



Here Come the Mobile CDNs

Stacey Higginbotham, Monday, May 12, 2008

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Today, telco gear maker Dilithium Networks launched a software product for carriers, content publishers and content delivery networks that can handle all of the transcoding necessary to take content formatted for one screen and move it to another in real time. The Dilithium Content Adapter is the first software product from the seven-year-old telecommunications gear maker. The company has focused on 3G video since its inception, and Dilithium says the product is already deployed with some operators and CDNs.

But Dilithium's not alone in its focus on delivering faster video to mobile devices. In a few months, Limelight Networks will launch a mobile CDN product for its customers, and Dave Hatfield, an SVP of marketing sales at Limelight, says customers are testing such a product now. While it's not a huge focus at Limelight right now, he says phones like the iPhone have changed the potential size of the market by making it easier for consumers to get mobile video — and that could spur market growth.

After the launch of the iPhone, which opened the Internet to mobile users in ways that were previously cost prohibitive or downright impossible, [mobile video may be inching closer to reality](#). I'm even inclined to shed my [doubts about mobile video](#) (although not mobile TV). As such, operators may have to worry about delivering everything from video ringtones to YouTube content on devices. And that could mean a new market for content delivery networks.

Delivering images and video over the Internet to a PC via a CDN is an established fact of doing business for content publishers, but adding mobile screens to the mix have a few gear and service providers seeing green. Such vendors are trying to capitalize on three opportunities in the mobile infrastructure to sell products.

First is some sort of transcoding service, through which content formatted for TVs or PCs is encoded and decoded in real time, or encoded in a variety of formats and stored for delivery to the appropriate device. The second is a sizing service that fits the content to the mobile screen on one of more than 5,000 different mobile devices out there. Finally, the third is any sort of tweak that can reduce the amount of space and time to deliver mobile video on a wireless network.

There are skeptics. Barrett Lyon, CTO of BitGravity, a CDN, scoffs at the notion that any sort of specialized services need to be offered for delivering content to a mobile phone. He points out that CDNs are already delivering ringtones and other content to mobile devices. He may be right, which means Limelight may not find a huge market for its services.

However, I tend to believe that real-time transcoding and other ways of rendering content delivery across multiple devices seamlessly will propel sales of gear or software in the years ahead. Especially if [mobile Internet devices](#) take off like chip makers hope.