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Skype founders launch social music service

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SAN FRANCISCO: Working with the Red Consultancy, former Skype and Kazaa founders Niklas Zennström and Janus Friis are promoting the launch of Rdio, a subscription-based music service that enables social media sharing and mobile access. The product, which is backed by technology investment group Atomico, is currently in its “invitation-only paid preview” stage and will officially launch later this year, noted Rdio CEO Drew Lerner.

“The message is that we feel like the paradigm is shifting in an ownership model where people can buy individual tracks that can be expensive, and it cuts people out of the market,” he said.

He added that the team wants to incorporate a message of affordability, as well as “discovering music” through friends and influencers.

The team began planning its communications strategy with Red toward the end of 2009. The first phase of the PR campaign launched this week, with traditional media relations aimed mainly at technology blogs and national business outlets. Alice Chan, SVP and GM at Red, added that the team is leveraging the founders' credibility via media interviews.

The second phase, which will occur later this year when the program officially launches, will target consumers via media relations and a greater focus on social media promotion, she said.

“One of the main strategies was to really keep it under wraps until we were ready to tell the story,” she added. “When you have rock star founders, there's always a tendency of things getting overhyped. We wanted to make sure the people really understood what the value proposition is going to be.”

Lerner added, “One of the things we were conscious about was trying not to do any PR until we were ready.”

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