

cell broadcast

Developing world takes well to Celltick's CB service

Celltick has managed to turn cell broadcasting, a data bearer that was pretty much dead in the water two years ago, into a nice little earner for operators outside developed markets.

Data usage among subscribers of Hutchison's affiliate carriers in India has shot up since the introduction of the solution, rebranded there as HutchAlive. The percentage of Hutchison subs accessing data services has gone up from a measly 2% to about 27%. It is generating nearly US\$2 million in revenues each month.

But although Celltick's interactive CB solution has also launched with cellcos in Sri Lanka, China, Ukraine and Brazil and could also be rolled out in Africa and other parts of Asia and Latin America, it has not debuted in the developed world – other than in Israel, Celltick's home country.

First-world carriers are not as quick off the mark, says Yossi Wellengstein, Celltick's founder and CEO. "Early adopters tend to be flatter organizations with less decision-making layers," he says. Cellcos fitting that description are more common in the developing world. Wellengstein adds that Europe's big carriers all have hundreds of people working in strategy at different levels, slowing down adoption.

O₂ UK conducted trials of Celltick's LiveScreen solution on a few hundred users a while back, together with now-defunct wireless-media company XY Network. The trials showed a 7.5% ARPU increase among users, Wellengstein claims. But nothing came of the trial. Wellengstein expects a UK-based launch of LiveScreen to finally take place by the end of next year, though he would not specify with whom.

"Portalized content" is failing to reach the mass market just as other mobile content-delivery methods before it, Wellengstein argues. Running a successful portal requires a lot of sophisticated content management, with daily changes to front-end content to encourage stickiness and drill-downs – something beyond the abilities of most ordinary carriers, he says.

Traditional mobile content channels, such as WAP sites and PSMS, require end-users to take too much initiative and too many steps, adds Wellengstein. "For example, just to download a ring tone, you still need to go through around 12 clicks and five screens," he says. Operators have to advertise content services through other media.

LiveScreen gets around the problem by turning phone screens into scrolling billboards. The STK-based solution provides a business case for commercial CB by broadcasting news snippets and teasers to phone screens every minute or so that link up to value-added services such as premium SMS, MMS, WAP, Java or IVR.