



imagineear newsletter

January, 2011



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imagineear 2010 review

Last year *imagineear* made significant progress in all areas of the business. In this newsletter update for staff, clients, friends and investors, I mention some of the highlights, but do contact me for more information if you wish. Alternatively, if you would rather not receive such occasional updates from *imagineear*, please let us know.

This update coincides with the re-launch of our [B2B website](#), so you can check on the new site for more recent news. It is designed to be cleaner in feel and clearer in its positioning of *imagineear* as leading business-to-business rental and retail multimedia interpretation supplier to the cultural tourism world. Let us know if you agree!

With best wishes for a successful and prosperous 2011.

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Positioning imagineear - Why we are different

This time last year, the board of *imagineear* decided for two reasons to re-focus the business towards the B2B market that we understand well, and have worked with for some years. Old clients were asking us to do so and, no less importantly, we felt we could bring fresh thinking and products to the market. So we set about building a portfolio of products and services, concepts, use cases and clients to support this initiative. More about these below.

Much in the cultural world has not changed. We still believe that visitors worldwide will buy tours when we provide them three things: **a call to action** and **a compelling value proposition** near or at **the point of consumption**. If these are the fixed points, what trends do we see developing in cultural interpretation? And how are we exploiting these differently than others?

1. Audio - visual

First, audio gives way to audio-visual. 'Pure' audio tours are becoming rarer, as sites are able to build richer media experiences for their visitors, and tourists expect more. Our approach has been to build multimedia technologies and programming, but to caution against throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Audio is still the ideal medium in a large number of cases where there is a physical object to see. We often recommend an 'audioVC' tour where VC stands for visual confirmation: the visitor can verify that he is looking at the right object, but his attention is not distracted by the screen.

2. Personal Devices

Second, proprietary devices are complemented by smart personal devices - usually mobile or smartphones like iPhones (but including iPads and other tablet devices). We make a distinction between non-gated environments, like the café, the hotel lobby or the garden at home; and the gated variety, which are sites that restrict and manage access, like museums, galleries and managed historic sites. In the non-gated environments the consumption of information is growing exponentially as people gain confidence with the enabling mobile technologies. *imagineear's* solution here is clear: we offer best-in-class cultural tours for downloading onto smartphones.

Gated environments feel obliged today to offer handheld players to their visitors, and there is no reason to think this will change soon. Our solution is to build outstanding content for delivery via great value, high quality, robust players for repeated rental. Our *mediaPacker™* device is currently the best value multimedia device on the market, and the easiest and most flexible to programme, making it a great choice for cultural partners.

3. Cultural tourism

Third, tourists increasingly seek cultural experiences - in fact 40% of all trips to the UK for example include a visit to a museum or cultural site. Cultural tourism has outpaced the tourism market as a whole. Many cultural tourists travel with their phones, and may use them on 'safe' networks which do not require them to incur roaming charges. *imagineear's* response to this growing market is to focus on translations into multiple languages, and to develop city tours for cultural tourists in collaboration with local tourist offices and our museum clients. Our initial locations include Amsterdam, Barcelona, Geneva, Ypres, and Jerusalem, but look out for more.

4. Europe and Asia

imagineear is headquartered in Europe, and this is a key focus for our activities. We are present from London to Geneva and from Madrid to Krakow, building our brand and delivering outstanding value solutions for cultural tourists both directly and via museums, galleries and city tourist offices. European clients are highly experienced, and appreciate the flexibility and autonomy that the *imagineear* solutions provide, together with the control over their cost base this affords in a time of economic austerity. *imagineear* is also investing in Asia, building a regional presence in Singapore, and actively selling this year into India, China and Hong Kong, and we will look to address the Arabian peninsula in 2011. The Asian markets are vibrant and ambitious, and particularly value the unparalleled experience that we are able to bring in all areas of content development, technology, and delivery.

Client and Project Development

If 2009 was the year we reappraised the city tour, 2010 was a year of developing the means to address cultural sites. The following examples illustrate the breadth of the work we have been asked to do:

- The Geneva Tourist Board asked us to develop a multilingual city tour of the city on *imagineear*'s audioPorter™ retail player. Likewise, our German partners soundgarden chose the audioPorter™ to deliver a Nazi-period city tour of Munich;
- Wickham Vineyard in South East England, asked us to provide *imagineear*'s APro™ walking audio tour of the vineyard for their visitors;
- Dr Johnson's House, where the seminal dictionary of the English language was conceived and written, asked *imagineear* to provide an audioVC tour of the house and character of Dr Johnson on *imagineear*'s mediaPacker™. Likewise, the Taj Mahal and the Red Fort in Agra, India, selected the mediaPacker™ for their tour of India's leading tourist attraction, as did Norway's National Museum of Music and Musical Instruments at Ringve, and the Balestier Trail in Singapore;
- Also in Singapore, the Singapore Art Museum and the National Arts Council have asked *imagineear* to deliver and staff a turnkey project including multilingual tour on *imagineear*'s mediaPacker™ and smartphone app for the prestigious Singapore Biennale, over four locations in two months.

In addition we were shortlisted for example at the Historic Royal Palaces tender, no mean feat for a small and new company. They did not choose *imagineear*, but told us they liked our submission, and both shortened and narrowed the contract term, the effect of which is to make it easier for us to work together in the future.



Global Staff Presence

imagineear's approach is to maintain as far as possible a small, highly focussed central team, and to build an eco-system of collaborators, partners and colleagues to help us deliver projects. We continue to grow in reach and to build the central team, adding both experience and fresh dynamism to *imagineear*. 2010 has seen us build a direct sales presence - and sales! - in Singapore and Switzerland; and a partnership with Soundgarden in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Poland.

Key developments over the last year include the following:

- *imagineear's* focus on South East Asia is in Singapore, where we have created *imagineear's* Asian focal point, *imagineear* Singapore Pvt Ltd, managed by **Andrew Jeffery** and **Steven Hopkinson**. Andrew and Steve have extensive experience in digital media, and in the region, and together we have had strong early success in Singapore.
- **Nathalie Beeckman Nagelmackers** is the new Senior Production and Sales Manager, based in Switzerland. Nathalie brings more than a decade of experience as European Creative Manager and Project Manager at Antenna Audio, and has in the past delivered projects to major institutions such as The Louvre, The British Museum and The Reina Sofia.
- **Nick Sherrard** has joined the London team as Head of Business Development, UK. He is no stranger to us or to the industry, having worked for Antenna and then for Discovery as Key Accounts Manager, UK & Ireland, before founding his own consulting firm focused on the visitor experience.
- **Rémi Carlizoz** joins us to strengthen two areas of the business. Geographically he will develop the French and Spanish markets, and the Arabian Peninsula; and his experience in cultural sector digital media will be invaluable in developing *imagineear* on personal devices. He held similar responsibilities at Antenna, and was prior to that a principal at Soundwalk. He subsequently founded his own consultancy, Vinteuil.
- **Otto Gumaelius** joined the team full time in October as Mobile Media Manager. He began at *imagineear* on an internship basis, focused on the conversion of audio tours to mobile phone app tours. Otto graduated from Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh last year with an MA Hons in

International Management.

- **Kavya Kamaraj** is currently working as our London office intern. She is a graduate in Visual Communication and has a Masters degree in Creative Writing from Swansea University. During her internship she will be assisting Otto develop content and build apps.

Technology Delivery

During the year, we launched our initial set of delivery technologies, and are now working on the v2 iterations and complements.

- Smartphone delivery, via iPhone, Android phones, Blackberry and iPad. For personal device tours we partner with leading app developers, like Tristan Interactive. The Amsterdam city tour will shortly be available for free download from the Apple appstore. Other non-gated tours are on their way.
- Our multimedia rental player, the mediaPacker™, was launched in August. It plays audio, images, video, and text; content can be accessed via a numerical keypad or from a screen-based map; the mediaPacker™ is a radio-receiver which allows it to be used as a multilingual video sync device. We will add a group tour solution in v2. But more than this, the chipset we have built affords clients very flexible management of their media assets without additional software or training. This reduces cost and helps ensure that the mediaPacker™ is a great value solution for cultural clients.
- The mediaPacker™, like the low-cost audio rental player the APro™ and the iPod Touch, charges in a single smartCharger™. This has the twin benefits of being small (just 15 x 15 x 27.5 cm for a ten-unit rack) and modular, so that hundreds of players can be charged and uploaded at the same time.
- The audioPorter™ and the APro™ are *imagineear*'s low cost audio players. The audioPorter™ is sold to visitors as a pre-recorded device, with map or booklet, batteries, and earphones for two. The package sells for around €20 at retail, and is available for example from the Geneva Tourist Board. The APro™ is a more industrial strength version, for heavy-duty rental where audio is sufficient.
- Headsets are the secret bugbear of audio rental companies; when they fail, they cost a great deal to repair. Where they fail is typically where the



cable meets the headset. So we designed a behind-the-head (BTH) foldable headset with a removable cable, and are now developing a complementary over-the-head (OTH) version.

The Final Word

We have spent the year 2010 designing and building a platform and team, and laying the groundwork in our chosen markets. Our initial client projects have validated the investments we have made to date, which encourages us to accelerate our commercial, creative and technical development. Expect to see continued growth across all of these areas in 2011.

Once again, we all wish you a very happy and prosperous year!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew".