

Collaboration Brings VoD to Standard TV Receivers without Set-Top Boxes

Cable operators can slash CAPEX spend by delivering video-on-demand direct to the TV

London, UK – 12 March 2009 - TANDBERG Television, part of the Ericsson group (NASDAQ:ERIC), Sony, Neotion and Strategy & Technology (S&T) have combined their industry expertise to deliver a Video on Demand (VoD) solution that enables cable operators to deliver network-based time-shift services and targeted adverts direct to the TV, without the need for a set-top box (STB).

The breakthrough industry collaboration allows standard TVs to support VoD right out of the box. This results in lower deployment costs for cable operators, who can avoid set-top box purchase and installation. Consumers benefit from reduced energy usage in the home and faster service availability – and they do not have to make time for an engineer's visit.

Cable operators have the opportunity to generate valuable new revenue streams and offer a better customer experience with on-demand services, and hence reduce subscriber churn. They maintain full control over the applications offered and the look and feel of the user interface. Meanwhile, viewers gain full PVR functionality on the TV with no storage and no extra cost.

At the heart of the system is a new common interface specification (CI Plus), an emerging industry standard defined by Sony and Neotion and their partners in the CI Plus Forum, which will soon be supported within 80% of Sony digital televisions and approximately 70% of all new integrated Digital TV sets.

Coupled with more secure conditional access, this new interface enables applications – once downloaded from the CI Plus module - to be launched from a browser in a CI Plus TV or other compatible receiver, thus opening the door to applications such as Video on Demand (VoD) and Targeted Ad-insertion.

TANDBERG Television and Neotion have implemented a standards-based VoD system that combines Neotion's CI Plus module and TANDBERG Television's OpenStream® Digital Services Platform. This handles the management of content, session control, billing, catalogue generation, ad-insertion and resource management.

“Consumers want to watch more television on their own schedules and cable operators with VoD and network-based catch-up TV are rewarded with higher service take-up and reduced

churn,” comments Edward Allfrey, Cable Business Director, TANDBERG Television. “This solution makes it easier and cheaper for cable operators to introduce on-demand, while maintaining full control of the service.”

By running a full VoD platform including time-shift TV & nPVR (network Personal Video Recorder) on any CI Plus TV without a STB, Cable MSOs are spared the large capital expenditure of deployment by teams of technicians, as the system is simply installed by subscribers. This dramatically cuts the operator’s costs of migration from analogue to digital, and by delivering PVR functionality from the network rather than an internal HDD, the life of installed devices is also extended – so slashing downstream maintenance commitments.

“This collaboration is great news for operators and, ultimately, consumers,” comments Hiroshi Sakamoto, Vice President of TV Marketing, Sony Europe. “By extending the existing CI Standard, we can make digital TV and VoD even more accessible as it literally becomes plug-and-play with the need for only one device, namely your TV set.”

Says Loïc Bernard, CEO at Neotion: *“As the consumer’s familiarity with the PVR (personal video recorder) grows, the idea of accessible, on-demand online video is set to gain real momentum in the living room. Advanced Neotion IP connected CI Plus Modules seamlessly turn this into reality for consumers buying flat panel cable-ready iDTV. At the same time the average revenue per unit (ARPU) for operators is strengthened, while the investment and churn is reduced.”*

Finally, Strategy & Technology (S&T) has developed a data-driven MHEG application that runs within the CI Plus browser in the TV and allows subscribers to quickly and easily navigate through the entire content catalogue, select on-demand titles, and control media playback. This VoD application runs across the diverse family of CI Plus TVs and other CI Plus equipped CE devices ensuring MSOs are able to deliver a consistent and visually rich VoD user experience to their subscribers.

“MHEG was originally conceived as a technology for delivering device independent VoD solutions, and so is ideally suited to this kind of application,” says Colin Prior, Director of International Sales at S&T. “The inclusion of MHEG in the CI Plus specification means it is relatively easy to develop, deploy and update such dynamic applications to a broad range of suitably equipped CE devices.”

Visitors are invited to see the advanced CI Plus VoD system being demonstrated at Cable Congress 09 on the TANDBERG Television stand (number 21).

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