

The content should drive the exercise, not the platform. Do we want to communicate information on some topic? Then, probably the Internet (with appropriate positioning) might be the best medium. Do we want to entertain, for example, in the area of children's programming? Then, we might think about a specific program to go on a satellite broadcast.

Given our assumption that we want more than a select few to be watching or receiving the content — how do we make that happen? How do we become distinctive in universes with hundreds of channels and hundreds of thousands of web sites? How do we set ourselves apart?

Well, the short answer is that we probably can't. We will need to allocate a healthy budget for promotion and publicity, but we would be kidding ourselves if we thought that would enable us to "compete" with the Americans or the Europeans. But, there are a few things that might help to single us out.

**Being First.** On the Internet, any site that's a "first" gets a lot of attention. The first site to offer downloadable video, the first site to use RealAudio that plays sounds live, or, last year, the first site to use VDOlive that plays video live, or the first site that allows us to view 3-D graphics gets immense free promotion. Recently, PointCast News became the first "design-your-own-news" site. It quickly became one of the Web's most visited sites. The "firsts" are constantly changing, but if a site comes up with something new and technologically original, it will stand out. Obviously, this has more of an impact in the developed world.

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**Language.** Language can almost be considered a kind of platform. As of now, at least 90 per cent of the Internet is in English or French. If you're looking for content in Swahili, Polish, Arabic or Chinese, the selection is slim. What that means is that the chances of finding Canadian information would be considerably improved if it were translated into a number of languages. Given that such countries may be the very ones we would want to target, translation, as RCI has demonstrated, becomes a very attractive tool to replace the neon sign.

**Local Relevance.** Continuing, at least partially, on the language issue, in regions where there is little Internet activity, linking a Canadian site to local sites would greatly benefit our ability to attract visitors. Also, the identification of Canada with local businesses and organizations substantially enhances our credibility.

## The Stuff

So how would this all work? It's all very fine for one to talk of "content" and "platforms," but what would it all look like? How would a focused communications policy function? To answer that basic question we need some examples and possibilities. I say examples and possibilities, because any decision about content would have to flow from whatever the government considers to be its priorities.

Assume for the sake of argument that Canada has a strategy in place and is planning a number of initiatives to coincide with the APEC meeting. Presumably