

By Shlomo Wolfman, COO and founder of Starhome.



Convergence – The Mobile Way

Convergence is not just a temporary trend – it is a revolution that will have a profound impact across the entire communications marketplace.

Ultimately, convergence will result in a communications market without boundaries. Major players from all sectors are already staking their claim within the convergence market, offering end-to-end solutions that pose a direct threat to mobile operators, as well as other service providers. There are already signs that mobile voice revenues are being undermined by Internet and VoIP providers – notably Skype with its 3G phone – moving into the mobile space with services that promise complete mobility and appealing price models.

WHO OWNS THE CUSTOMER?

Protecting existing revenues is undeniably crucial but mobile operators face a further challenge in warding off threats to the stability of their customer base posed by new suppliers and services. Losing customers has an immediate impact on revenues but the importance of ‘owning’ the customer also has longer-term, strategic implications. First, operators who build customer trust and loyalty in the early stages of the converged market’s development will have a better chance of selling more services in the future. Second, it is also feasible that convergence will lead to fewer providers as customers will ultimately receive all their communications services from a single provider.

TAKING THE ADVANTAGE

The good news is that mobile operators can turn convergence to their advantage. By deploying the right mobile IP solutions today, operators gain new revenue streams while making the most of their existing assets. At the same time, operators smooth the way for easy migration to IMS should they chose this option.

THE 3 STEP MOBILE CONVERGENCE STRATEGY

Effective mobile convergence can be summarized in three words: **Extend, Gain, Now.**

'Extend' means that mobile operators should offer their existing subscribers a greater variety of IP services and applications (IM, sharing, video, etc.),

and on more devices – laptops/PCs and dual mode handsets.

Customers can easily fall through a gap in the service portfolio straight into the arms of an IP-based competitor offering a converged solution. Once they’re gone, winning them back won’t be easy.

'Gaining' new customers is imperative. Providing applications on the PC to off-net customers can be a solid strategy for operators. With a secure foothold in new areas, operators then have the opportunity to gain these customers as mobile subscribers.

'Now' means precisely what it says. With the drive to convergence already well underway, mobile operators should meet the challenge of convergence head on.

Waiting for IMS to become a commercial reality tomorrow, means losing potential revenues today. Operators should focus on implementing strategies that allow them to capitalize on converged applications by offering solutions now. These services can utilize existing infrastructure while ensuring operators are well positioned for an effortless migration to IMS in the future.

SMOOTHING THE PATH TO CONVERGENCE

Starhome provides the technology and expertise needed to bridge the technology gap and enable mobile operators to extend their mobile capabilities towards SIP/IMS.

Starhome’s solutions are based on Telco-grade, scalable technology which utilizes existing mobile network components including HLR, SMSC and SCP. The solutions integrate with the mobile network as standard MSC/VLR while having a direct connection into the IP world.

Let’s take a look at some of the Starhome solutions that are helping mobile operators shift to convergence by maximizing their subscribers’ freedom of choice.

MOBILE2IP

With Mobile2IP, operators can provide subscribers with a complete virtual mobile handset. A fully branded soft client offers subscribers all the features and services they need on any PC or IP device. One system for all types of services – voice, video and messaging – simplifies access and control.

A single relationship with a trusted supplier is an appealing proposition. Subscribers enjoy an attractive converged solution with one interface, one address book, one customer support center, one

Telephony - Voice & Video (client2client, fixed & mobile)

Messaging & Presence IM, SMS & MMS

Communities - Mobile & Others (MSN, logos)

On-net Contacts - 1 Address Book



Internet Add-Ons - Internet TV Stock Tickers, RSS Feeds

Voice & Video Mail

Sharing - Whiteboard, File/Application Sharing, Video Streaming

Branded & Customized

Mobile2IP: The Complete Virtual Mobile Handset

monthly bill and most important, a single mobile identity or phone number.

The youth market is one example of a segment pursued by IP providers who have built relationships through heavily-branded IM-type applications on the PC. To compete, mobile operators can offer Mobile2IP, gaining a new footprint on PCs and enabling them to provide new applications such as IM, video, sharing and white boards.

PBX ANYWHERE

Designed for all enterprise types, be they SOHO (Small Office Home Office), SME (Small to Medium Enterprises) or Large Multi-national Corporations (MNC), PBX Anywhere extends PBX quality call switching capabilities across the communications infrastructure, from fixed and IP devices through to any mobile device.

With PBX Anywhere, businesses can offer employees ‘anytime, anywhere’ one-number access to any device – fixed, mobile as well as PC. The solution also offers intelligent call routing and screening capabilities for improving corporate productivity and cost structures.

International roaming capabilities allow employees to contact one another on their mobiles using the same type of short code/VPN dialing used on fixed-line phone systems. In addition they can define the order in which their devices are contacted.

Businesses using PBX Anywhere benefit from significant improvements in

cost control, such as split billing, which allows personal and business calls to be charged separately.

Starhome launched PBX Anywhere in November 2006 in partnership with Sympac, a KPN global MVNO provider in Europe. Sympac targets multi-national corporations with a uniquely comprehensive approach to the design and management of customized business communication systems across different countries and networks.

According to Sympac, PBX Anywhere “precisely bridges the gap between fixed PBX and mobile services”.

WIN NEW OPPORTUNITIES NOW

Convergence offers mobile operators new opportunities, and with the right tools and partner, they will be able to redefine their market approach with new business models built on entirely new end-to-end service packages.

A successful convergence strategy requires partnership with a supplier that understands the mobile market from both the technical and business perspectives. Starhome’s unique advantage is its deep technical understanding of mobile networks amassed from nine years’ experience with mobile operators and over 130 gateways integrated into tier one and two operator core networks.

It is all about utilizing a proven and stable platform to offer the right solutions to the right segments today, and be ready for IMS tomorrow.