

Channel 4 splashes the cash on new media

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It was a sombre launch for Channel 4's new digital project [C4iP](#) last night. They switched on the [website](#) where social new media entrepreneurs will be allowed to bid for the £50 million fund. This at a time when Channel 4 has announced [job cuts](#) and the abandonment of its plans for [digital radio](#).

So Chief Executive Andy Duncan was suitably downbeat, while 4iP boss [Tom Loosemore](#) was also restrained. Tom is a great guy who has a deep understanding of the potential for 4iP to reinvent broadcasting and public service media. So he doesn't need me to tell him the scale of his task. He has the added pressure of a massive economic gamble by his employers. It has to work.

He has taken a significant symbolic step by declaring that this is "4" without the "Channel". But is it 'public service' without the 'broadcasting'? Or is it just going to be hundreds of half-baked Internet geeks feasting off Channel 4, producing a lot of charming but niche products that go largely ignored by the public?

One historic lesson is the [launch of Channel 4](#) itself 25 years ago. It all started in chaos around its purpose, identity and popularity. But now no-one questions the way that it helped revive TV in this country. It did it with occasional bouts of brilliant leadership that combined commercial graft with creative diversity.

For the sake of Web 2.0 public media I hope C4iP will do something similar. I also hope it gets the time and resources that its parent company got (from a Conservative Government!) all those years ago.

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