created storytelling platforms for Canadian brands, Williams says that plans to work on projects north of the border are in the works, adding that SocialSamba could be in Canada as early as mid-2012.

“The reality is that we are still at the first page of what it means to socially engage with characters” says Williams. “We will definitely be writing additional chapters over the next few years.”

Read more: <http://mediaincanada.com/2011/11/04/notes-from-the-mediascape-socialsamba-brings-tv-characters-to-life/#ixzz1ckTWnftm>