Title:
Why Wireless DA Is A Multi-Billion Dollar Industry

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Summary:
Wireless Directory Assistance (DA) is a virtual directory that offers a fast way to get directory-dependent applications online. It is a multi-billion dollar industry that has a window of opportunity to develop and offer a higher value and more flexible services to subscribers. With billion of calls to DA, approximately a third of which generated by wireless users, it has become the cash cow of telecommunications carriers.

Virtual Directories

Virtual directories are not...

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Article Body:
Wireless Directory Assistance (DA) is a virtual directory that offers a fast way to get directory-dependent applications online. It is a multi-billion dollar industry that has a window of opportunity to develop and offer a higher value and more flexible services to subscribers. With billion of calls to DA, approximately a third of which generated by wireless users, it has become the cash cow of telecommunications carriers.

Virtual Directories

Virtual directories are not unlike meta-directories. User data can be accessed from different repositories. Meta-directories copy data into a new repository that needs to be created, maintained and synchronized. Updating data can be very difficult especially when there is frequent change in source directories' data. Business units may find the idea of creating a second repository for customer data objectionable since it will be outside of their control. Virtual directories can access the attributes requested from each directory or database on the fly. A cache is used by the software to speed performance but data doesn't usually get to be scored locally. Virtual directory deployments cost substantially less than other alternative strategies.

The virtual directory technology should be considered for any plans to customize an application. It can also help applications that are not sophisticated enough to deal with more complex directory mechanisms such as Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) referrals. A virtual directory can follow the reference to locate the data and return it to the application.

Its potential weakness lies in the fact that it can only be as good as the directories behind it. A meta-directory having its own data source may prove to be a better choice if a directory tends to go down frequently or offers poor response. Virtual directories however, have load-balancing and fail-over features that can be configured to redirect a request to an alternative data source. In instances where a connection drops in the middle of a request, the outside directory retries another repository and returns the rest of the data.

An additional repository is not created but another layer of complexity is. This is because virtual directories require applications to access information indirectly through the virtual directory server instead of going to the directory that actually holds the data. There are some apprehensions with the added layer of infrastructure because if anything happens to the web single sign-on, the critical applications are down.

Virtual directories are recommended for use for applications that can access only a single directory when the user data or attributes reside in many places. It is also offered as an alternative to meta-directories when attributes in source directories change frequently. It can be used as a directory migration tool as it lets administrators migrate to a new directory architecture without updating all the applications that depend on it. These applications are presented with a view of the old directory and its schema structure. Very large repositories can be broken apart to improve writer performance and reduce downtime.

Wireless Directory Assistance

The industry focuses its attention on Enhanced Directory Assistance which hopes to increase value for wireless users. This is because wireless directory assistance comes in second to subscription with regards to the largest source of revenue as analysts project the total amount of access fees to continue increasing. Wireless customers are looking for more informative and user-friendly services to enable them to be more wirelessly productive and efficient.

A research conducted by the Wireless Commerce Monitor Study revealed that one in three subscribers use Directory Assistance on their wireless phones. The

remaining number either use online directory assistance, mapping services and the newer services including Enhanced Directory Assistance, wireless short messaging, wireless e-mail notification and wireless mapping and direction services. Barriers that have been identified with regards to qualitative work are inaccurate, incomplete or irrelevant information and low perceptions of value for money.

Wireless and Internet providers compete for most of the said Directory Assistance customers. The research further revealed that more than half of wireless users are using two or more Directory Assistance solutions. This would seem to support the thinking that there is not one form of assistance service that would fit everybody in the same way that one person will not always use a single form. People tend to prefer and choose from voice and electronic solutions depending on the situation. It would be advantageous to the wireless industry to continue developing wireless as a delivery mechanism for Internet applications.

There is a need for Directory Assistance providers to prove to prospective business partners that Directory Assistance services actually stimulate revenue. This is especially true with small business advertisers who want to see real value. Majority of those using Directory Assistance on their wireless phone have used it for the purpose of contacting or receiving information with regards to business. The percentage is very close to the levels of inquiry seen with online methods. Another important aspect of the study revealed that the conversion potential or the proportion of actual purchase as a direct result of the inquiry is considerably strong.

The Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association together with the majority of the largest wireless carrier proposes to include wireless phone numbers in a data base accessible by dialing 411. Those who oppose this move say that it compromises user privacy and thus is totally unnecessary. However, backers of the directory insist that privacy remains paramount in their agenda. The group will use one unnamed aggregator to store the number in a data base and such numbers will not be published and posted on the Internet or sold. These numbers will only be available to 411 operators.

Users are required to make a formal request to have their number included in the directory. All numbers with no request shall remain private. There will be no additional cost incurred, whatever the option is taken. Some have seen the benefit of having a wireless directory include all the business numbers as it can provide more company employee accessibility to clients.

Protection from unsolicited wireless calls on one hand and the consumer’s right

to directory assistance on the other constitute the basic differences in opinion of each side's proponent. Wireless directory assistance will be different from tradition landline directory assistance or printed white pages type of directory. Mobile directory assistance benefits consumers in terms of location capabilities. Carriers likewise stand to benefit from this type of directory service since operators can charge for these services. The combined features of Internet type directories and location capability is a sure fire revenue generator for carriers. This just goes to show that any service that meets the needs of consumers will turn out to be quite a very lucrative business.