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Interview: GoTV Networks CEO Thomas Ellsworth Dishes On All Things iPhone

By Matt Kapko

With Apple's (NSDQ: AAPL) App store launching today, we got in touch with GoTV Network's CEO Thomas Ellsworth today to discuss his company's plans for the iPhone and where they stand in Apple's approval process. While some companies are hesitating to develop applications that would compete with Apple's core music and video business on iTunes, Ellsworth tells us GoTV hasn't encountered any problems with Apple and is moving forward with an expected launch date coming this summer.

Do you have any plans to make use of the new iPhone 2.0 software and build an application?

“GoTV is deep into the iPhone 2.0 SDK. This summer we plan to release iPhone video applications for our music-magazine products: Hip Hop Official, Rock On Altitude and ES Musica. The combination of the iPhone's user interface, core feature set and higher speed allows us to push the envelope further than other platforms.”

Will Apple even allow a GoTV application in its store?

“GoTV's music applications hold leadership market share positions in the U.S. We feel this performance and our unique music focus has earned us the opportunity to be part of the Apple iPhone App Store. We look forward to it.”

Has Apple already approved GoTV to come onto the App Store?

“Yes. Specifically, Apple reviewed GoTV's music channels and verbally approved them for the App Store (during a business-development review). Today, GoTV's development team is at top speed building the app. When completed we will submit to Apple for formal approval (and technical review). The technical step is important in that Apple needs to ensure the app works properly and does not crash phones. GoTV does not anticipate any issues.”

Do you see entertainment companies taking a bigger interest in the platform?

“I hope so. While I obviously can’t speak to the planned strategic thrusts of other entertainment companies, the web and application usage patterns of iPhone users versus other mobile phones and platforms cannot be ignored.”

Lastly, can you talk about the scale of the iPhone at this point? Does it make sense for a company like GoTV to put significant investment towards the platform based on its reach?

“You must prioritize development efforts in line with today’s market opportunities while monitoring longer term market timing issues and maintaining appropriate investment in the platforms which will produce future revenue streams. With that in mind, the iPhone usage metrics are compelling and GoTV has prioritized its development efforts accordingly. The web and data usage over indexes the device’s unit market share by a reported 5-to-1 margin. That’s massive. This summer, GoTV is planning to launch ad-supported iPhone music applications including Hip Hop Official, Rock On Altitude and ES Musica. We’ll be announcing our ad platform partners and launch dates very soon. It’s an exciting time.”