

iPad goes to Hollywood

Glitz, glamour - and tablets

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13 September, 2011 10:32



James Dean

If you're lucky enough to be on a Hollywood set, chances are you'll see more than a few people carrying iPads--and most will be big-shot executives. It should come as no surprise that the iPad has caught on in the entertainment industry given the iPad's billing as a great media-consumption device.

But the speed of adoption is pretty impressive.

Case-in-point: Hollywood-based Sample Digital, a software developer of workflow applications, built an iPad app version five months ago. Now the iPad app is used by 70 percent of Sample Digital's more than 120 movie and television production customers that deliver top shows such as "The Mentalist," "CSI," "Weeds," "How I Met Your Mother" and "Mad Men." Thanks to the iPad app, business has soared nearly 25 percent.

The emergence of the Apple iPad among the entertainment power brokers has put a new twist on the traditionally odd courtship between Silicon Valley and Hollywood. Both have key roles in making movies and television shows, yet their cultures clash like Felix Unger and Oscar Madison. Brainy techies in flip-flops simply don't mix well with image-conscious movie stars and directors who make superficiality, well, an art form.

In order to get the iPad app to market, Sample Digital needed to team with GlobalLogic, a software research and development services provider with an innovation arm in Silicon Valley. GlobalLogic's team in Argentina also assisted in development. The iPad app, called dax|Mobile (\$5), lets a host of disparate decision-makers collaborate. Directors can swipe through scripts-scenes-takes, make comments and approve content.

"The industry has been moving from a physical media to a digital media, in terms of workflow," says Sample Digital CEO Patrick Macdonald-King. "The iPad's screen is big enough for people to actually digest media properly and be able to make creative decisions, see stuff on the fly. They have all the tools of a desktop application without the anchor of being at their desk."

With its mobility and ease of use, the iPad speeds up decision-making--a key element for an industry that operates on a strict schedule. In the television business, a production company, studio and television network have only one week to put a show together and get it on the air. Inside this week are a hundred deadlines, and the iPad and dax|Mobile help facilitate workflow.

But that's not the only reason Hollywood is star-struck over the iPad.

"It's sort of a status symbol for executives," says Macdonald-King. Assistants often lug clunky laptops, while the power players prefer to carry a slick, cool-looking iPad. The day is coming, though, when everyone on a production set will have an iPad, he says.

When talking about the iPad experience, Macdonald-King peppers his speech with words like "romantic," "emotional" and "intimate," which are often used to describe a personal relationship. At least this time around, Hollywood movie-types have the Apple geeks in Cupertino to thank for bringing some emotion and excitement to their odd-couple relationship.

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