

Achieving the potential of wireless broadband with content and applications

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In this whitepaper we will take a look at the potential for delivering applications and content over wireless broadband networks, and highlight the ways in which Quiconnect can help maximise the success for providers in this area.

PWLAN as an alternative delivery channel for content and applications

In all the talk about fixed-mobile convergence and the role Wi-Fi is playing in this movement, we hear a lot about voice. Of course, voice is the most obvious example around us of how service providers are looking to change their offerings to work with the growing number of network alternatives available.

However, with the growth of wireless broadband capabilities in such a broad range of devices and the wide availability of Public Wireless LAN, many more types of applications and content can be made accessible to users outside the usual confines of their home or office.

While the basic building blocks are there to get content and applications to users over wireless broadband, there are a few missing pieces. To explore these, let's start by looking at the connection experience at hotspots.

Wi-Fi connection experience

A typical connection experience for a user with a Wi-Fi enabled handheld device looking to buy content at a public hotspot might look like this:

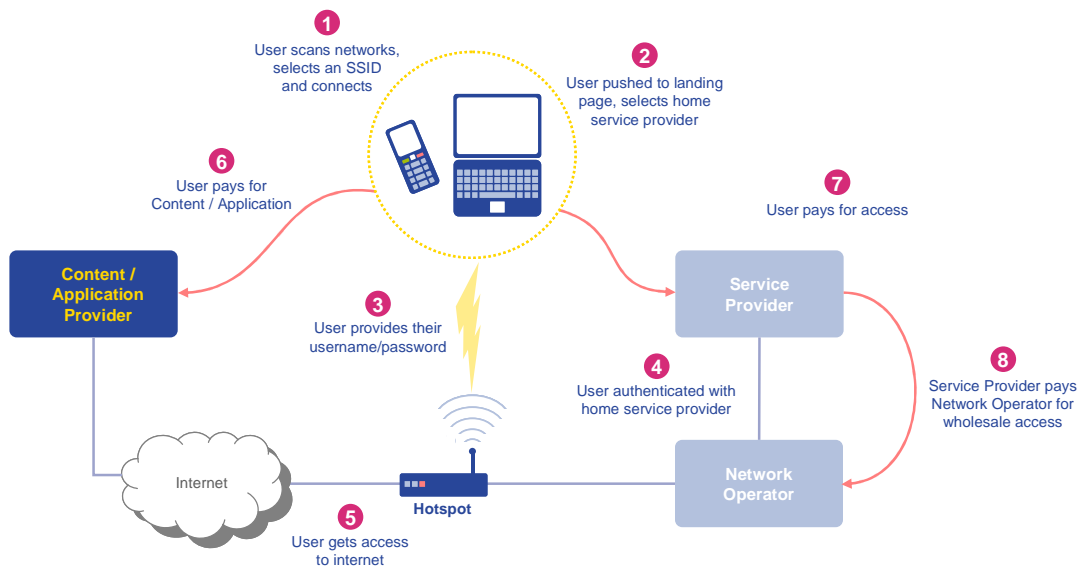


Figure 1 Typical Wi-Fi content purchase experience

The first thing we notice about this scenario is that the user deals with two providers: one for the network access (which may or may not be the company who actually operates the hotspot

network itself) and the other for the content. This means having two accounts and dealing with two sets of credentials for each transaction. For now, let's suppose the user has a wireless subscription which allows them to roam to this particular hotspot. We'll also need to assume that this user knows this hotspot is available to them in advance because they checked with their service provider – they had to check first, because on their small-screened device it's too hard to navigate around the web pages looking for their provider's logo to click on.

This highlights the second issue: the limitations of many non-computer wireless devices make it difficult to interact with the network using the same methods as other users. Most hotspot login processes are designed for users on laptop computers, which means that getting online at public hotspots is a very different experience for users of other types of devices. These may be small, have a tiny (or no) keyboard and may not even have a browser, so overall the requirement to log in at each visit to the hotspot can be surprisingly onerous for many users.

The third problem is related to the first: not only does the user have to deal with multiple providers in terms of registering an identity with them and needing a username and password, but they will generally also be paying both providers. They are charged to access the network (which may also include an additional fee for roaming as they're not on their "home" network) and they also pay for the content they're downloading. Apart from the administrative impact, this makes it difficult for the user to determine the "real" cost of the content and they may conclude that the premium they're paying to get this content in a mobile context isn't worth it.

Addressing the user experience problem

So what can be done to address these issues? The key is to provide a user experience which is built around the customer. An experience which provides the level of simplicity required for the customer to want to buy in this way again and again.

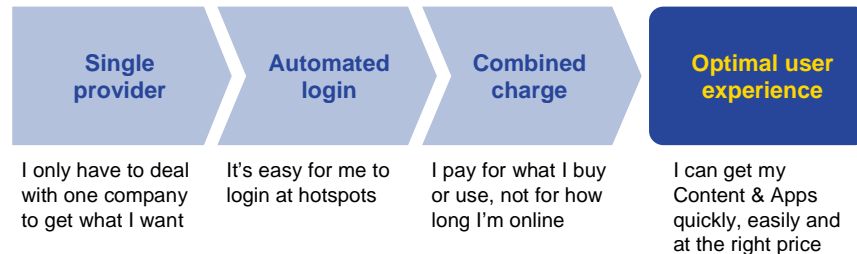


Figure 2 The consumer value proposition for content and applications over wireless broadband

How do we achieve this? Through improved technology to facilitate the connection and by using a new business model to simplify the commercial landscape for the user.

Making the login easier

Quiconnect's Hotspot Connector helps application developers through the challenge of providing access to public wireless networks for end users. As a toolkit which can be integrated into applications, Hotspot Connector provides the ability to authenticate using stored credentials, giving users an easy path to getting connected and making applications simple, intuitive and more valuable.

Integrating Hotspot Connector into your application means secure authentication at hotspots with no user action required. This supports the ultimate user experience at typical venues – before your customer has even found a seat they're already online!

Simplifying the commercial landscape

As we saw in the previous section, the technical connection is only one element of a great experience. For the user, the simplicity needs to extend across the entire experience including the commercial component – a single charge representing both network access and application use, and a single provider with whom to interact.

Quiconnect's Interconnect Platform provides these capabilities. By interconnecting a range of networks in the locations that are relevant to the target customers and offering a single commercial interface to these, Quiconnect enables application providers to sell access to these networks – bundled with their application – without the need for expertise in wireless broadband or the complex administration of roaming deals. On top of the connectivity itself this includes rollout planning for the virtual network, commercial negotiation and financial clearing and settlement.

A straightforward experience built around activities of existing value for the customer means fewer barriers to usage and, importantly, the acquisition of customers who might otherwise be difficult to attract.

Suitable propositions for mobile wireless broadband

Following are several examples of business models for services which would be ideally suited to public wireless broadband.

Example 1
Mobile VoIP service provider

Company T offers mobile Voice over IP (VoIP) services to consumers. While many calls are made on open networks at the home or office, a complete service needs to also include public hotspots. By making it easier for customers to connect using its client software and through relationships with a range of wireless network operators, T can offer voice calls from public hotspots with a tariff which includes the wireless access component.

With the commercial and technical operations being handled by Quiconnect, all T needs to do is promote its VoIP services to customers, for whom the experience is simple: they just walk up to a hotspot and dial.

Example 2
Media provider

Company W sells video downloads over the internet. Customers browse a range of titles on the W website and download their selection. While primarily a home-based service, W is finding that its customers are increasingly consuming their content while away from home, e.g. business travellers catching up on TV viewing to pass the time on plane journeys, or families with young children downloading movies to keep the children occupied on holidays.

With the option to download content while out and about and the simplicity of adding a small charge to the cost of the download to cover wireless access, many new customers can be introduced to the benefits of using hotspots.

Example 3
Online gaming provider

Company N provides online services to customers who own its gaming consoles, giving them the ability to play each other in multi-player scenarios over the internet. As the consoles are small, portable devices these are often carried from place to place and N's customers like to play online from many different locations.

N is able to offer its customers the ability to use these services in a range of hotspots without the customer needing a subscription with hotspot operators. N has the flexibility to choose whether to pick up the bill itself for network usage as a marketing tool, pass this on to the customer as a subscription or work with game publishers to build this into the cost of software.

Conclusion

Wireless broadband offers content and application providers a delivery channel for their products and services which can meet the needs of mobile consumers. Quiconnect can help providers to assemble compelling offerings by overcoming the challenges presented by the customer login experience and a fragmented commercial landscape.

By simplifying login with automated authentication and enabling easy bundling of network charges, a mobility element can be added to existing fixed internet propositions creating new opportunities for providers and network operators alike.