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## INDUSTRY COMMENT

## Feature

### Mobile TV – a service-based solution

The concept of applications provided on an as-a-service basis is commonplace within the general IT industry. There are now firms offering similar service-based solutions in the mobile TV industry...

Mobile video services: Seems a bit of a running before you've learned to walk type of scenario doesn't it? Even though the market is still relatively immature, it's so typical of the IT and telecommunications industry to come up with second-generation solutions when the first generation is actually barely out of nappies. Well, that could be slightly unfair as it goes because it may well be the case that, to change



Wayne Purboo

and mix metaphors, a quantum leap is needed to give the market an impetus that the first generation could not deliver. With its mobile video services, QuickPlay Media may well be doing exactly that.

Essentially, QuickPlay Media provides content management and service delivery solutions for mobile television and video services. Its flagship OpenVideo platform is designed to offer flexible and streamlined application integration for mobile operators, media companies and technology partners. The platform sees use in applications such as search, advertising, billing and user interface frameworks. The platform is currently used for mobile video services for 13 major mobile operators in North America and Europe, providing both live and on-demand content from more than 150 different media companies. In four years of operation, the company has expanded to the point of opening offices in Toronto, San Francisco and London.

## True ecosystem

Speaking to C2M, Wayne Purboo, president and CEO, described the network of carriers and handset manufacturers with whom the company sells its services to as a true ecosystem. He believes that after working with QuickPlay, the benefit of services becomes apparent, especially with the device manufacturers. "We're working with just about every handset manufacturer out there and what's interesting is that a number of them have come back and wanted to own media services to put on the device they ship." He makes particular reference to that this has been done by some of the biggest names in the industry such as RIM for its BlackBerry device and for operator Vodafone in Italy. MTV Mobile is another who has leveraged QuickPlay and boosted the quality of its offerings from using the OpenVideo single platform.

There are multiple pieces of the platform and there are specific pieces of the platform that are concerned with delivery and others with transcoding of the content. The single platform supports a multiple delivery mechanism that provides both content back up and also video on-demand types of services. It also allows the operator to use transport delivery mechanisms such as MMS. The nub of the service offerings are search and navigation, says Purboo, who believes that you can't overstate the magnitude of both. He explained, "We think [they are] incredibly important. The discovery of the content [has] probably [been] one of the biggest factors for growth of the overall market. And we are fairly strong believers that a wireless device warrants a different search mechanism. Part of the secret [of] our platform is providing a lot of meta data around the content to enable effective search and [make more] effective things like recommendations and playlists to alleviate the problem of discovery. Typically in search, the search itself is external to the platform. And we would publish the Meta data about the content that is maintained in the platform to a search engine such as Yahoo or Jump or some of the other mobile search advertising."

## Key aspect

One of the key aspects of the OpenVideo single platform is the ability to link adverts to video streams. This has meant that the platform has to have a particularly robust tagging mechanism to enable real contextual-based adverts. The aim is to give as much detail as possible about what video the consumer would like to watch and that will then enable the single platform to target much more highly the adverts that are being served by the service operator. The other key element of the targeted advertising solution is data collection. Says Purboo, "We've done a lot of work around reporting and analytics to be able to give reports that not only can be used for settlement but that can also be used to future campaigns which we feel is just as important."

The results of such activities have been interesting. Vodafone Italia has been able to launch an advertising service that leverages dynamic stitching of adverts. That is to say when a consumer clicks on a video, Opinion ensures that the video stream dynamically stitches on features such as recommendations and also pre- and post-roll advertisements.

Even though QuickPlay is very optimistic about its future – the company has doubled its revenue for the last couple of years – Purboo is realistic enough to recognise that there are going to be a number of key challenges ahead in order to stay ahead of the competition. For example, the service is going to have to be engineered to support unlimited data plans. Furthermore as services are rolled out, the nature of the networks themselves is changing – speed is increasing constantly - and the company has to anticipate a world where next-generation handsets will have wider screen and basically superior video and audio features that will need to be supported.

But this is something Purboo is looking forward to and presents a confidence as to how things will pan out. "[Hitherto] a lot of the video that has been done is video 1.0; which is pay per use and where there is a separate data charge from the content and it was sold like a ring tone or wallpaper, as opposed to being sold as a real media asset. We definitely see things as more a portal approach which is more highly personalised than [currently] like you get from your TV or your PCs today."