

## Serious Drama As KnockaTV Shuts Down

By Michael Arrington  
(TechCrunch)

Submitted at 2/14/2008 1:40:01 AM

I haven't seen this much public drama between founders and their investors since the FilmLoop forced merger in early 2007. Earlier today I wrote that Israeli startup KnockaTV was heading to the DeadPool. Employees, who are apparently going unpaid, are pushing the company into liquidation to try to get at least some of what is owed to them.

We dug a little more into the story, because it just didn't make sense: the startup was well funded with \$3.5 million in capital from mid 2007 and the founders, who were among the creators of ICQ, had a \$407 million payday in 1998. That doesn't guarantee the startup would be successful, but it suggests that employees wouldn't have to worry about their paychecks this early on. Based on rumors going around Tel Aviv, there was some sort of major fallout between Evergreen Venture Partners (the venture firm behind the financing) and company founders, particularly Sefi Visiger. Product development may have been seriously



delayed. Burn rate was so high that an additional funding round was needed, and Evergreen may have demanded the founding team put up more cash instead. Tempers flared, the founders elected to shut the company down, and are reportedly supporting the employees in their efforts to liquidate it. According to one source, the liquidation will ensure that employees are paid before other creditors become too numerous. A liquidation would knock out existing stockholders, leaving the company assets to be sold off. Quite possibly they would then be acquired by the original founding team, leaving Evergreen without any stock, or their original investment. How much of this is true? Sefi and Evergreen won't comment directly to us. But there is little our contacts in Israel want to discuss today other

than KnockaTV and what they heard happened. Companies that closed substantial funding just a couple of months prior don't generally fall apart immediately before launch. Evergreen's reputation in Israel is considered excellent, whereas some members of the KnockaTV founding team are said to be major league partys first and serious business people second. More will likely be said on this story, from both sides, before it is finally put to bed. The sad part of all this (other than employees going unpaid) is that the product actually held promise. Our early reviews were generally positive.

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## What's Next for YouTube (Video Editing, Recommendations, Advertiser Analytics)

By Erick Schonfeld  
(TechCrunch)

Submitted at 2/14/2008 8:21:56 AM

Last night at an event in NYC dubbed "Videocracy," YouTube gave marketers a sneak peak at some upcoming initiatives. Silicon Alley Insider's Michael Learmonth tried to get in, but was thrown out. Luckily, Deep Focus CEO Ian Schafer took notes. Here is what he learned: —YouTube is excited about its active sharing feature that lets YouTube watchers signal to other viewers when they are watching a particular video (if you turn the setting on, anyone watching the video at the same time as you will see your username on the right side of the screen).

—Better video-editing tools are on the way. (What took you so long?). —Video recommendations will soon



be launched based on what you have already watched (similar to Amazon's collaborative filtering, people who liked this book also liked that one). —YouTube wants to be everywhere. It will continue to distribute its videos beyond the Web browser to mobile devices and large, flat-screen TVs in the living room. —For marketers, the "real news was YouTube's announcement of an impending launch of advanced analytics tools. You'll be able to see where video views are coming from (geographically and site-wise), as well as many other data points. This

will be a huge help to advertisers trying to extract more success metrics and data from their YouTube efforts." YouTube is also planning some more "Tentpole Content Initiatives" to draw a mass audience, much like its presidential debate partnership with CNN. These will include: —The YouTube Games. A takeoff on the Olympics featuring homemade videos of the "wacky wide world of weird sports." —Living Legends. Videos of living legends like the Rolling Stones. —The YouTube Global Gathering. A worldwide event that will be broadcast from multiple locations on YouTube. Thanks for sharing, Ian!

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## Topper

### Topper Makes Search Complicated In The Name Of Progress

By Duncan Riley (TechCrunch)

Submitted at 2/14/2008 4:24:27 AM

Topper search offers a search service which...um...machine learning...um something...results. Here's the pitch anyway. Here is a quick description of how to use it. Enter a search query. Topper Search will go out and get the top 100 results and display the top 10. Select at least one '+' and one '-' result. Topper will use machine learning to build a model and classify all 100 results. Use the buttons in the top bar to reorder these results to your taste. Topper will then display the a different top 10 based on your model. It is great for building ad hoc models for a single search. Try it for disambiguating a query. The stock example I use is 'lions' (for the football team or the animal). It can also be used for multiple searches and has a simple persistence mechanism for later use. For example once you have a model built for 'lions' try a search for 'bears' or 'eagles'. This is just the tip of the iceberg. We are building out tools for blogs and news etc using similar machine learning tools. There's a PDF on Topper here for those interested.

It sounds cool, but I'm not a coder and this sounds rather complicated. Using it is worse again, after the slow delivery of search results you're asked to + or - results in an attempt to create better search results (sort of a poor mans Reddit, but more complicated and without the kooks.) Developers and coders may find this interesting so ultimately those of you reading this who are that way inclined can take a look. For the vast majority of the rest of the planet, it comes in on the usability scale at between ZOMG and FAIL. Still, it might take off, maybe the world is looking for a complicated version of Google

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# CNN iReport: iLame Or iGood?

By Duncan Riley (TechCrunch)

Submitted at 2/14/2008 12:40:57 AM

CNN launched iReport.com yesterday, a "citizen journalism" site dedicated to user news submissions. Andy Warhol said in 1968 that "In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes," and iReport.com is offering users at least part of their 15 minutes as submissions may be used on CNN itself. But unfortunately that's where it ends, because there is no payment for submissions. CNN claims this is a site is "where the community — not CNN — became the most trusted name in news," but trust doesn't equal money at a time where more and more sites and startups explore ways of compensating users for their time and effort.

There is some good content on the site, and CNN has selected star reporters in a social networking style popularity contest that encourages decent content, that and users can vote on stories as well. The weakness in the idea is that submissions are not



pre-vetted or pre-read (or seemingly post-read), and you get stories like this one that is currently sitting as the fourth most viewed story on the site. I'm sure the weather in New York might be disgusting, but does a story that consists of one line and a picture of snow really make for great reporting? Then there's stories like this one; Testing testing..... I can see people having proper fun with this in the coming days, until CNN ultimately decides that not moderating the site is a dumb idea. Bored TechCrunch readers should feel free to add their own stories to CNN iReport and post the links. There's no prize for the best one, other than your 0.25 seconds of Warhol fame in the TechCrunch comment thread

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## Seismic Announces \$6 Million Series A Round

By Michael Arrington (TechCrunch)

Submitted at 2/14/2008 12:25:35 AM

Seismic founder Loic Le Meur wrote a long blog post about his \$6 million Series A round of funding today (I am an investor in this company). Most of the round was taken by Atomico (founded by Skype's Niklas Zennstrom and Janus Friis), and rounded out with a long list of angel investors. Much of this was reported late last year.

This is Loic's fourth or fifth startup, but his first in the U.S. (he's French). Seismic, a video-focused startup that is very twitter-like in its ability to facilitate random discussions, is doing well in its closed beta period.



We aren't covering it much given the conflict of interest, but this is a company I expect great things from, which is why I invested. See Dave Winer, VentureBeat, Mark Evans, Ryan Stewart, TheNextWeb and others for their thoughts.

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	AM	1:00 AM	1:30 AM	2:00 AM	2:30 AM	3:00 AM
11 TVGCP				Programming	Programming	Programming
12 KBCW				Paid Programming	Paid Programming	Paid Programming
13 KSWB	Place	Jack Van Impe Presents NEW	Peter Popoff	Market Place	Market Place	Market Place
14 KDTV		Los Archivos de Cristina		Los Archivos de Aquel y Ahora		Casos de Fami Especial
15 DSCP		Story	The Lost Tomb of Jesus NEW			Paid Programming
16 KXPX	oming	Pastor Scott		International Fellowship of Christians &	Paid Programming	Paid Programming
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18 KSTS			Programa Pagado	Programa Pagado	Programa Pagado	La Capture de

## Couchville Joins The Deadpool

By Duncan Riley (TechCrunch)

Submitted at 2/14/2008 3:04:29 AM

TV listings site Couchville has joined the deadpool.

The service, provided by PVR software maker Snapstream, offered US TV listings via zip code and cable or satellite provider. According to Michael's March 2007 review:

... and it shows you a simple, easy to navigate TV guide. A vertical red line shows you what's currently on, and

via an Ajax interface you can grab and drag the listings vertically (for channel) or horizontally (for time) to see more (this works much like the Google Maps interface)....It's very simple and it's very useful. Michael said Couchville did one thing right, just a shame that one thing wasn't sustainability. (thanks to 1to10 Reviews for the tip)

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