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Cinedigm Ready to Launch Kids Live-Streaming Channel

In an on-demand video market, Cinedigm is upping live streaming with the planned May launch of Dove Kids, a 24/7 ad-free supplemental channel available to Dove Channel subscribers.

Los Angeles-based Cinedigm has seen strong response to Dove Now, its live-streaming channel featuring curated content and targeted to Dove Channel subscribers who don't want to search for on-demand programming.

"We saw such a dramatic, positive response in actual [viewer] consumption," said Erick Opeka, EVP of digital networks at Cinedigm. "It's now the single-most utilized feature on the service."

Opeka said that among live-streamed content, children's fare is a coveted genre. So much so, the idea for a kids-centric channel featuring 300 hours of refreshed content per year seemed intuitive.

Indeed, children's streaming video has become big business. British-based research firm Ofcom found kids aged 5-15 spend more time online watching video than watching TV.

Consequently, HBO Now acquired the rights to new seasons of "Sesame Street." The PBS Kids Video app features "Curious George, classic "Sesame Street" episodes and "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood," among others. Disney Kids TV and Sling TV's "Sling Kids" are slated to launch later this year.

Dove Kids' programming will be set by the time of the day as well for children who are home-schooled and seeking more educational-based content.

"We will work with home-school curriculum providers, and beyond that, develop general kids [and family] entertainment for primetime," said Opeka, adding all content on the app would have the equivalent of a 'G' rating. "The Dove Foundation rates all the programming that goes on the service," he said.

Opeka said that despite strong user feedback to Dove Now, the penchant to run ads was superseded by the desire to operate an ad-free online linear channel.

He said Cinedigm is weighing opportunities to sub-contract out the live-streaming channels to third-party over-the-top video services and traditional pay-TV operators.

"It's part of the plan," Opeka said, adding live video streaming remains a popular option on Cinedigm's OTT video service CONtv, which targets the Comic-Con audience.

"We're currently evaluating how best to implement a selection of live channels for CONtv," he said. "It's in the planning stages."

The executive said that while on-demand video programming dominates industry-wide, live streaming such as Twitch, Facebook Live and Amazon's recent deal for NFL Thursday Night Football, underscore the popularity of live programming.

"Live viewing is still a huge beast of people today," Opeka said. "The response from our customer base shows the rapid growth in minutes viewed of the Dove Now product."

He said discovering on-demand content sometimes requires a complementary live-streaming component. It allows the subscriber to be entertained without searching for content.

Opeka said extensive on-demand viewing data helped Cinedigm bow live streaming and enable subscribers to log on and watch something immediately and spend less time browsing.

"Sometimes people think linear TV is a blast from the past. But in essence, it is really a great tutorial, discovery mechanism, which leads to more on-demand consumption," he said.

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