

‘BREAKING IN’ TO THE DIGITAL HOME



Image: Capt Kodak/Flickr

BEFORE THE INTERNET and PCs ever existed, the best glimpse at the future of technology was a show called “The 21st Century” on CBS hosted by Walter Cronkite that made predictions about what the future home would look like. Cronkite envisioned a master console that would “inform, instruct and entertain” the family and 3D TVs and “stereophonic” music that would fill up the entire room. Fast forward to 2013 and that’s pretty close to what the home entertainment experience looks like, as a result of major advances in digital technology.

Now, let’s take a step back and look at how we got here. Explosive growth of connected digital homes and consumers with insatiable appetites for video content anytime, anywhere and on any screen have been the catalysts behind the major media landscape shifts we see today. What used to be a basic home network is now a feature-rich collection of mobile devices, broadband-enabled services and multifunctional set-top-boxes and other complementary devices — all of which collectively create comprehensive residential gateways. This spike in consumer desire for content presents significant market opportunities for mobile operators.

To drive the mobile entertainment ecosystem forward, it is vital that service providers start to capitalize on this trend that's becoming a mainstay by making the strategic decision to offer true TV Everywhere solutions that differentiate their service offerings, enabling them to better compete in an industry driven by content. So the big question is: How can service providers strategically "break in" to the home? The answer is diversification. They must quickly and effectively diversify their offerings in order to capitalize on consumers' multiple device usage, deepening existing customer relationships and ultimately preserving market share.

Additionally, to keep up with the OTT players, and to maintain their subscriber base, telecom service providers have to deliver high-quality, value-added services quickly, while also exceeding the quality, content and security of the packages offered by cable and satellite competition. The more services and options a provider can deliver to consumers, the more successful it will be. In fact, those providers that are already delivering triple-play services are proving to be the most successful within the TV Everywhere ecosystem.

What's Keeping Telecom Providers from Entering the Home?

Achieving multiscreen delivery across mobile devices can be a complex and expensive proposition, especially in the midst of shifting content and policy rights that limit how, when and where content can be consumed. Telecom providers in the United States are faced with a multitude of challenges surrounding intellectual property, policy and security, and digital rights management (DRM), which collectively present a large barrier to entry when it comes to delivering a true TV Everywhere experience both in and outside the home.

In addition, there are the issues of bandwidth efficiency, network resource allocation and the significant upfront costs associated with providing a service, depending on the type of content that's being delivered. Fortunately, service providers are well-positioned to leverage their existing customer networks to deliver multi-service product bundles. Additionally, with solutions available today that enable providers to quickly deploy branded, true TV Everywhere offerings, they can successfully extend their services into the home.

Getting a Foot in the Door with Technology Solutions

The explosive growth in consumer demands for a more engaging video experience is showing no signs of slowing down. Not only do they demand personalization—which is considered to be the ‘Holy Grail’ for multiscreen — they also want this content to be delivered securely to their personal screens. Similarly, providers now must leverage both the big screen, as well as mobile devices, to unlock new revenue opportunities and grow their network capabilities by delivering personalized content, including targeted advertising.

There are a number of different technology solutions that service providers can use to help them meet consumer demands and quickly and cost-efficiently get a “foot in the door” as it relates to the home viewing ecosystem. One device that offers a truly unique value proposition and has the potential to make waves in the TV everywhere ecosystem is an HDMI dongle. The dongle is an easy-to-install device, enabling branded, rapid deployment of in-home services. It also allows operators to optimize the growing use of the second screen — as tablets and smartphones become the new in-home remote controls — for an enhanced TV experience.

The dongle delivers a turnkey, in-home TV Everywhere experience to existing customers or a value-added service for new customers. As wireless operators look to expand their customer base while providing them with value-added services, the dongle is an ideal tool to help them. It also allows service providers to easily integrate it into products that are currently in their customers’ homes and easily diversify their TV Everywhere offerings.

The HDMI dongle is a significant step in proliferation of TV Everywhere services. Thanks to this full-service offering, there will be many opportunities in the future to deliver innovative, engaging applications and services to help operators unlock the true potential of multiscreen digital entertainment and “break in” to the home.

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