

## RAI UTILE ITALIA

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A total of sixty-six billion hours spent watching television; the average person spends four hours and a half of his waking life in front of a TV set. It is a huge amount of time, often under valued. How can we all take advantage of it?

We are living on a revolutionary media era. A new type of television has been developed. The digital terrestrial television is changing the rules of mass media communication. The one to one system will be soon part of the past. Meanwhile, an innovative concept of broadcasting is revealed by circular communication: information flows not only from broadcaster to viewer, but also back from viewer to broadcaster.

Digital terrestrial television, DTT, provides a greater number of channels, and digital quality of sound and picture, through a conventional aerial instead of a satellite dish or cable connection. It is in the process of deployment in a number of countries. Governments see DTT as a "futuristic" technology that will push their countries to the forefront of the digital revolution and free up existing TV frequencies for resale. Broadcasters see DTT as a way to fight competition from satellite and cable DTV and other digital program distribution technologies, such as personal digital video recorders and video on demand. Hardware manufacturers see DTT as a way to sell set-top boxes first, and new all-in-one TV sets later. Consumers see DTT as a way to obtain more programs from their existing TV antenna at the cost of a set-top box or new television.

Rai Utile is the first digital terrestrial television in Italy. It has been conceived to start a new dialogue between public administration and citizenship, offering services and facilities to speed up the whole bureaucratic system. The channel aims to transform the old public services into something new, to make easier the use of public administration services, and to avoid queuing at the counter of the post office, government or tax offices.

Through a wide range of television programmes, Rai Utile offers information covering six different macro areas: consumption, environment, work, family, culture and civil society. Furthermore, every half an hour, the National Firemen brigade and the Forest and Coastal Warden write new reports from their headquarters around the country.

Rai Utile is also a newborn virtual space open to ideas and innovation. It is conceived as a great opportunity given to many editorial projects to present their own proposals inside the state-owned television channel. It's the case of *Tele*

*PA*, the Public Administration news bulletin; *Vita news*, the largest Italian non-profit newspaper; or the vocational training for Public Administration operators. A new way to conceive television that also requires new professional figures.

Choice, fun, convenience, empowerment and control, that's what interactive television offers. Sitting on the couch any television licence-holder will be able to have almost any product or service he desires, delivered at the touch of a button. Interactive TV is an umbrella term. Interactive TV offers the content and services that are available for digital viewers to navigate on their TV screen. In practice, at the moment, this means giving the viewer control over some video, audio, graphical and text elements or allowing them to use simple games and quizzes or send simple pieces of communication back to the broadcaster. The elements that constitute interactive TV are inevitably constantly evolving. A main feature common to all TV systems is the ability to offer a different choice of contents to each TV set or each viewer using the TV set.

The Return Path is the way through which information generated by the viewer can be sent back to the broadcaster. It is also known as the Back Channel. At the moment it enables the viewer to send relatively simple pieces of communication to the broadcaster via interactive TV services. For instance, through the T-government, viewers will be able to buy or pay any bill by using a remote control only.

There are many different ways in which viewers of interactive TV services could use the Return Path: to send in comments on a show or a topic, to submit credit card details for a donation or a purchase, to vote for a Pop Idol or even — we never know— for a government.

Inside a digital set top box there is much more than a TV tuner. There is actually a computer stored with million of information. And, best of all, users will get it really cheap or for nothing.

**It is time to bet on this new technology.**