

New Social Platform Lets You “Friend” & Interact With Your Favorite TV & Movie Characters

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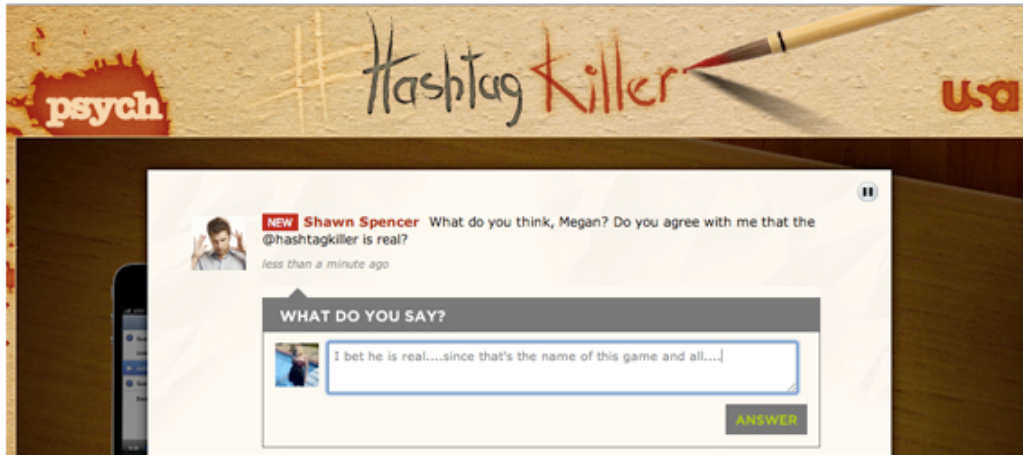
Have you ever wished that you could be friends with the characters from your favorite movies and TV shows in real life? Until recently this was impossible—after all, these characters don’t actually exist outside of the TV shows and movies you love. But **SocialSamba** is aiming to change all that. SocialSamba is a new scripted social networking service that lets you become friends with your favorite characters, interact with them and become a part of their stories through posts, images and videos.



SocialSamba has launched with three initial customers—USA Networks’ *Psych*, USA Networks’ *Covert Affairs*, and Warner Bros’ feature film *Dolphin Tale*. Using SocialSamba’s software, *Psych*, *Covert Affairs* and *Dolphin Tale* have launched interactive experiences that allow fans to not only friend and interact with characters, but also to help solve mysteries and problems.

The *Dolphin Tale* experience went live on Facebook back in August and the *Covert Affairs* campaign also ran over the summer. But let’s take a look at the *Psych* campaign, which just launched at HashtagKiller.com. Fans of the show can sign up to be the new assistant of characters Shawn and Gus, sending Facebook-style messages to them and helping them solve the crime of the Hashtag Killer. According to the rules listed within the game experience, “Hashtag Killer is a seven week *Psych* game in which you can solve the crime along with Shawn and Gus. The story unfolds in real time over the whole seven weeks so come back daily for new events, mini-games, videos, phone calls and more.”

As you can see from the image below, the characters actually interact with fans, asking them for input as the story unfolds.



The game lasts for seven weeks, introducing new clues each week so over the course of the game you really get to know and interact with the scripted characters. According to a press release, the game has seen massive success thus far, and it's only the beginning. "In the first 12 hours of being online, more than 13,000 unique visitors visited HashtagKiller.com. Of those visitors, 10,000 signed up for the game. The website has been fielding up to 6,000 requests per minute. The average time users spent on the site is more than 12.5 minutes. Additionally, 22 percent of visitors returned at least once within the first 12 hours." I'm interested to see whether they will have a problem with retention—it's hard to keep people coming back regularly for 7 weeks—but for those fans that manage to remember to check in to the game often, it sounds like it should be a pretty cool experience.

SocialSamba's co-founder and CEO Aaron Williams says, "SocialSamba's technology revolutionizes social media marketing. We give fans a deep and personalized connection to the characters and stories they love, and open proven social revenue streams to those brands. The tremendous interest we have received, even before officially launching, affirms our belief that our technology establishes an entirely new industry standard for how consumers engage with characters and brands, and with social networking itself."

What do you think of the scripted social networking concept? Would you consider friending any of your favorite TV or movie characters for a 7-week long interactive experience?



Megan O'Neill is the resident web video enthusiast here at Social Times. Megan covers everything from the latest viral videos to online video news and tips, and has a passion for bizarre, original and revolutionary content and ideas.