SuperGeeks, Digital Rebels and CyberPsychos

Channel Four Education Content Proposal

Super Geeks, Digital Rebels and Cyber Cops

Audience: 14 – 19 year olds

12 x 15 mins for E4, 4OD and Channel 4 YouTube

Content objectives: cybercrime and hacking are the perfect prisms through which to examine how ever increasing connectivity is affecting the lives of young people, presenting both real dangers and enormous opportunities.

We will tell tech stories (and more) with a young human face!

This tale does not necessarily fit into any one category from the brief, although it certainly concerns a lot of brands 14 to 19 year olds know about.

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Introduction

2011 saw Lulzsec and Anonymous go on a 50 day hacking spree that targeted the most powerful companies and government agencies in the world…for a laugh. These superhighwaymen posted the news that phone hacking emperor Rupert Murdoch was dead on The Sun's homepage and we chuckled along with them, glad to see someone 'sticking it to the man'. When the authorities struck back and began nabbing the cyber rebels the world realisedthe uprising was being conducted by teenagers, operating out of bedrooms in theirmum's houses!

Kayla is one of the leaders of Lulzsec. She claims to be 16, the same age as British memberTFlow who was arrested in July around the same time as fellow Brit and Lulzsec mouthpiece, Topiary, was nicked on the Shetland Islands. He's a little older at 19.

We will create a series of 12 programs that can either be shown online in 15 minute form or broadcast in pairs as half hour shows.

We have outlined three 30 minute episodes in some detail and then sketched the remaining three.

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Who We Are and WhyWe Should Make This Show

Don't Panic make politically motivated stunt and hidden camera virals, including films that featured us closing down Nobu, getting Alan Duncan MP sacked or exposing green washing by Conservation International (before Dispatches did). We also make branded content for a range of youth orientated clients like PlayStation, Vauxhall (Corsa) and Channel 4. Our recent viral called 'Can I Be Your Friend?' for the English National Opera won the Gold Lovie Award for Best Branded content. It featured us enacting social media tropes (Friending, Following, Writing on Walls etc) in real life - *http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDycZH0CA4I&feature=player_embedded*. A subsequent viral for a Random House title Dark Market: CyberThieves, CyberCopsled us to thinking about how to make a techie topic funny. We adopted a similar sort of approach and went on a cyber crime spree on the street,phishing and carding unsuspecting people - *http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBAVFsXQWdc.*
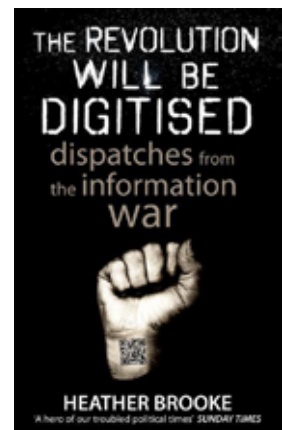
It struck us that cybercrime is really under reported because it is usually presented in a dry, boring way. We will solve this as we are experts at presenting complex issues to young audiences in byte sized chunks. However we won't be doing it alone!

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Misha Glenny is an expert on cybercrime and the global underworld, having also written the bestselling McMafia. He is currently a regular contributor to the Guardian and other newspapers where he writes about cyber issues and has just completed a programme for Radio Four. He was previously BBC Central Europe Correspondent. Misha has excellent contacts and connections with hackers, cyber criminals and cyber cops, what's more he has an unparalleled understanding of the issues with a track record of presenting them in a really entertaining way. He will be a consultant across the whole series, helping write episodes, hooking us up with hackers and law enforcement across the world.

Heather Brooke is a freedom of information campaigner who is best known for exposing the MPs expenses scandal. This year she wrote the The Revolution Will Be Digitised that explored "the world of computer hackers, internet whistleblowers and pro-democracy campaigners" which is a perfect subject area for us. She has impeccable journalistic credentials and amazing contacts among hacktivists and digital civil liberties campaigners. She will also be a consultant on the episodes concerning these areas.

Access

MishaGlenny has impeccable contacts with hackers, cyber criminals and cops. Heather Brooke has fantastic access to hacktivists including large number of high ranking Wikileaks staffers.

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Talent

Here are our initial suggestions for presenters. We will partner a tech person (with knowledge, contacts and credibility) with a TV presenter with some tech knowledge who will join our audience on a voyage of discovery.

Tech Presenters

We feel this show has a lot of international potential and so we have selected presenters from both sides of the pond. Some may be familiar to a 14-19 year old audience and some won't.

Barrett Brown – One of the most well known members of Anonymous Barrett Brown is the author of Flock of Dodos: Behind Modern Creationism, Intelligent Design, and the Easter Bunny. He's a regular contributor to Vanity Fair,The Onion, and Skeptic.

Peter Cashmore – Scottish founder of Mashable. Pete was named one of Ad Age's 2011 influencers, a Time Magazine 100 in 2010, and a Forbes magazine web celeb 25. He was also named a Briton of the year by the Telegraph in 2010.

Olivia Solon - Associate editor or Wired UK. She writes about technology for The Telegraph and Metro and has plenty of onscreen experience regularly commenting on Channel 4 news.

Christopher Poole AKA Moot – Bit of a wild card to say the least. This guy runs 4Chan, the message board where Anonymous was born. He gave a brilliant TED talk and so has the skills to present. He looks about 13!

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Grace Dent – Twitter fanatic, soap expert in The Guide and panel show regular. She does have good tech knowledge.

Jay Foreman – AKA Beardyman's brother. Again good tech knowledge but makes a lot of wildly popular factual virals for YouTube.

Bo Burnham – 21 year old YouTube sensation due to daft comedy songs, was the toast of Edinburgh fringe this year. One of his most popular song is about nerds.

Call out

We will recruit a team of young people, with computing ability. They will be set tasks and challenges throughout episodes and help us give issues a young human face. We hope to call these young operatives -

JiLsi's Army (more on this following.)

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Episode Guide and Themes

Weekly themes will be brought to life using a cybercriminal, law enforcement officer or hackvist. Our teen team will then be challenged to complete a themed task.

We have outlined three episodes that will be broken down into the two 15 minute mini episodes for YouTube. The first half will feature the expert and the theme, the second part will be the challenge!

Other themes not outlined here are described in brief below.

Living life offline (two x 15mins episodes)

RenukanthSubramaniam AKA JiLsi was one of the administrators of Dark Market. He is 34 and currently serving at Her Majesty's pleasure in Wormwood Scrubs, but is likely to be released in the Spring of 2012. Once he's ou he will only be allowed to use a computer for one hour a week under police supervision, for five long years.This is a harsh penalty for a man who only knows computers!

JiLsi is Misha's contact. NB Misha is hoping to work with JiLsi to develop an army of white hat hackers to defend NGOs from cyber attacks launched by hostile governments and corporations. If JiLsi is unavailable we will select another reformed hacker.

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Challenge

The challenge is set up in the first 15 mins by JiLsi. The challenge unfolds in the second episode. In this duo of episodes we will tell some of JiLsi's story (Tamil refugee from Sri Lanka bullied in British schools becomes computer genius and then crack addict).We will examine what life is like without access to computers by setting our group of young people the challenge to live for a week on the same terms as JiLsi. We will also explain how we all need to develop these skills (like map reading) as there is a very real threat that the UK online infrastructure could go down under attack from a foreign power or terrorist.

How will they communicate with no Blackberries or iPhones? How will they do school or college work without the Internet and is life without Facebook bearable? We'll monitor them as closely as JiLsi, and eliminate every teen who breaks our laws.

This episode will highlight our complete and total reliance on the Internet, how we used to live before social networking and mobile (a time virtually unknown to the audience) and the civil liberties implications of internet law.

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Super Geeks and Psychos (two x 15mins episodes)

Dark Market describes how most hackers who are behind bars would almost certainly not have become criminals were it not for the Internet. They are mostly extremely gifted mathematicians who love computing, who at the age of around 13-17 are easily influenced by manipulative criminals online who suck them into criminalactivity by online psychopaths (men with computing skills who groom others to commit crimes for them).

Loads of geeks are autistic. Take Adrian Lamo, originally notorious as the Homeless Hacker for cracking Yahoo!, Microsoft and the NYT from internet cafes, and now best known as the man who betrayed Specialist Bradley Manning. While under arrest he was diagnosed as having Aspergers Syndrome.

Gary McKinnon is facing 'fast track' extradition to the USA nine years after being indicted by a US military court. Again he has Aspergers.

We will tell Gary's story with help from Simon Baron Cohen (brother of Borat and Cambridge don specialising in autism and contact of Misha's) and examine the special nature of the highly gifted young people who get involved in cybercrime. He has also examined psychotic behavior of criminals.

Challenge

JiLsi's Army will be put to work hacking for good, so (under close supervision, and with express permission from the companies involved) they will undertake the work of the grey hat hacker and try to breach companies' websites and post an image of JiLsi's army flag on the website. They will then help the companies repair worm holes and advise them on how to keep their data secure.

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Cyber Rebels and Civil Liberties

Working with Heather Brooke we will talk to some of the Anonymous and Lulzsec members able to speak to us and investigate the motives behind some of their audacious hacks. What motivates these young rebels and how are the authorities planning on dealing with them? Will a backlash see the UK heading the same way as Russia where the SORM 2 system means the FSB tracks all credit card transactions, e-mail and web use. There are moves afoot to eliminate anonymity on the web - will this drive people under ground to the 'deep web' or 'dark net' where Bit Coins are the currency and websites are entirely unregulated? NB: The deep web is currently 400 to 550 times larger than theworld wide web.

We will speak to Ian Clarke who invented Freenet so activists in foreign countries can avoid the prying eyes of the authorities and speak to people who use it on the ground in countries like Syria where this technology is essential to survival.

We'll look at Wikileaks and notions of what information we have the right to or what, if anything, needs to remain secret. This will lead us nicely into social media privacy and how much information our audience post on Facebook without giving it a second thought.

We will focus on one of Anonymous, most likely Barrett Brown, who will talk about their aims, goals, methods and what it means to be a political hacker. We will also speak to law enforcement agents for SOCA in this episode and look at the difficulties inherent in policing the Internet and the justifications for some of the harsher sentencing.

Challenge

JiLsi's army will challenge some of their non-computer literate friends to disappear. They will then by hunt them only using data freely available on the internet. This sort of challenge formed the crux of the film Erasing David.

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Other Content Concepts

Piracy and Hacking for Good – the launch of the Xbox Kinect saw big advances in robotics as the movement sensors were hacked and used as a cost effective way to control automatons. What can our army hack and use? What are the legal issues involved and who has fallen foul of them?

Enterprise – what is the difference between Mark Zuckerberg and Topiary? They're both highly intelligent geeks yet one channeled his talents into creating a billion dollar business and the other is in prison. We examine the culture of enterprise and what it takes to make millions online.

Who Owns The Internet and The Stuff That's On It – Broken many laws today? How downloading and sharing is often illegal but then it's not just young people who are breaking the law, big corporations are doing it all the time. We examine both sides of the legal debate in live studio audience with big wigs from the music industry, downloaders and The Pirate Bay spokespeople on a web link.

Budget

Each 30 mins will cost circa £60,000 to make.

Thanks
Don't Panic