

Fox uses SMS to tie the knot for new show

By [Jordan Crook](#)

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Should they wed or break up?

Fox's test-phase program Wedlock or Deadlock has turned to mobile to create further viewer interaction with the hopes of launching the reality show nationwide.

Twentieth Television, the distributor of the show, teamed up with mobile marketing firm HipCricket to launch an SMS voting system that lets viewers participate and engage in the show. The program is currently running on Fox television stations in New York, Tampa, Phoenix, Dallas and Memphis.

"Respectfully, this isn't television the way grandma and grandpa watched it," said Jeff Hasen, chief marketing officer at HipCricket, Kirkland, WA.

"Viewers are multitasking and their mobile devices are within reach, humming on Twitter and Facebook and interacting in hundreds if not thousands of other ways," he said. "The mobile component makes viewing an interactive experience.

"Just look at the success of American Idol — viewers like to have their voices heard — it makes them feel like a part of the action."

[Twentieth Television](#) is a program producer and distributor of many popular programs such as How I Met Your Mother, Are You Smarter Than A 5th Grader and The Unit.

[HipCricket](#) is a mobile marketing firm.

The mobile initiative for the [Wedlock or Deadlock](#) show offers three different routes for consumer participation via SMS.

At the end of each episode, bumpers spread across the screen sporting a mobile call-to-action to text the keyword LOVE to the short code 55981.

The reply message will include a link that will send the user directly to daily lovescopes, love-centric horoscopes provided by Tarot.com.

The same end-of-show bumpers also offer the chance to text the keyword MATCH to the same short code, which drives the viewer to a love compatibility test.

“In an age where there are so many devices and screens fighting for consumers’ attention, mobile can be used as a complement to more traditional forms of media like TV and radio,” Mr. Hasen said. “It adds stickiness to the program.”

Wedlock or Deadlock is a reality show that gathers engaged couples to speak to Dr. Michelle Callahan, a psychologist and relationship expert.

The decision is then up to Dr. Callahan to choose whether each couple is a match made in heaven or if they should throw in the towel.

Since the program’s climax is rooted in these yes-or-no decisions, Twentieth Television found that letting viewers cast a vote can be a wildly successful path to build customer loyalty.

Along with the other keywords, users also have the option to text either WEDLOCK or DEADLOCK to the short code 55981 to cast a vote on whether each couple should stick it out or go their separate ways.

“Wedlock or Deadlock is aimed at a young, hip, urban audience, so adding a mobile element was a great fit,” Mr. Hasen said. “Texting is most prevalent in the 18-34 demographic, which is in line with the show’s viewership.

“Also, SMS has the widest reach – 227 million people, according to CTIA – of any type of mobile marketing, so it’s a great option for brands looking to reach a broad audience,” he said.

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