

## Cox taps PCMM for speed preview

Cox Communications is enlisting the help of Camiant Inc. and the PacketCable Multimedia (PCMM) architecture to enable high-speed customers to preview the operator's set of cable modem service speed tiers.

Leveraging Camiant's policy server and bandwidth-on-demand application, the PCMM-based version of Cox's speed preview service will enable residential cable modem customers to try out faster speeds for a limited period of time. They will then be given the option to upgrade to a faster tier, if customers decide it better suits their needs. Today, Cox offers three levels of service: a "Value" tier, a "Preferred" tier and a "Premier" tier.

PCMM, a CableLabs-specified architecture, injects quality of service into a range of IP-based applications.

Cox plans to roll out the capability market-by-market as the operator installs the requisite equipment in regional data centers, according to Cox Vice President of Voice & Data Product Development Scott Hightower. In the early going, Cox is conducting a PCMM market trial with the bandwidth-on-demand app in the Pensacola, Fla. area.

Cox will also have to upgrade the code in the cable modem termination systems (CMTSs) that support each PCMM-enabled market.

"At this point, all CMTS vendors are supporting PCMM [and] are at various stages of release of code," noted Ed Delaney, Camiant's VP of marketing and business development.

Cox has been offering speed previews for a couple of years, but until the introduction of PCMM, the process was much more manual. For Cox's pre-PCMM speed preview, the operator has to send a new configuration file to the modem and then tell the modem to perform a "soft reboot" in the late evening. The new approach will offer more automation and remove the soft reboot from the procedure.

"It smoothes out the process for us and improves the overall reliability," Hightower said.

It will also provide some added flexibility to the timing of the speed preview offers. Rather than offering it on just a weekend, when some customers may be traveling, the enhanced system will allow customers to initiate a 48-hour speed preview on their own. Cox hopes to offer that capability later this year.

Although Cox has not provided specific upgrade figures for speed preview, the application has received positive feedback for the earlier, pre-PCMM version of it. The company expects even better results from the PCMM-powered entrant.

"We've seen customers upgrade in good numbers," Hightower said, noting that the customer response rates have been much better than what the company has generated from direct mail campaigns.

As Cox penetrates its markets with policy servers and PCMM, the company is also seeking out other applications that can

leverage the new architecture, but has yet to identify which ones it expects to test or deploy. However, those that are sensitive to delay and jitter - such as voice, gaming and video - "are the ones that we think can benefit from a platform like this," Hightower said. PCMM "will give us more control on how we can tailor the experience down to the customer level."

Cox is one of the first MSOs to publicly enlist wide-scale plans for PCMM. Among recent PCMM activity, Buckeye CableSystem announced a bandwidth-on-demand deployment in tandem with Camiant.

PCMM "is baked, viable and ready for large deployments," Delaney said.