
Turner International and Bright Little Labs Sign Strategic Equity Investment

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- Investment marks Digital Ventures & Innovation group's first entry into the edutainment space. Turner provides funding and kids creative expertise to power Bright Little Labs' international growth as innovator in the kids coding and life skills space.
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Turner International's Digital Ventures & Innovation (DV&I) group today announces an equity investment in Bright Little Labs (BLL), a UK-based early stage company which creates and distributes edutainment content for kids.

The funding will be used to fuel Bright Little Labs' international expansion in terms of both creative development and distribution.

The investment will enhance BLL's current offering by leveraging Turner's expertise in the kids' space to develop quality IP which delivers on Bright Little Labs' vision to engage, entertain and educate kids about critical thinking, computer science and coding.

Bright Little Labs' existing edutainment IP centres around Detective Dot from the Children's Intelligence Agency, a hi-tech spy agency which incorporates the official UK coding curriculum and allows kids to learn in a fun and engaging way.

The agreement will also lay the foundation for further leverage across Turner's wider animation and licensing and merchandising portfolio.

The investment means that Turner becomes Bright Little Labs' main strategic investor and signals its commitment to developing a presence in edutainment. Christopher Sodergren VP Digital Ventures, DV&I for Turner will take a seat on Bright Little Labs' board of directors.

"Partnering with relevant start-ups is a core part of our strategy to compete and lead in today's rapidly evolving digital landscape," said Aksel van der Wal, Executive Vice President, Digital Ventures & Innovation for Turner. "We saw in Bright Little Labs the opportunity to expand a great concept into an international multiplatform D2C offering, in a way that fully embraces and utilises our expertise in kids, speaks to our desire to create new fan-centric experiences and aligns us with a like-minded partner. It also serves as a great platform for our ambitions to do more in the kids D2C space."

Sophie Deen, CEO, Bright Little Labs, said: "We're beyond excited to be partnering with Turner in the next phase of our journey. In a world of post-truth, job-automation and internet enabled teddy bears that could be snooping on you, digital literacy and critical thinking are key. It's imperative that all children, regardless of their background, have access to these 21st century skills and we've seen first-hand that a hi-tech spy agency with empowering role models like Detective Dot is a great way to achieve this. We're working to scale our transmedia platform, reaching kids wherever they are, so we can deliver rich, personalised experiences directly to our users. Not only does Turner share our vision, working with Turner means we can leverage their expertise in creating the very best kids content and reach new audiences globally."

Patricia Hidalgo, Chief Content Officer EMEA & International Kids Strategy for Turner, said: “Turner shares with Bright Little Labs a passion for engaging kids in a way which is original and immersive. We see multiple opportunities to leverage our kids’ expertise to further develop BLL’s existing business and engage kids in a way that while putting entertainment first also equips them for the skills they need for today’s 21st century world.”

Turner’s kids’ portfolio includes the Cartoon Network, Boomerang, Boing, Toonami and Cartoonito channels, websites and YouTube channels as well as extensive content production and licensing and merchandising operations.

The investment in BLL follows DV&I’s stake in Copa90 in February 2017. DV&I has also launched gaming service Gloud and movie streaming service FilmStruck internationally since forming just under 18 months ago to focus on D2C opportunities executed through innovation, in-house development or acquisition.

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About Turner International

Turner International operates versions of core Turner brands, including CNN, TNT, Cartoon Network, Boomerang and TCM Turner Classic Movies, as well as country- and region-specific networks and businesses in Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia Pacific. It manages the business of Pay- and Free-TV-channels, as well as Internet-based services, and oversees commercial partnerships with various third-party media ventures; it teams with Warner Bros. and HBO to leverage Time Warner’s global reach. Turner operates more than 175 channels showcasing 48 brands in 34 languages in over 200 countries. Turner International is a Time Warner company.

About Digital Ventures & Innovation

Digital Ventures & Innovation (DV&I), is part of Turner International. Turner International operates versions of Turner brands including CNN, TNT and Cartoon Network across the world, whilst also focusing on digital-only brands. DV&I drives innovation, develops new revenue streams and is responsible for managing and growing Turner’s existing multi-platform suite of international products and services on the web, for smart phones, games, apps and OTT. It is responsible for Turner International’s Data strategy and it develops new digital direct-to-consumer businesses and consumer-centric products. These include the recent UK launch of FilmStruck, a new premium movie streaming service expertly curated by film lovers for film lovers, and GLOUD, a cloud-based gaming service available in Latin America. The group is also charged with identifying new opportunities for Turner through technological product innovation and acquisitions. Technology and operations (T&O) for Turner International is also part of DV&I.

About Bright Little Labs

Bright Little Labs is building a kids media giant for the 21st century. They make interactive stories to promote critical thinking, computer science and equality for kids aged 5+. Their flagship story is about Detective Dot, a tech-whizz who is on a dangerous mission from the Children’s Intelligence Agency (CIA). The company provides a lo-fi and accessible route into coding, with kids joining the CIA to complete STEM-focused ‘missions’ on and offline which complement the UK Computing Curriculum. Starting on Kickstarter in 2016, Bright Little Labs was part of the Cabinet Office backed, tech-for-good accelerator Bethnal Green Ventures. They now have users in over 30 countries and are widely recognised for their story-led approach to 21st Century skills (recipient of EDF Stem Pulse Award 2017, named ‘Top Coding Toy for Kids’ by The Independent in 2017 and the Evening Standard in 2018). Their founder and CEO, Sophie Deen, is an active advocate for diversity in kids’ media and in the tech industry. She has been named one of Computer Weekly’s ‘Most influential women in UK IT’ 2017, Barclays/Everywoman ‘Startup Founder of the Year’ 2017, the British Interactive Media Association’s ‘Innovator’ in 2017 and London Tech Week ‘Changemaker’ in 2018 for her work to inspire children into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths).

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