STORYCODE™

StoryCode is a community hub, lab and creative consultancy for emerging and established cross-platform and immersive storytellers.

The StoryCode Ten: Questions for Morgan Bouchet

Introducing The StoryCode Ten: a short-form quarterly interview series that examines how leading cross-platform and immersive media storytellers around the globe are defining the medium.

Morgan Bouchet
VP Transmedia & Social Media, Orange

Interview conducted by Hal Siegel.

1. Your title is VP Transmedia & Social Media. In the United States, it seems that when you say "Social Media", most everyone knows what you are talking about, but when one mentions the terms "Transmedia", you usually get a lot of blank stares from people who are not in the media industry. What is it like in Europe and at Orange?

We use the terms "Social Media and Transmedia" for a number of reasons, and this is not so much specific to Europe as it is a particular to our telecom/media business (Cable TV, IP TV, Satellite TV, etc). Since 2004 Orange-France Telecom has developed a "Media and Content" department (which includes VOD, Music, TV, Games, etc.). Then in 2009 we decided it would be worthy to consider the future role of a network operator in the content industry. Transmedia is one of the ways we decided to explore and test projects that offer new experiences for consumers. This includes everything from experiments to multi-screens experiences, to games and cloud gaming, Social TV and more.

Also, "Social Media" has been commonly used in business since the beginning of the web 2.0 era, but it is now no longer sufficient to define the continuing media evolution (Social is everywhere, on every screen). Transmedia seems to be a logical new addition to the Social Media landscape.

2. In your role at Orange, do you view Transmedia and Social Media as two separate endeavors, or is there a lot of overlap between the two?

There is quite a lot of overlap. My main job is to develop Transmedia properties in the content division, but some of my projects also involve branded content that is done in support of the Orange brand. In our organization, the Social Media part of the brand (ie, our "e-reputation") is managed in another department, but they are also encouraged to create stories and Transmedia kinds of engagement.

3. In terms of Transmedia, is your role to "extend" the existing media properties of Orange, or to create new properties? Or put another way, do you use Transmedia more for marketing or for the creation of content?

All. In fact, depending on the projects, we can develop marketing kinds of Transmedia, native Transmedia content, or Transmedia intended to drive loyalty. In addition, I try to define an overall Transmedia strategy, one that takes into account the new media ecosystem that is emerging. And in all of the projects, you'll find Orange Transmedia tools inside (API's, Telecom Services, etc.)

4. Let's get more specific. In your experience, are there any characteristics of a story that make for a successful Transmedia property? Are there kinds of stories or formats that work better than others?

It's a bit early to say because there is simply not enough Transmedia experience in the world as of yet. The only thing I can say is that interactivity, social and the idea of fun (ie "gamification") must be integrated and that "a good story" still prevails over everything else.

5. Can you tell us what kinds of Transmedia projects are in development at Orange? What is on the horizon?

I'm currently working on three main efforts:

Alt-Minds (launching November 2012) is what we call a "Total Fiction": a game and a digital series. It is a conspiracy thriller about the abduction of several young scientists. The main narrative will be told via ten weekly webisodes, and players will also be able to subscribe to a newsfeed on their PC or tablet, providing background information and updates. Then there is also an App that lets you take part in the investigation. Via the App you receive video logs and documents of the field investigators and you can help them progress. For instance, you can use the Agency's tools (developed by Orange) to analyze a picture, enhance a video and zoom in it to find clues and much more.

Augmented TV: our plan is to develop a platform with the aim of allowing a user to augment his or her TV experience (with a transmedia storytelling approach). Dedicated first to TV producers and Brand agencies, we hope to launch a first test this fall in France.

The Transmedia Lab: this is what's on the horizon. In the lab we are actively developing other experimental digital tools and frameworks for the TV media industry and our media partners.

6. You mentioned the term "Total Fiction". I haven't heard that before, although I like what it suggests. Was it invented by Orange?

Yes, it was. It means that the story could be everywhere on the network, across different screens and

utilizing different technologies in order to create a far more immersive experience. There is a lot of cross-over between real life and virtual life, and a mix of true and fake news–but it's clearly a game.

7. Outside of Orange, are there other recent Transmedia or Cross-media projects in Europe that have been particularly successful or notable?

I would say the French TV Series *Braquo 2* and *Engrenages* (Canal +) or the European TV program *The Spiral* (ARTE). These are more ARG's than Transmedia properties, but there are a lot of European transmedia projects in progress, on the web and in the TV industry (France Television now has a Transmedia Department) and I hope to see a convergence between Transmedia and Social TV.

8. In terms of your budgets, are your projects funded via Marketing or R&D or from elsewhere in Orange?

Our projects are funded via many different parts of Orange, for instance, the Content Division funded the project *Detective Avenue*, which was a mix of webseries and game. Whereas the Content Division, and the Orange Brand, and the R&D group funded *Fanfan2*, while the Content Division & Orange Brand funded the movie *The Prodigies*.

Our latest project *Alt-minds* (co produced with Lexis Numerique) is budgeted by Marketing but it also utilizes a game type of business model. The first chapter of the investigation game is free. The remaining seven chapters are purchased individually or at a preferential rate if acquired as a complete series. Wired UK and Dailymotion.com are also partners.

9. Are brands coming to Orange yet and asking for Transmedia kinds of projects, or do you still have to educate brands about Transmedia?

We have not had propositions from brands as of yet. The first sponsor brands for our projects are Orange and Dailymotion.

10. How are you evaluating and measuring the success of your Transmedia projects? What kinds of metrics are you using?

We currently use quite a lot of metrics, a mix of social metrics, audience engagement and activity. We hope to see the creation of a new and unique metric of "engagement" for the media industry as a whole.