

Making the most of IPTV

MICHAEL LANTZ, CEO, Accedo Broadband, reports.

With IPTV comes a multitude of new possibilities in terms of interactive content, in a way that has been impossible with earlier distribution technologies. As well as this, consumers are experiencing more interactive content in the home than ever before, allowing them to play games, read news, check weather or traffic information, amongst other things, on a variety of devices.

This explosion of interactive content and devices has led to an increase in consumer demand, and means it is more important than ever for operators and service providers to make the best possible use of this potential to keep IPTV ahead of the game.

The full potential of IPTV

According to Strategy Analytics, there will be a sharp increase in the number of online devices, such as media centres, online gaming consoles, consumer electronics and IPTV set-top-boxes. At Accedo Broadband, we estimate that there will be more than 200 million online TV-centric devices by 2011 with the majority of these being IPTV-related devices. This is further backed up by the recent news from iSuppli that IPTV video services will be worth \$26.3 billion by 2011.

The introduction of IPTV has greatly increased the opportunities for interactive TV. Multi-player gaming, weather and news applications, interactive quizzes, Karaoke-on-demand channels and community-centric on-demand applications can all be created in a more attractive and user-friendly way with the new technology.

This technology is in its early stages, but the fundamental technological possibilities for interactive applications can already be seen. In broadcast TV, applications normally had to be sent as broadcasted 'application packages' to be run locally in the set-top box. In IPTV, you have an always-on two-way connection to the set-top box, which makes it possible to make full usage of a client-server technology. Even

if a traditional web experience is not possible on IPTV, a similar application philosophy allows usage of server-side components to provide more advanced applications and fully personalised content. Operators can further enhance consumer interest with community services, multi-player gaming and instantly refreshed content and campaigns inside applications.

To enable operators to exploit the full potential of IPTV, Accedo has developed its Accedo Application Provisioning Solution (AAPS). This platform handles both the distribution and management, as well as the content insertion and rights management. AAPS means that service providers can personalise the applications for each user, depending on their subscription package or generation of set-top-box.

'Long tail' content

One of the main benefits of IPTV is the cost-efficient distribution of niche content to subscribers. This ranges from TV channels and Video on Demand content to interactive content. The key to knowing the subscribing IPTV households is regular evaluation of content usage. In a world of increasingly larger content fragmentation, TV behaviour and interest will also be increasingly fragmented, with niche content, so called 'long tail' content, becoming a larger share of consumption over time. The same 'long tail' content strategy should be applied to interactive content, where it is easier to adjust content offering and track user behaviour to constantly improve the IPTV offering.

The Accedo Application Portfolio includes a broad range of interactive 'long tail' IPTV applications such as games, quizzes, puzzles,

horoscope, karaoke, lifestyle, niche sports, news, weather, video art and communication. At IBC we launched our multiplayer gaming engine, which brings yet another dimension to the personalised gaming experience, allowing users to interact with each other either within a network or between different operator's networks and countries.

New applications are constantly added to ensure a content portfolio in tune with popular demand, and make it possible to update an interactive IPTV offering regularly.

Moving forward

IPTV opens up a wealth of opportunities for broadcasters to adapt interactive technology available on other platforms to the TV medium. It is vital that operators use this potential to put together a compelling package for consumers, in order to make the most of this new broadcast technology and stay ahead of competing formats.

Accedo's portfolio is designed with this in mind. As well as including a whole range of applications as mentioned above, it has also been designed to work within the international market, allowing content to be regionalised to fit local market needs and languages. The Accedo knowledge bank on which applications work for different consumers will provide service providers with the expertise needed to succeed with interactivity.



Examples from Accedo Application Portfolio