

What's Wrong with Smart TV?

Written by Bob Snyder
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You can debate a number of issues facing Smart TV but we'd like to highlight one problem that jeopardizes the success of selling Smart TV.



Apps.

Apps are the computer routines that add functionality to the "brain" of the Smart TV. Without apps, your Smart TV might be a genius but no one would know and no one would love it.

To give you an idea of what makes a "smartphone" smart, you need to know (according to Nielsen data) users spend more than half their time with apps (versus text messaging at 13.4%).

The IQ of a smart TV is directly related its apps.

Apps for Hulu Plus, Netflix and Vudu streaming service, among others, are already built into some internet-enabled televisions. Microsoft's Xbox 360 and Roku's streaming video player let viewers watch apps that mimic channels. New sets by Samsung and others come with built-in apps loaded with television shows, movies and sports.

But Smart TV apps are not exploding like smartphone apps.

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Apple's App Store ended 2011 with more than 590,000 apps. This is almost double compared to 2010 (300,000). In 2012, the App Store should reach 1 million available apps.

The Android market has 320,000 apps and users now download apps at a monthly rate of one billion. You can expect more than 500,000 apps on the Android Market by 2012.

Even mobile phone platforms in near-death spirals have far more apps than smart TVs. BlackBerry App World has over 40,000 apps available. And for Nokia phones on Symbian browsers, there's an estimated 30,000 apps available at the Ovi Store.

While the TV may be getting smarter, TV makers and TV content producers may not be. According to app developers, it is quite difficult to find information on TV based app development. One developer (read our link below) describes the frustration after one year of active involvement claiming developer materials were "ridiculous and unbearable."

When it comes to smart TVs, each manufacturer has a platform of their own to differentiate themselves from the competition. However unlike Android, smart TVs do not run on a unified platform which is what Philips and LG are hoping to accomplish with their Smart TV Alliance. Their goal: to let apps work across multiple television sets made by different manufacturers.

Just like we see in smartphones and tablets, buying smart TVs could also depend on what type of apps are available, the quality of those apps, and how many apps there are.

While many TV industry veterans suggest that Apple will bring little to the party with an " Apple iTV," each industry that suffered disruption by Apple (MP3 players, phones, PC) originally predicted Apple's failure.

The traditional TV industry underestimates the attraction of apps and what Apple's platform brings: a million apps and millions of app-loving consumer opportunities. Otherwise we would be embracing developers, making their lives easier and encouraging app production.

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Any other course of action for Smart TV is just plain dumb.

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