

Operators – reach a world of new customers

Reaching Out

The early 21st Century is the Communications Age, and nations will be judged by the access their citizens have to communications possibilities unthinkable even a decade ago.

Communications is the instrument to raise people and communities to higher standards of living, more productivity, and more self-reliance. Increasingly, Regulators are placing demands on Operators, as a condition of their spectrum licenses, to provide basic telephony services to outlying and distant communities and to low-income residents of urban areas.

The tremendous expense of completing the Local Loop with copper wiring, not to mention the planning and infrastructure required to bring telephony to remote communities, has brought about innovative new uses for technology ordinarily thought of in the context of wealthy populations.

The most critical component of the system is delivery, and failure or success will be determined by ease of access and availability. As an Operator, you are going to make an investment to serve these communities as a term of your operating license. You need to make the right choices.

This challenge can be met by smart planning and end-to-end thinking.

The solution must be quick and easy to deploy, inexpensive to maintain and expand, and be simple enough for the most naïve users to master quickly, yet robust enough to deliver value added services.

The solution of choice is fixed wireless telephony, using or creating cellular networks to reach out to this new class of customer, with the right strategy to turn him into a valued subscriber.

Typically, rural telephony is required to carry basic voice transmissions. Over time, as the customers make their way along the learning curve and see improvements in their lives through telecommunications, the Operator has the opportunity to educate them about more advanced services. This comes in tandem with the increased earning and spending power they enjoy by being connected.

Operators must view these installations as opportunities and not as an encumbrance. There are three components that make this the most remarkable opportunity for an



Operator to acquire new customers: low cost of acquisition; continued customer traction; and high customer retention.

Equatel is here to help Operators meet this challenge through our Fixed Cellular Technology.

Meeting the Challenge

Equatel's SIM payphone™ systems provide Operators with the solution to reach outlying areas quickly and economically. Far from being a burden, the SIM payphones are a new source of Operator revenue.

The first component of equatel's SIM payphone system is the Subscriber Identity Module (SIM¹) card. The SIM card is credit-card sized (to prevent its use in handsets), and is branded to the Operator's specifications. As the cards are pre-paid – in keeping with the most popular payment option for 90% of subscribers in emerging markets – the distribution mechanism is greatly simplified, and the Operator has already booked the revenue making billing simpler. Not only is this a viable method for quick and substantial expansion of the customer base, the financial status of its new subscribers can be qualified by taking an initial registration fee, which typically covers the cost of the cards themselves and lowers the risk profile of the new subscribers.

The SIM cards are rechargeable and permit the transferral of credits so that friends and relatives can 'send' talk-time. Equatel's telephones can meter a running count to the user during a conversation so that he is aware of his account status at all times; separate card chargers provide a mechanism for him to add credits to his card. Operators can prevent their SIM cards from being used in other phones.

The equatel SIM card becomes the nexus of the subscriber's communications identity. It holds his personal phone number, his access key to the communications age. It stores his contacts' phone numbers and calling history. It can give him access to SMS and voicemail, and a wide range of advanced, value added services that he can afford. It may be the most precious thing that he owns.

Environmental Challenges

Equatel's SIM public phones are built to withstand harsh environments. Housed in a rugged and weather-proof casing, the phones are solid state which reduces the failure rate and maintenance costs. As they contain no cash, they are less attractive to vandalism, but even so are made to withstand malice. Although securely fixed in place, phones can be moved easily by technicians as needed to other locations, or replaced quickly for maintenance. Public phone banks can be set up swiftly in any environment to respond to special



circumstances such as sporting and entertainment events, or emergency situations. Equatel's phones can be mounted on buses or trains for ubiquitous telecom opportunities.

The equatel phones can be programmed to accept only the Operator's cards, or to accept any card with the appropriate billing arrangements. An optional internal SIM card gives the phone its own permanent number for incoming calls or outgoing free or emergency calls as per the wishes of the Operator.

Equatel views the phone's display screen as real-estate and the Operator can sell advertising, using the equatel public phones as a constant source of revenue. The same technology allows the Operator to distribute software updates simultaneously to all phones in the system.

The payphones are configured to work with any GSM network, and are powered by an internal battery, recharged using a standard 220-240V 50Hz AC line (alternate power sources are also available). The phones can be configured to be multi-lingual.

Simple instructions shorten the learning curve even for subscribers using a phone for the first time in their lives. Other features of the phone are found through intuitive exploration.

Equatel's products can be field upgraded as customers' knowledge and sophistication grows and they demand more elaborate services. Most functions only require a remote software update, however, equatel's phones have been designed to make field servicing and modifications as simple as can be in order to lower the total cost of ownership for Operators.

Summary

Equatel's holistic approach to "*connecting the unconnected*", facilitates Operators to acquire subscribers at ultra low cost, opening up new markets further afield and fostering these communities and individuals for the future.

At equatel we believe in equalising opportunities through telecom.