

Increasing Subscriber Revenue through Flexible Content Security

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Content security is often regarded solely as a means of avoiding lost revenue from unauthorized consumption. Perhaps more important, yet often overlooked, is the ability of a security system to significantly increase revenue (ARPU) through enabling rich business rules developed by the operator’s marketing department. Thus a security system must be able to translate even the most complex business rules into the equivalent “security rights”. This is far from switching channels “On” or “Off”.

While operators may understand the concept of “up-selling” subscribers to richer service options through free introductory or one-time trial offers, they may overlook a much more lucrative strategy of continuously offering a multitude of customized “teaser” up-selling opportunities over the life of the subscriber’s access to a network. This requires a security system to handle tremendous flexibility yet appear totally transparent to the user.

Examples of marketing techniques include: free preview periods that may only last a few minutes (operator customizable) yet “float” to whenever the user want to preview. These periods can be set to be specific to one or many channels, programs, genres, or to specific subscribers based on their demographics, location or viewing habits.

Better yet, the “up-sale” marketing teasers can be renewed continually based on market research. By researching subscription metrics, marketing campaigns can be fine tuned to target a multitude of different demographics and viewing habits simultaneously - a kind of perpetual “carrot”.

Roaming is a special case for Mobile TV. It’s not just the underlying service carrying voice is different, the programming itself may be entirely different. Here the challenge is to translate the business rules to another system perhaps even deployed by another operator. Advantage may be taken of the additional value that certain channels may have to transient users.

A critical facet for success in marketing additional services is delivering the perception of “immediacy” or “instantaneous gratification” to subscribers. It is well proven that viewer follow-through on subscribing to new services falls off dramatically as the time between thinking of it and being able to do so increases. Selecting an option on the mobile TV ESG is perhaps the path of least possible resistance but the response must follow very quickly.

In a security system, “immediacy” can be implemented by ensuring that the handset or viewing device has the authority to instantaneously give viewing rights to premium but as yet unsubscribed to content. This avoids delays caused by server based polling and back-office services. When marketing premium pay-per-view sports events even the most outrageously oversized network and servers cannot keep up with the demands as subscribers usually clamor for viewing rights in the last few minutes before the “big game”. Failure to satisfy equals considerable lost revenue and leads directly to customer churn. Yet to implement advanced security features and allow transparency to advanced forms of marketing, means that the security in the device itself has to be highly trusted to contain the necessary secret information to instantly unlock the premium programming yet securely report all subscriber usage later.

To support some revenue generating opportunities additional features are required from security systems. One is the need to report all viewing habits to help better match the marketing to individual viewer. Then flexible business rules are needed to allow the marketing department to match the programs to sign up more subscribers and add more features or “tiers”.

A further security related feature is the ability to securely “push” premium content to storage in a handset. With compression and storage developments this mode of operation is already viable and is rapidly becoming cost effective. This method of delivering high value content has a number of advantages: Immediacy – the content is already there and instantly viewable. Random Access – the video file can be navigated to wherever the viewer wants. Trickle or low priority delivery – since a file is delivered to the handset for storage, this can be achieved using the lowest priority and lowest incremental cost bandwidth, for example at night and over low quality of service conditions. It may be delivered via broadcast channels or via an accompanying 3G overlay.

In summary, in order to provide a quality viewing experience and to offer enticing higher value services to a mobile TV viewer, a security system needs many of features evolved over years in other pay TV markets to achieve these goals. Security - no matter how secure - with primitive and or non-scalable features will result in lower revenue.

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