



COVER SHEET

This is the author-version of article published as:

Keane, Michael A (2006) The 'diggi awards' an agent model for creative community building. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 9(3):pp. 377-381.

Accessed from <http://eprints.qut.edu.au>

©2006 SAGE Publications

**An interview with Jerry Wang, CEO of Moli Media (China).
Starbucks, Chaoyang District, Beijing 20th July 2005.**

Michael Keane
Institute for Creative Industries and Innovation
Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane
Australia

Jerry Wang is CEO of Moli Media. Moli Media is a leading Chinese media & entertainment provider for consumers and businesses in multiple media channels. Leveraging leading technologies and exclusive TV resources, Moli Media aggregates and distributes world-class content properties across digital TV, Internet/broadband, mobile and other terminal devices, as well as traditional outlets such as television.

MK: Jerry, tell me about your background and how you got involved in this business.

JW: I graduated from Tongji University in Shanghai in 1998. My background is actually marine geology and geophysics but I was interested in multimedia. In 1999 I worked for Macromedia. At the time they had no staff presence or company in China so I was doing evangelist work, such as presentations and training.

Following this I worked for a couple of years with Tom.com, a Hong Kong group whose investors at the time were interested in the dot.com market, particularly the area of interactive marketing services. This division of their company was called i-Tom and I was doing creative campaigns, and training with them until 2001 when I broke away and formed an independent company.

I used the marketing services component from i-Tom to merge with a Shanghai company, which had investment from an American VC company. It was in the same family group as Tom.com so we raised 4—5 million US dollars. The business was primarily interactive data base marketing. The B2B concept was then a growing enterprise in China and clients included Sony and Intel. But data-based personalised marketing was not really well understood.

In 2003 service data base marketing was taking off in China. I left and founded Moli Media in 2004 in order to work in the area of telecom value-added content services. Now our company has twenty staff and most of these are young, an average age of twenty-five.

MK: So how do you recruit your staff and your talent?

JW: A couple of years after I started working in multimedia a very big event started. This was an annual event supported by Intel and Macromedia and Pentium 4 Flash. This was known as the Intel creativity contest in 2002 and 2003. Then in 2004 we formally set up the *Diggi Awards*. In 2005 I established relationships with the Ministry of Culture and several other ministries to

promote the National Diggi Awards. So in fact this is a government-supported digital creativity contest.

We establish relationships with the best people working in the creative industries. We don't have in-house developers. We work on an *agent model*, making a community. Each winner of the contest is the top developer and they sign a contract with us. They contribute content and we redistribute through Internet channels, broadband, and mobile channels to the consumer.

So we are building up the infrastructure and aggregating content. We establish efficient e-payment channels—through the mobile field or whatever multi-payment channel—and we can help those individuals to sell their content.

MK: There are obviously problems for creative people in China who want to get their products to market

JW: Yes, this problem is very evident in China. The only real way so far for creative people to make money has been to serve clients; for example clients like Intel or Sony. In this model there is limited creativity. It's not possible to create original content; or if there is original content there is no means to sell it to the consumer.

For Chinese developers making original animation there were no guidelines. Now we have done this. The guideline is that each production is five minutes; it must have sub-titles, and must have a sequence. From last year each production is part of a series: from one to twenty episodes—that is an animation series that is suitable for the Internet or mobile platforms. One producer from our company has entered a film in the Nice animation festival (France); it was the only Chinese entry and we produced it.

As well as individual content there are international partners, such as Real Networks. We help to bring them into the Chinese market.

MK: What you are primarily developing then is local content.

JW: Mostly, but also some international content—and mainly animation and short film.

MK: What kinds of support do you get from the Chinese government? Is it financial or bureaucratic?

JW: As far as our core business is concerned, no financial support so far. But in terms of setting up some big projects, there is good policy support. For instance, the government has supported the Diggi Awards.

MK: What about locating your business in a Science Park such as Tsinghua Science Park, which is seeking to become more creative, or in turn looking to the model of the Creative industries Precinct that QUT has developed in Australia.

JW: There is a problem with this. Creative industry centres in China are different to the QUT or even the Silicon Valley models where the whole environment and policies suit creativity. In China it's just not like this. Tsinghua Science Park for instance is pretty boring for creatives, a lot of R&D.

MK: Nerds?

JW: Yes. In China the creative companies—like advertising companies—are young. You go to Tsinghua and you can't find a Starbucks for example [laughs]. In Shanghai it's better. The government there has helped facilitate smaller-scale lofts or studios. This is a better model for the creative industries whereas a traditional business park might suit a Sony-Ericsson factory or a big software company.

MK: Why are you in Beijing and not Shanghai?

JW: I was in Shanghai and studied there for ten years. Shanghai is creative in the area of advertising—there is a lot of advertising. And the business milieu is good and the interactions between people are good. But in some ways Shanghai is more like Hong Kong: it doesn't need to interact with other cities. Shanghai is more independent.

In Beijing the communications environment and the relationships are different. For instance, we are engaged in a telecommunications business and we need relationships with Internet, broadband and mobile companies. Telecommunications companies are in Beijing: China Telecom, China Mobile, China Netcom, China Unicom etc. This situation doesn't exist in the same way in Shanghai.

Also the relationship with the Ministry of Culture is an important advantage of working in Beijing. However, when Shanghai people do things, their performance is better than Beijingers. They talk a good story in Beijing—but performance is not as good as Shanghai.

MK: Is it possible to say which city is more creative?

JW: Beijing has more culture and is closer to the core idea of Chinese culture. Shanghai is more like a copy of New York or Hong Kong. It's hard to see a difference between Shanghai and Hong Kong but you can definitely notice the difference between Beijing and Hong Kong.

Shanghai has the commercial and economic feel while Beijing gives the impression of the real China: the hutongs, Beijing Opera and so on. International people get their biggest impression of China from Beijing. However, Beijing is slower in its uptake of the new century digital creativity concept (multimedia, music or whatever—new things).

MK: In China you have a long culture: How do you use the long culture in the digital environment.

JW: This year the Ministry of Culture had a political mission in relation to the Diggi Awards. It is called the National Preservation of Intangible Culture—elements like opera and comic dialogue (*xiangsheng*).

The Ministry of Culture provides the resources to be protected and as content developers we follow these themes and digitize them; for instance opera can be animated so that young people can identify with it. Now a lot of young people just don't like it. So we are building up a digital content pool and have already signed up more than 300 individual studios and developers for this project.

MK: How is the environment different in the digital content market? For instance, in the traditional media you now have large groups that have consolidated in each province. You have big national companies like CCTV and SMG (national champions). But it's not like the international model where you have big networks like NBC or the BBC.

JW: The digital environment is different from broadcasting and old media. You have businesses like Sina.com that are national. Internet and mobile is better in this way than central broadcasting.

MK: What do you think of the idea of having national centres for animation or mobile content such as those that have been established in Shenzhen and Shanghai?

JW: From the people who have participated in the Diggi Awards each year we have ascertained the most developed places—such as Zhejiang, Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai...and Sichuan. But physical locations have problems. This year the Ministry of Culture has a plan to set up a creative industry base but they are considering establishing a virtual base (that is, not physical)—a virtual community.

For instance, in the Chinese digital creative industry there are a lot of big studios. Guangzhou has two, Sichuan has two, Shanghai has three, Beijing has four; but with a virtual community there are benefits in terms of capital, giving support to small company on a project—information sharing. So far it's really only private companies that are doing this and so the government can help to facilitate this process.

MK: So which Ministry has most influence in this?

JW: SARFT is very focused in its own area of broadcasting; and MII has an interest in infrastructure, but the Ministry of Culture cuts across these areas

MK: Is there anything that we can provide from Australia?

JW: I was talking with Meng Xiaoshi (vice-minister of Culture). This year the Diggi Awards is presenting a forum and a road show in eight cities and 40 universities. It is possible to cooperate in this area, such as bringing in creative industries people to give some lectures or show their design and products. We're definitely interested in QUT's creative industries precinct—thinking

about establishing parallel projects, such as copying the model and then modifying it to use it for local markets.

Moli Media can broker policy support from the Ministry of Culture. You can bring in expertise, knowledge and professional talents from Australia. We can collaborate with Australian companies to sell their concepts and products on the Chinese market and to export good Chinese products to Australian market. An investment of capital by an Australian company may not be much in Australia but it is a lot of money in China.

We have the advantage of good connections with the Ministry of Culture which is in charge of the authorisation of content. This makes it very attractive to overseas investors. So the Diggi Awards can expand into a bigger community for all kinds of creative people and companies and business opportunities.

Also, at the moment we don't have the right channel to promote to a global market.

We currently have a training certification program. We have a company here that can give people Apple or ZW web design certifications. The Ministry of Labour issues the certificates. We are currently planning with the Ministry of Culture to set up a professional creative industries personnel certification program in areas such as animation, multimedia design and post-production. We hope to collaborate in this area with QUT, such as a form of cross-program in which QUT can provide 3 to 6 month short term exchange program after students finish their courses in China.

However, creative talent doesn't always come from universities. In China creative people are well trained in technical areas but not in creative business management, work flows, project management and managing creative people. In China business leaders don't have a lot of creative concepts. The workers can talk with their leaders but the leaders make the decisions. In traditional China people were afraid to express creativity because it may get them into trouble. So, there are still many difficulties for creative people in making money.

