



# A Guide to Interactive TV Terminology

Interactive TV has been bandied about for the past 10 years and seemed no more likely than beaming up to the Starship Enterprise. Suddenly it's all over the trades, with every sector of the advertising business either prognosticating on its future or building it. As with any new advancement, there are new words that describe new processes or redefine and expand the definition of common terms. For example, "video" has replaced "programming" as the term for moving pictures with sound. And "TV" has become a "channel" or "platform" rather than the only medium to use channels.

This collection of "interactive TV" terms should help you get started and ready for the new frontier.

**Addressable** – Term used to describe the ability to send content to an individual household. Privacy issues slowing current proliferation.

**Addressable Cable System** – The network operator installs an addressable set-top box (STB) or equivalent device that connects to the subscriber's display device, such as a television. The network operator can then switch on and off channels and other services that this subscriber is willing or unwilling to pay for. For the system to work, the network operator has to install an encrypting system at the headend and/or in the equipment on the customer premises. Pay channels (and that can include video on demand and other services are delivered to the customer in an encrypted mode which will then be decrypted by the consumer's set-top box so it can be displayed

on his TV or other display device.

As each customer' computerized system has a unique identification that customer's interests can be noted and advertising and other services oriented toward that customer's specific interests can be sent to that customer.

**Ad server** – An ad server is a server that provides advertisements. The ad server may be located in-house or be at the network operator's facilities.

**Authentication** – Verifying consumer as a content subscriber in order to allow them access to programming. Intended to maintain content rights and protect ad revenue models.

**Broadband** – Digital cable, fiber-optic Telco's and internet access. Satellites are not broadband.

**CAM** – Community addressable messaging. Future goal of ITV, when messages can be delivered at the household or STB level.

**Clickstream Data** – What programming the consumer shows interest in by activating interactive links. This is used by content providers and/or market research firms for targeted advertising.

**Click-Through Rates** – The number of times an ad is clicked on (activated) compared to the number of times that that ad is presented. For example, if an ad is shown 1,000 times and five people click on it, that ad has a click-through rate of .5%.

**Click-to-Call/Buy** – Using the remote control to request a call from the marketer or make a purchase.

**Client-Server** – A way to distribute data on a network to a number of computerized devices such as set-top boxes and/or PCs. The server (also known as "host") stores and maintains the data. It provides the "client" computerized

devices access to this data when the client devices request it. Both the Internet and VOD are largely based on this.

### **Cloud-based Content (*Cloud-Based Media*)** –

In cloud computing, software and data is stored on the Internet, rather than locally on a PC. It can be accessed by devices such as mobile phones, PCs, televisions and tablet PCs. The “cloud” in cloud computing is the hardware, networks, storage, interfaces and services that combine to deliver the computing. Cloud-based user experiences utilize devices to access cloud-based content, software and services.

### **Codec (Compression-decompression algorithm)** –

A codec can be thought of as a list of instructions that identifies the method used to compress data into fewer bytes, as well as doing just the opposite, *decompressing* it. By following these instructions, applications such as encoder, decoders, and media players can reliably compress and decompress data. Codecs are used to decrease digital media content file size and *bit rate* (the amount of data per second that's required to render audio and video content). With lower bit rates and smaller file sizes, digital media content can be stored and streamed over a network more quickly and easily.

**Conditional Access (CA)** – CA is an encryption/decryption management method (security system) where the broadcaster controls the subscriber's access to digital and Interactive TV services. This can ensure that the person is who he/she says he/she is (authenticity). It also offers security for purchases and other transactions.

**Content** – Programming, commercials (short form/long form) ... everything is “content”.

**Contextual Advertising** – Advertising that's targeted to the individual viewer's unique interests. A contextual ad system scans the viewer's preferred programming and displays associated advertising. For example, if the user is viewing a New York Yankees baseball game,

the viewer might be presented with ads for New York Yankee related products.

**Cost per Click** – How much an advertiser pays a promoter/host each time someone clicks on the advertiser's banner or link

**Custom Versioning** – Create various versions of commercial messaging with the intention of trafficking them to unique, targeted viewers based on interest and consumer behavior. Ideally used when “addressability” is achieved.

**Datacasting** – Datacasting may be used for interactivity in the digital television environment.

**Digital Homes** – Homes that receive their TV content from a set-top-box or specialized device that transmits from a web connection. Homes that utilize a “digital receiver to convert “analog” frequencies are not “digital homes”.

**Direct Tune** – Message on the overlay to tune to an OnDemand or VOD unit for more info. I.e. Tune to Ch 223 to see brand videos.

**Dynamic Ad Insertion** – With dynamic ad insertion, network operators can provide targeted ads that can be swapped in and out of that television program as it's delivered to the end user. Usually, ads are inserted in advance and cannot be swapped out once the content (TV program) is on the operator's network.

**Dynamic Ad Units (DAU)** – Advanced interactive creative units that serve additional information or entertainment i.e. gaming, geo-targeting, sweepstakes entry. Like “rich media” online.

**EBIF** – Enhanced TV binary interchange format. Standard software to enable interactivity for all set-top-boxes (STB) regardless of manufacturer.

### **Electronic/Interactive Program Guide**

**(EPG/IPG)** – Focus is on advancements that will provide better search tools for viewers.

**Encoder (video)** – An encoder is a program and/or device used to change a signal, or stream of data, into a code that a compatible computerized device at the receiving end can work with. Often this includes "compressing" a certain amount of the content.

The code the encoder produces may be further manipulated in the network for optimal results. This encoded data typically needs a "decoder" at the receiving end to change it into a signal or data stream that a TV or other applicable device can understand. (Analog TVs don't understand digital signals unless the signal is "decoded" by a computerized device for them.)

TV providers encode their TV signal as part of the process of sending it to their subscribers.

Multiplexing technologies are often used in the TV provider's encoding process. Multiplexing is a general term for combining types of data and/or signals and sending it to a receiver(s).

**Head End** – The closest distribution point where a cable system transmits content to its subscribers.

**Hot Links (*Hot Spots*)** – This is the area or areas of a document, video, picture, audio file etc. that is/are designated by the author to be "active areas". These areas are often in the form of icons or text links. When used in conjunction with television, upon activation by the viewer, these will retrieve and display more data, such as advertisements.

**Infotainment** – *Infotainment* is an "Information" and "entertainment" catch phrase. It's entertainment that also offers informative data. Typically these are longer in length than most commercials.

**In-Game Advertising** – This is advertising that video game players experience while they're playing their game.

**Internet-connected TV (*Connected TV, Broadband-enabled Television, Network-connected Televisions, Web-enabled TVs*)** –

Internet-connected TVs are television systems (typically HDTV) that can adequately display some or more Internet content.

**IPTV** – Acronym for "internet protocol TV". Future ability of the TV set-top-box to interface with the web like a modem, access content and achieve 2-way communications with the web.

**MAC Address** – Media access control address. Like a computer IP address, it's the unique identifying code given by the manufacturer for your set top device.

**Metadata** – Information about the audio and/or video data that's included in the signal's data stream. It might be considered data about the data itself. Metadata aids in providing Interactivity.

**Microsite** – Custom landing page. Also refers to a custom channel or marketplace on TV.

**Mosaic** – A collection of elements (often channels) displayed on a single TV screen. These could offer interactivity in the form of virtual or enhanced iTV channels. These applications can be customizable by the user. Examples include picture in picture feeds where several live minimized channel feeds are offered on a single screen to watch simultaneously.

**MSO** – Multiple systems operator. Companies that own and operate a number of individual cable systems in the US. Over 2,000 cable systems are owned by 7-8 MSO's including Comcast, Time Warner, Charter, Cox, Cablevision and Bright House.

**Multi-Screen** – For interactive marketing, usually refers to the three interactive video mediums, TV, Web and Mobile.

**On-Demand** – Refers to a consumer-driven action in which programming or commercial content is served and viewed upon request. Also refers to a range of channels on a cable system designated for requestable commercial content.

**Overlays/Bugs** – Visual baseline pop-ups added to a TV commercial reflecting the call-to-action prompts with instructions on how to use the remote for interactivity.

**Over-The-Top** – Over-the-top is a general term for service that you utilize over a network that is not offered by that network operator. It's often referred to as "over-the-top" because these services ride on top of the service you already get and don't require any business or technology affiliations with your network operator.

**Pay-for-Play/Free TV** – Viewers option to pay for programming to eliminate commercials or watch for free with commercials. Free option should disable Fast Forward.

**Polling** – Consumer surveys using the remote control to capture response. Queries on anything including brand preferences, buying behaviors, political attitudes and more.

**Proxy Server** – A *Proxy Server* acts as an intermediary between an end-user (customer) and his/her server (content provider). A Proxy Server can serve several purposes; it can hold the most commonly and recently used content for users, (versus users having to load up a new copy of the webpage every time they visit it, which can be time and bandwidth consuming.) Also it can filter and convert content to match the capabilities of the receiving software and/or hardware.

**RFI** – Request for information, coupons, and samples. Respondent opts-in and fulfillment is sent to subscriber account file.

**Rich Media** – Rich Media offers a combination of audio, video, text and graphics to create an interactive and enhanced media experience. Rich Media can denote the use (or offering) of additional information related to, and complementing the viewed programming or presentation. The additional information could be in the form of images, websites, graphics, chat functions, PowerPoint displays or other multimedia content.

**Rollover** – This occurs when a user rolls the cursor over a spot on the screen and that spot (field) changes in some way and likely initiates an action. Usually a rollover is used to show the user that the spot is "hot", which means it can be clicked on to go somewhere else, get more information, etc

**Set-Top-Box (STB)** – The predominant TV device that receives all video content and stores DVR programming.

**Short-Form** – Content that's short in length, such as video clips. Short-form content can appeal to Internet surfer's limited attention span.

**Smart tags** – These automatically create hyperlinks on someone else's Web page. If clicked on, these take the viewer to the browser's manufacturer's Web page of choice. These hyperlinks are often created without the knowledge of the Web page designer

**Static ad units (SAU)** – Static overlay units that a viewer can respond to without changing channels or viewing content.

**Subscription Model** – Used to monetize the proliferation of video content across all media platforms.

**T-Commerce** – Television commerce transacted interactively.

**Telescoping (Long Form Advertisement)** – Upon activation, long-form commercials "telescope" from the traditional 30 or 60 second variety into a longer form of programming. These advertisements can include more developed forms of interactivity, such as one-click shopping and other forms of T-commerce. Long-form commercials allow consumers to browse products and access information that interests them. Using their remote control device, viewers can explore products and interact with brands at their own pace.

**Tru2way** – aka "IPTV". Java-enabled, IP-addressed, set-top-box, that will enable hyper-

linking with the web and return communications.

**TV Everywhere** – Multi screen distribution of content to aggregate viewers and fulfill their expectations of viewing content On Demand. Usually involves TV, Web and Mobile. TV Everywhere is also the name of a Comcast/Time Warner Cable initiative to bring cable programming online.

**TXT-to-Order/Connect with TSR** – Using a mobile phone prompted by a TV call-to-action to text an order or request a call from the marketer.

**User-Generated Content** – User-generated Content is often produced by networked communities of often amateur users.

**Video** – General word for “content” delivered through various media services including broadcast, cable, satellite, telecom and web, across all lengths and formats from user-generated clips to full-length movies.

**VOD Advertising (pre, mid, post-roll)** – Advertising positioning during a VOD program airing.

**Widgets/Apps** – On-screen icon that links to an interactive application.

**Definition Sources:** *Interactive Television Dictionary, Glossary of Interactive Television Terms, Wikipedia*



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