

Fandor Pushes Into Film-Focused Branded Entertainment

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COURTESY OF FANDOR

Starz-backed streaming service taps Scott Travis as chief revenue and partnership officer

Fandor (<http://variety.com/t/fandor/>), a subscription-streaming service for indie films, documentaries and international features and shorts, is expanding its business to develop sponsored short-form content as the company queues up new digital distribution deals.

Fandor's core subscription VOD service, starting at \$7.50 per month, offers a selection of 8,000 titles from around the world. In addition to that, the company — whose investors include Starz (<http://variety.com/2015/digital/news/starz-fandor-7-million-funding-1201633694/>) — has stepped up production of original content distributed on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/fandor>) and Verizon's Go90 service. Fandor's February series of video essays on "Who Should Win?" for this year's Academy Awards, under its Keyframe content division (<https://www.fandor.com/keyframe/>), generated more than 11 million unique viewers on those platforms, three times the previous month, according to CEO Larry Aidem.

"The line extension of the Fandor brand beyond its proprietary website and the movies themselves into social media through commentary, discussion and essays should endear it to the large community of film-lovers," Steve Katelman, exec VP of global media partnerships at Omnicom Media Group, said in a statement. "OMG looks forward to developing distinctive opportunities for like-minded clients."

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To lead Fandor's foray into branded content, Aidem has hired Scott Travis (<http://variety.com/t/scott-travis/>), a veteran AOL and SiriusXM sales executive, as chief revenue and partnership officer. "Scott's experience at AOL and the premium environment that is XM Radio is perfectly suited to the premium film-lover

space that Fandor occupies,” said Aidem, the former Sundance Channel boss who joined the company last year (<http://variety.com/2015/digital/news/larry-aidem-fandor-ceo-1201601566/>).

In addition, the company announced that Courtney Spence, founder of multimedia marketing firm CSpence Group, has joined as senior marketing adviser.

Fandor recently reached a deal with a large OTT distributor to launch later in 2016, Aidem said, declining to identify the partner. That, coupled with its direct subscriber base and existing syndication pacts with Verizon Go90, Vessel and HP, will expand Fandor’s viewer base to more than 5 million by the end of the year.

“We’re absolutely a subscription service — that’s still the origin of the brand,” Aidem said. “But that too is evolving from a la carte model to where we are going to be more aggressively bundled with other services,” like a basic cable network.

In November, Fandor announced \$7 million in funding from Starz and other investors. The San Francisco-based company’s principal investor is Chris Kelly, who was Facebook’s first general counsel.

“Starz looks forward to joining with Fandor in the upcoming months to provide broader selection and value to the OTT consumer within this rapidly expanding OTT marketplace,” Michael Thornton, chief revenue officer of Starz, said in a statement.

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