



## **USA'S PSYCH DANCES THE SOCIALSAMBA WITH HASHTAGKILLER**

**01.01.2012**

Digital entrepreneur Aaron Williams was contemplating Facebook, and the connections friends make on it, when it hit him that connecting with real people is kind of boring when compared to, say, friending George Costanza from Seinfeld or Homer Simpson. Intrigued by the idea of communicating with fictitious beings, he teamed with Matthew Shilts to create SocialSamba, a social networking space where fans could interact not with the actors behind their favorite shows, but the characters themselves.

Williams, now co-founder and CEO, said SocialSamba, lives by the idea that, "If you are a TV show, you want to be able to connect your fans to your greatest asset, which are your stories and characters."

Specializing in what it calls "scripted social networking," SocialSamba fleshes those assets out in the online realm, telling a new story through posts, images and videos. "It's the experience of Facebook," its website reads, "but scripted so fans can experience it whenever they want."

After launching their first story lines last summer with USA's Covert Affairs and Warner Bros.' film Dolphin Tale, SocialSamba re-teamed with USA in October for the network's drama Psych, creating HashtagKiller.com, an interactive gaming experience where fans could sign up to work with main characters

Shawn and Gus to help solve a crime for the Psych agency. Unfolding over seven weeks, the parallel storyline heightened engagement with the main characters and let fans become participants in the story beyond the show's one-hour time slot. In the first 12 hours of its launch, more than 13,000 unique visitors went to HashtagKiller.com and in its first three weeks that figure increased to more than 160,000.

"Fans can't get enough of Psych," Williams said, "so give them Psych not only on Wednesdays at 10:00 - give them Psych all week. The benefit to the storytellers is they're getting deeper, more engaged fans, and they're getting the opportunity to monetize that connection."Â