

# Netflix hires actors to pose as its Canada fans

September 23 2010, By MICHAEL LIEDTKE , AP Technology Writer

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(AP) -- Netflix Inc. tried to bring a touch of Hollywood to its Canada debut Wednesday only to wind up apologizing for a botched publicity stunt.

Things backfired at a Toronto street celebration after reporters discovered that actors hired by the [Netflix](#) had been given written instructions to give media interviews gushing about the video subscription service's arrival in Canada.

The actors also were urged to fill a variety of stereotypical roles, including "mothers, film buffs, tech geeks, couch potatoes," according to the one-page handout given to them.

Netflix never intended to mislead reporters, company spokesman Steve Swasey said. He attributed the mix-up to the bureaucratic hoops that Netflix had to jump through to get a permit to close an entire street for Wednesday's event.

To qualify for the permit, Swasey said Netflix decided to film a fake documentary. That led to the hiring of a handful of actors who were only supposed to help drum up enthusiasm and attract a crowd before CEO Reed Hastings arrived on the scene. Swasey wasn't sure who decided the actors should give media interviews under false pretenses.

"We are embarrassed," Swasey said. "We regret that this put on a blemish on what should have been perfect day for Netflix."

It marked a rare misstep for Netflix, whose earnings and stock price have been soared in the past two years as the service added millions of new customers. The service, which currently has 15 million subscribers, offers DVDs-by-mail and unlimited streaming of video over the Internet for as little as \$9 per month.

The convenience and low cost of Netflix's subscription plans already have contributed to the demise of one major video rental chain, Movie Gallery Inc., and are threatening to drive another, [Blockbuster Inc.](#), into [bankruptcy protection](#).

Netflix is hoping to expand its audience by peddling its Internet [streaming service](#) in Canada (there are no plans to deliver DVDs in the country). It's the first time that Netflix has ventured outside the United States.

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