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IMS – Sharing Emotions and Delivering Profits



The advantage of IMS is that it provides the right service cocktail for the exchange and sharing of emotions on combined media.

It is an all too familiar story: fixed operators around the world face declining ARPU and subscriber churn to competition; voice traffic is leaving the networks and tripping merrily to the Internet through products such as Skype and to mobile phones. This exodus, along with broadband commoditisation, has forced operators to look at ways to bring more value-added services into the mix to stem the tide.

Operators need to deliver new, value-added services, and they need to deliver them quickly. They need to be able to introduce these services at a reasonable cost and evaluate the value of the services quickly and effectively. Finally, they need to be able to do all of this while maximising the considerable investment they have already made in their existing networks: nobody can afford to build a new infrastructure. Evolution, not revolution, is the name of the game.

IMS means Services

The advantage of IMS (IP Multimedia Subsystem) is that it provides the right service cocktail for the exchange and sharing of emotions on combined media. It offers person-to-person communication in novel ways that were not possible before because of the ways systems and networks were built. It also means quality of service management. Currently, operators have great technology for managing the QoS of IP connections, but there is no vehicle in the marketplace to maximise this capability and transform it into profit. IMS unlocks that value and provides operators with the opportunity to make money from the QoS management systems already built into their networks.

With IMS, services interoperate seamlessly so that one service can interact with another. An end user might say: "I want to share this video that I have just seen with my friend

down the street. I want to be able to take this picture and share it with my entire family in an easy, seamless way, regardless of what kind of terminal I am on, or the kind of network through which I am accessing the content." This is a key attribute of IMS – the capability to communicate instantly using text, video, voice, or any kind of multimedia; to instantly share that information with any network and any device.

How it works

Today, services are deployed on individual stovepipes, with services built from the bottom up, with the added hurdle of having to tie them to business operations and support systems. Every stovepipe has its own data, its own user storage repository – everything that is needed to bring a service online. However, switching between services and using information from one service and sharing it with another is very difficult and often impossible. Also, the time that it takes to roll services out is between 18 and 24 months, which represents a huge expense to operators.

From the core network, IMS changes service delivery from the stovepipe vertical integration model to one in which the delivery of session control and media is deployed horizontally. That means that the information is shared in a streamlined way with the business and operating support systems; it is standardised in a way that allows for the applications to be sandwiched between these layers. New services can be quickly introduced; we can interact between services: resources can be pulled from the triple play platform for voice, information can flow between presence and voice servers. Also, information associated with billing and charging is easily brought into the business support system and the operations support domain.

Everybody is speaking the same Language

IMS uses a set of communication capabilities that are easily expandable, as well as IP-based technologies. It helps operators bring services to market at a reasonable cost with less worry about business cases, because they can deliver services quickly and can quickly determine whether the services are interesting to the end user or not. Finally, because IMS is an overlay system, it enables services to be introduced without impacting the entire core network. As a result, networks can evolve smoothly using an IMS approach. IMS is not just an IP multimedia subsystem, but a service environment that provides a rich multimedia capability that will be the future of service delivery. ■

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