

Comcast, NBCUniversal get behind zeebox app

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(AP)—Comcast Corp. and its NBCUniversal subsidiary are taking a stake in zeebox, the maker of a so-called "second screen" app that people can fiddle with on mobile devices while they watch TV.

The U.S. cable giant isn't saying how much it's putting into the company, but executives said that starting next month it will start advertising how zeebox will be integrated into its shows.

The app gives users information about people and products that appear in shows, allows users to see what their [Facebook friends](#) are watching and points users to iTunes so they can buy songs that come up during singing shows such as NBC's "The Voice."

The idea is that if viewers are more engaged with shows, they'll keep coming back for more. The second screen also gives TV networks another opportunity to raise [advertising revenue](#).

Zeebox, which launched in Britain last year, is one of many similar apps like Viggie or Yahoo's IntoNow that take advantage of the fact that many people watch TV with their mobile phone or [tablet computer](#) in hand.

Instead of making you poke around the Internet for random information, zeebox picks up audio clues and automatically identifies and syncs up with the show. That way, information specific to the program is offered up in real time.

[Time Warner Inc.](#)'s HBO will also create special information for zeebox when its shows are on, but it isn't taking an [equity stake](#) in the company.

While many second-screen apps do similar things like sync up with shows in real time, Comcast is hoping that TV networks will converge around one app. That would make it easier to tap into large online audiences all at once and reduce viewer confusion about where to go if they want to engage with a show online.

"What the industry really needs is a nationwide platform," said Sam Schwartz, president of Comcast's converged products division.

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