TACOMA Daily Index

Abazab, widgets, and the growing demand for Web video

By Dana Greenlee, Technology Columnist

Lucy is looking forward to the Pearl Jam concert at the Gorge Amphitheater in a few weeks. So are her friends who visit her MySpace page. They're planning on watching Lucy's girl-at-the-gorge video commentary about the show almost as it happens.

Lucy is a member of Abazab.com (http://www.abazab.com), a group of young entrepreneurs that created a video-based messaging "widget," allowing anyone with a camera phone, PDA or computer to send video, photo and voice messages directly to any Web page.

Lucy can use her phone to send video of the concert (provided the Gorge allows camera phone recording -- but that's another story) as it's happening back to her personal page, allowing her friends to share in that experience just moments after it occurred. Her friends can access that rich content from the widget through any web-enabled PC, Mac or PDA. In turn, they can post their own rich media responses via computer, PDA or camera phone right back to her Web page.

DANA GREENLEE

Music producer and engineer Jason Slater, a founding member of the rock group Third Eye Blind and other bands, believes Abazab will help him connect more closely and immediately with his fan base. "When I'm writing a song or working on a riff, I can post it via Abazab and get instant fan feedback," says Slater. "Abazab also lets me reach out to my fans and share more of my life, and I get a chance to connect with theirs."

Itzik Cohen, Founder and CEO of Abazab, took a few minutes to explain how his widget works.

DANA **GREENLEE**: Your new online service at Abazab.com is a very interesting social networking concept. Can you give us an overview of how your new Web site service works?

ITZIK COHEN: Abazab enhances your Web site with socially interactive video. We provide "widgets" for teens, bloggers, vloggers, even auction sellers. What this allows them to do is provide a video presence. If someone comes to visit your eBay auction, for example, they will see you live and be able to talk to you right away. If you're not online at the time, they will be able to see an outgoing message from you or other video messages that friends of yours have left, and make their own.

GREENLEE: All this can also be done while you're out and about, too.

COHEN: Yes. The other interesting angle we found is people want to share things they've seen everywhere, not only when they're in front of their computer. With the proliferation of video phones and picture phones these days, we found a way for you to take a picture of something really fun and cool that you see and share it right away on your Web site. We provide a publishing tool straight from your phone so you can send an SMS message and, immediately, that image or video will appear in your site.

GREENLEE: It's really just code you can drop onto your blog and play your video and people can comment next to it.

COHEN: Right. We are not trying to create a destination site. We're not trying to take people away from your Web site. We just want to help you to create a more enhanced, social site. The first time you register, you get a little piece of code that we give you and from then on you never have to visit Abazab again. Everything is being managed and configured from the widget itself.

GREENLEE: Let's look at the bigger trend. Do you think we're seeing a fundamental shift in the expectation of an online user right now that everything centers around visual and audio media and that textual content is getting left behind?

COHEN: The big thing we see now is there is a huge push from TV-based rich media content into the Web. Another trend is that the content is user generated. At first, I thought teens would not be into this because of the Web using a smaller window and the slow buffering problems. I was wrong. Kids watch YouTube.com videos with bad quality, but it's the content that's important -- and it's the place. One of the successes of MySpace.com was the fact that you can create anything you want on the site. There's almost no control on how you want it to look. It's very personal. The YouTube widget allows you to link certain videos from YouTube to your site. What we have is a more social video experience where you can actually comment and have friends leave their own videos on your widget.

GREENLEE: What are you working on now?

COHEN: Our future plans are to stream certain channels onto your Web site. For example, you'll be able to register at Abazab, which will allow you to have the 10 best YouTube videos stream right your site.

To hear the full thirty-minute audio interview with Itzik Cohen, visit http://www.webtalkradio.com .