

Microsoft Buys Home Automation Start-Up from Slingbox Founder

Written by Marco Attard
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Microsoft buys Blake Krikorian's **id8 Group R2 Studios**, developer of Android-based home automation and appoints Krikorian as corporate VP for its Interactive Entertainment Business (IEB).



Blake joins the Xbox team as a proven innovator (Slingox), having created simple, elegant products that have transformed the way people engage with and consume content.

This news probably disappoints Apple and Google who were also in talks about bidding on the company.

R2 Studios develops home-media and automation technology, is secretive about its plans—which would seem to fit well within Microsoft. But it's no secret R2 Studios released an app that turns Android phones into touch panels for controlling heating and lighting systems wirelessly. R2 Studios also holds some patents related to controlling electronic devices and interfaces that Microsoft also acquired.

Microsoft wants to evolve its Xbox 360 from gaming console to home entertainment hub. As a part of this initiative, it is now offering digital downloads and live TV apart from games.

Krikorian's first big play in home automation was in 2010 creating the first Android app for Crestron, the leading manufacturer of professionally installed home-control systems.

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So for Microsoft this deal is a two-for, the type of deal that CEO Ballmer likes best: they not only get a play to help X-Box but they gain influence in mobile devices (apps for tablets and smartphones) that could assist Microsoft's renewed Windows8 push into the mobile market.

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