



# The New York Times Mobile Knowledge Network

## Mobile Strategy Proposal

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New York Times Knowledge Network, is essentially the Times' version of Continuing Education. The Knowledge Network Partners with various prestigious institutions (like NYU or Stanford) and offers online courses. The differentiating factors for these courses are, online availability, The Times content and Times contributors involved in facilitating the courses.

The strength of the Knowledge Network is it's position within the New York Times. Essentially anyone could sign up for a course online but only the knowledge network offers it's courses with articles, content and contributors from the Pulitzer Prize winning New York Times. These differentiating factors comprise the basis for the sustainable competitive advantage needed to gain market share and capitalize on the unique learning experience from the New York Times.

Knowledge Network courses are online distance learning. They remove the location limitation and as a result present access to a greater amount of institutions in a flexible and self paced format. However offering the courses through the mobile channel seems to be an option that would give the Knowledge Network courses an even wider reach through increased accessibility. Mobile is often referred to as "the third screen" and that distinction signifies it's importance in today's society. Mobile would give tech savvy prospective students and globe trotting business travelers an opportunity to experience continuing education in the same way they are currently consuming games or entertainment.

This proposal will make the case for The Mobile Knowledge Network, the New York Times Knowledge Network's mobile course offering.

### PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

This option offers students 3 main features:

1. Mobile access to the selected Knowledge Network class. (via video)
2. Relevant articles and commentary from the NYT used in that class. (in aggregate)
3. A mobile interface to participate in discussions post comments and chat. (Community)

The main benefit of the mobile option is convenience. The full course experience would be available on your hand held device in download-able format. The main interface would have three main categories, Learn (video), Insight (relevant NYT articles) and Share (post comments/chat). The NYTKN interface will also serve as the NYT daily. This option would essentially be a mobile version of the Times with each article tagged to a relevant course. This feature would make clear which articles were related to additional courses and make it easy to buy them.



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The user experience would be rich and provide an unparalleled mobile learning experience. For example, while watching the video lecture, the Insight (or articles specific to the course) would also be simultaneously accessible. As the professor spoke about a topic, students could follow along simultaneously. If the user had a question, the Share functionality would allow them to post a comment that would essentially broadcast (tweet) the question to all enrolled. Replies could then be shared back and forth through direct chat or public broadcast.

A professional who chose a mobile course wouldn't have the limitations of geographical location and being confined to a computer. This would make times when it's not practical to use a laptop more productive (airport time, in flight or time in line).

### THE KNOWLEDGE NETWORK BRAND IN THE MOBILE CHANNEL

The NYT Knowledge Network brand has identified a powerful way to distinguish itself among its audience of intellectually curious adults. In a world where the issues of the day develop at a fast pace and the news cycle brings ever-more-complicated questions to the fore, the New York Times brand is uniquely positioned to give us a thoughtful and clear understanding of those events. The Knowledge Network in particular allows us to take a macro view of those events and evaluate them in a thought provoking and insightful way. The opportunity to be guided by experts who live and breathe the issues and have unparalleled access to the newsmakers is substantial. The combination of rigorous intellectual engagement with big issues, and ground-level awareness of their impact on people and society offers a unique understanding of what most effects our lives.

The Mobile Knowledge Network raises the value of the NYTKN brand and strategically positions it on a global level. This brand extension leverages the strong relationship between current NYT content, the KN courses and the ability to offer on demand mobile CE. The Mobile Knowledge Network removes the limitations of physical location and makes courses accessible by anyone, at any time, worldwide. The words "Knowledge Network" now transcend the institutions represented to symbolize the larger concept underlying NYT Columnist and author Thomas L. Friedman's book, *The World is Flat*. The Internet already enables international competition for students. This mobile network of global institutions would position The Times as the gateway and differentiating factor in choosing. As a result, "Know Now" becomes more relevant in describing the immediacy and accessibility of information through The Mobile Knowledge Network.

### TARGET MARKET

Students of the Knowledge Network Classes come for personal enrichment or professional development. I would gather that The New York Times Knowledge Network only advertises within The Times media properties and on the partnering institution websites. That said the traffic to the Knowledge Network website would be from The New York Times print edition, The New York Times.com or any partnering University's website. I feel confident extracting the target demographics of the Knowledge Network user based on these assumptions.



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Knowledge Network Target Demographic profile is: Mostly Male, are mostly 35+, is definitely a college grad but is more likely to have a post graduate education, is professional/managerial to C level executive, earns from 75K to 150k+, is likely to own their residence and actively invests in the market.<sup>1</sup>

These demographics present a young driven professional that I'll refer to as Dan (skews male). Dan is more than comfortable with technology and does everything online. He is intelligent and based on his education has been able to do very well in his career, not because of the "Tiffany degree" but because of the mind behind it. That drive pretty much has erased the ability to slip out of meetings unnoticed and has this influencer/decision maker on a plane every week. He follows his Wall Street girlfriend's recommendations on stocks and the Economist on Twitter. Dan is an active person who uses the treadmill at his condo and cannot remember the last time he actually went to the bank—because he does everything online. This professional has more money than time and would jump at the chance to brush up on a few things of personal or professional interest.

Dan already combs the NYT.com daily on his phone, laptop or in print when he's 30,000 feet in the air. This is how we get him to become aware of The Mobile Knowledge Network. He knows that technology has evolved to a place where people aren't restricted by the networks or device capacity.<sup>2</sup> These facts present a global opportunity for the Knowledge Network to partner internationally by extending into the mobile space and reaching Dan.

### COMPETITIVE PRODUCTS

My search for competitive products didn't turn up any continuing education classes in the mobile channel. However, I will discuss pieces that would compete with the KN product on the basis of student objective. Those pieces were (degree granting) distance learning through online educational videos and Harvard Business School case/article packets. It's obvious that the New York Times brand presents a formidable asset to leverage among the distance learning competitive set. The Times brand equity has a clear effect on enrollment when someone registers through the KN and not the partnering institution's site where they are also available. It is unclear how the mobile accessibility would further affect decisions, however course merchandising could present related courses and thus degree opportunities within the KN.

However, if a student was interested in online courses for the purpose of obtaining a degree, that student would possibly directly seek an online degree granting institution.<sup>3</sup> Some of the NYTKN courses would fit this desire, however the network is in the business of continuing education and not the business of granting degrees. In terms of content, the value of a course taught with The New York Times and contributes would be the draw that would neutralize the strength of using HBS case studies. Times journalist and facilitators would quite possibly reference other scholarly content but The Times content would be primary. Should a professional be interested in a course for professional development or personal enrichment, The Times Brand ultimately would be a measure of it's ability to influence choosing a KN course over direct enrollment. In my conclusion, I found the strength of courses augmented with Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and the use of The Times exclusive content offered in the mobile channel compelling.



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### PRICE

I envision The Knowledge Network product in 3 variations; Online class only, Mobile only, or Online & Mobile. This would allow people with various motives for buying the course to choose how they would use the product. The casual pursuit of personal enrichment or professional development without degree intent could choose the mobile only or combination offering. Professional development with degree intent could choose the combo option or online only options. These are only my assumptions but these choices would self select and from that data we could test, learn and optimize how we presented the offer and its benefits.

The Mobile Knowledge Network would be priced at \$9.99 (mobile only) plus course price. I base this on the widget prices in the Apple App Store.<sup>4</sup> People are used to free or paying small amounts for mobile applications that give them access to content. The small additional fee for mobile only would be seen as a tremendous added value for not much more than an app from the appstore. This pricing would prevent any psychological hindrance concerning price after the course was over. Adoption through this channel would ensure a place to market sample courses attached to articles, offer continuous marketing information and an easy way to promote repeat purchase. Combination Pricing would be available for \$29.99.<sup>5</sup> This price is modeled after some of the more robust or fuller functioning applications in the app store. The same marketing rationale from above applies.

I don't have enough information on course registration volume to make assumptions about how much incremental revenue this option will produce. However my assumptions are that the NYT and partnering institutions split the revenue. I believe this because the courses through the KN are also available directly through the partnering institution's website.<sup>6</sup> The difference is that they may not be an online course. The courses are the exact same price. Therefore the additional revenue per registration in the mobile only option would be \$9.99/registration and \$29.99/combo registration.

### MARKETING

As earlier stated, traffic to the Knowledge Network website would be from The New York Times digital and print properties or any partnering University's website. Ads would be run on and offline in The Technology, Video, Education and World sections. Specifically online, they would run in the Bits Blog, Personal Tech cell phone section and any David Pogue section. The most compelling offer for the mobile option would be during the purchase process of the Knowledge Network class. At that point someone would be given a choice of the online class, the mobile version or a combination.

The Value proposition would be communicated in the ads by presenting a question in the form of an actual NYT article headline and the answer as a specific Knowledge Network Class. Know now, or the positioning of NYTKN as the source of the answers would be the call to action. The relationship between the NYT articles, stimulating thought provoking questions, and the KN courses (using the articles) is powerful. This model would also work with the features and benefits of the Knowledge Network's mobile option and would be part of the messaging in rotation.



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### TARGETED OR BEHAVIORAL AD SERVING

I recommend that The Knowledge Network tag specific articles from the online courses. This would be used as an interest indicator and would qualify a prospect to be served a NYT Knowledge Network impression. For example if a business course has 15 articles from the business section of the site and I read 3 of those 15, I would be served an ad about the class. If a person didn't sign up, at the very least the engagement and visible interest should be leveraged to build awareness and the email list. If this person joins the email list, a newsletter with NYT content highlighting relevant courses and mobile KN features could be compelling.

A targeted email marketing regiment towards the goal of better identifying and responding to users' interests in their pursuit of answers on-the-go is important. Collecting meaningful data and email addresses from site visitors and emailing them with Mobile Knowledge Network content (and course suggestions) relevant to their interests would be my strategy for converting prospects through email.

For customers who have purchased a class, course suggestions based on their past purchase and the mobile option up-sell, is an important vehicle for keeping visitors engaged. This is an opportunity to better communicate the related courses within the network that would lead them toward a certificate. This would also facilitate engagement with the Knowledge Network even after courses end. This strategy for converting, cross-selling and up-selling customers with related classes will help build the total KN brand. In addition to building awareness about mobile courses through the KN, this strategy would seek to convert prospects as a result of the mobile option and encourage repeat purchase through the network.



**EXHIBITS AND CHARTS**

Exhibit 1 NYT Demographic Profile

[http://www.nytimes.whsites.net/mediakit/online/audience/audience\\_profile.php](http://www.nytimes.whsites.net/mediakit/online/audience/audience_profile.php)

Exhibit 2 Mobile subscribers with 3G-Enabled Device

<http://www.emarketer.com/Article.aspx?id=1006893>

**Mobile Subscribers in Select Countries Who Own a 3G-Enabled Device, June 2007 & June 2008 (thousands and % change)**

	<b>June 2007</b>	<b>June 2008</b>	<b>% change</b>
France	5,616	7,958	41.7%
Germany	7,021	11,732	67.1%
Italy	14,462	18,008	24.5%
Spain	7,207	12,640	75.4%
UK	8,964	13,100	46.1%
US	35,651	64,207	80.1%

*Note: ages 13+; based on three-month moving average for the period ending June of each year  
Source: comScore, Inc., "MobilLens" as cited in press release, September 4, 2008*

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[www.eMarketer.com](http://www.eMarketer.com)

The increasing amount of standard features, lower prices and wide 3G-network availability of smart phones grew %80.1 in the U.S. alone from June 07' to June 08.

"Service providers have to offer personalized services that fit individual needs, instead of uniform sets of services," said Jayant Dasari, Parks Associates research analyst, in a company press release. "Consumers rely on their mobile phones for communications and for entertainment and social networking" Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 3 University of Phoenix

[http://www.phoenix.edu/online\\_and\\_campus\\_programs/online\\_and\\_campus\\_programs.aspx](http://www.phoenix.edu/online_and_campus_programs/online_and_campus_programs.aspx)

Exhibit 4&5 Apple App Store

<http://www.apple.com/iphone/appstore/>

Exhibit 6 Same Courses on NYTKN & Partnering institution site

<http://www.nytimesknownow.com/personal-enrichment/arts/writing-memoir.html>

[http://continuingstudies.stanford.edu/courses/course.php?cid=20082\\_EGL%20304%20W](http://continuingstudies.stanford.edu/courses/course.php?cid=20082_EGL%20304%20W)