

Camiant Brings Policy Management to Bear on Mobile Cost Issues

Camiant, supplier of policy management solutions for fixed broadband networks, is bringing to market a version of its policy server that will help mobile operators tackle issues raised by the surge in data traffic and its impact on bandwidth.

The new mobile version of the Camiant Multimedia Policy Engine (MPE) that's widely used in cable addresses mobile operators' urgent need to lower costs and optimize the delivery to subscribers, says Randy Fuller, vice president of product development at Camiant. This contrasts with the way the MPE is used in most fixed networks, where the goal is to manage quality-of-service and other policies related to enabling tiered broadband and other revenue-driving services.

"When we first starting talking with mobile operators, we were focused on the kind of ARPU (average revenue per user) enhancements we've come to expect in the fixed network world," Fuller says. "What we found is there was a fundamental, largely unmet need for technology that would help manage bandwidth usage in order to drive costs down."

Mobile carriers need to remedy situations where data usage is drawing too much of the available bandwidth out of the mobile infrastructure both in the access coverage area and over the backhaul, Fuller notes. This is especially the case as ever more users connect their PCs to mobile broadband services, thereby pulling much more bandwidth-consuming data through the air interface than would be the case if the user were accessing the same Web site using a handheld device.

"Even without PCs you'd see sheer volumes [of bandwidth utilization] up with 3G," Fuller says. "But PCs add a demand that pushes usage to levels that you need to deal with today versus a year or two from now."

Camiant's initial suite of applications written for mobile on the MPE focus on the following functions:

- Fair Use Management – a flexible, application-agnostic solution to "dampen" peak usage when the network is congested, thereby allowing operators to more cost effectively manage the pace of RF and backhaul expansion.
- Roaming Control – provides business rule control over the use of data services and applications from different roaming partners under a number of different circumstances. This is especially important in cases where operators can't recoup the full costs of roaming usage when significant amounts of data are consumed, Fuller notes.
- Cell Site Admission Control – provides flexible control over data session and bandwidth allocation when a cell site is congested.

"With the MPE and our new application, Camiant is helping wireless broadband operators use all the available tools – bandwidth, charging and quota control – to maximize the value and utilization of mobile broadband," Fuller says.

"Cost control is a primary concern for mobile broadband operators due to higher incremental costs," agrees Yankee Group analyst David Vorhaus, in reference to the

initial application targeted by the Camiant solution. "Moreover, operators are beginning to see the migration of high-bandwidth, latency-sensitive content to a mobile environment, and consumers are demanding this content be delivered with increasingly greater speed and quality of experience."

Vorhaus believes the ability to set and manage policies will be fundamental to mobile operations going forward, eventually extending into specific service-related applications. "As these factors drive mobile broadband network usage and complexity," he says, "a centralized policy control solution is a critical step in helping wireless operators mitigate cost, while future-proofing their networks to handle the issues and concerns around capacity and quality of service that will drive profitability."

The mobile version of the MPE is already commercially deployed by one unnamed operator and under serious scrutiny by others, Fuller says. By year's end or early next year the company intends to introduce applications-specific policy controls, which are already in the planning stages at the mobile company now using the MPE, he adds.

For example, an operator could allocate extra bandwidth for doing extra things, depending where needs are, possibly in conjunction with times-of-day usage patterns, Fuller notes. "There are components in the network, including routers designed for mobile, where we can affect the type of radio resources you get in any given location," he says.