

Widevine® Customer Case Study

Saskatchewan Telecommunications Holding Corporation (SaskTel)

Content protection proved critical for SaskTel's video-on-demand launch. Widevine Technologies' comprehensive conditional access and DRM solution—Widevine Cypher®—helped SaskTel attain the premium content line-up necessary for a compelling customer offer.

Customer Profile

Saskatchewan Telecommunications Holding Corporation (SaskTel) is the leading full service communications company in Saskatchewan, Canada, providing competitive voice, data, Internet, entertainment services, web-hosting, text and messaging services over a fiber optic-based, fully digital network. In 1996, it became the first to offer high-speed Internet via DSL in North America.

Business Situation

Three key factors led to SaskTel's decision to go into IPTV: It had become clear that the cable companies would soon be competing with SaskTel in the voice business; SaskTel knew that television would be necessary to make its overall bundle complete and competitive; and entertainment services would provide the corporation with a new revenue stream.

SaskTel launched its Internet Protocol (IP) broadcast service in 2002 and North America's first video-on-demand (VOD) service Max Front Row™ on its existing digital subscriber line (DSL) network in 2003. Max™ Entertainment Services include multimedia broadband service, unlimited high speed internet access, e-mail, a full line-up of television channels, local radio and music channels, and access to video on demand movies.

Solution Description

In planning the service, SaskTel evaluated all the components and technological aspects of delivering the service. A key component was the content security requirements mandated by top Hollywood studios and broadcasters in order to acquire the premium content they wanted for a compelling customer offer.

SaskTel wanted a downloadable CA/DRM solution that would work with the video system it was planning to develop from several best of breed vendors. The content security system would have to be proven in a variety of IP video networks. Finally, security on the consumer premises equipment would require renewability.

For this, SaskTel turned to Widevine Technologies for Widevine Cypher. Widevine's Cypher® Virtual SmartCard™ protects content on each set top box in SaskTel's network. This unique downloadable security approach significantly lowers the costs of maintaining and updating client security while dramatically lowering the potential for piracy. Today, Cypher Virtual SmartCards are the most deployed downloadable smart cards for IP video worldwide.

Cypher Virtual SmartCards:

- Allow service providers such as SaskTel to deploy and maintain content security because it can be downloaded and can renew all protected consumer devices within hours.
- Enables content stored on devices to remain encrypted up to the point of decryption and rendering on-screen.
- Supports a wide range of IP video STBs, PVRs, PCs and mobile video players. SaskTel currently estimates it reaches 225,000 homes with its Max Front Row in the centers where the service is available with plans to grow its subscriber base to approximately 25% market share.

SaskTel invested \$136.5 million in 2006 in its Next Generation Access Infrastructure program. This included DSL network upgrade investments to provide the 14Mbps capability required for internet and SD/HDTV and support for new compression technologies including MPEG4. Over the next five years, it plans to upgrade the network to VDSL2 concurrent with the introductions of increased video streams and faster internet—with speeds from 20-40 Mbps, increasing up to 100 Mbps. SaskTel plans to use new compression and DSL technologies in parallel with the existing ones, eliminating the need to replace existing DSL and set-top equipment. In 2007, SaskTel plans to add a personal video recorder (PVR) service.

Max Front Row viewers access movies using nothing more than a set-top box and their television. The movies are available for 24 hours, can be viewed as often as desired and the customer has complete DVD-like control over the movies, including the ability to fast forward, rewind, pause or stop. The library of titles now exceeds 600 and includes movies from Alliance Atlantis, Warner Bros., Sony, Twentieth Century Fox, Lions Gate and Paramount. All of SaskTel's Max Front Row video-on-demand service content is now being secured by the Widevine Virtual SmartCard solution. Based upon SaskTel's implementation of Widevine, they have acquired one of the largest premium content libraries in North America.

For the SaskTel video over DSL deployment, Widevine Cypher interfaces with Media Manager from Alcatel, the video delivery platform provided by Kasenna and set-top-boxes from Pace Micro Technology. The solutions run on industry-standard HP ProLiant servers which provide the carrier-grade, high-availability performance that service providers need.

Widevine is the leading provider of content protection and forensic watermarking solutions for IP video operators worldwide. Widevine enables telco, internet, cable, mobile and satellite operators to generate new revenue opportunities through the secure distribution, identification and tracking of multimedia content. Widevine is a privately held corporation headquartered in Seattle, Washington.

Solution Benefits

Content Acquisition Simplified

"To acquire the highest quality, most current content available for our VOD service, we had to provide full protection of that content throughout distribution," said Bob Turner, SaskTel's Director of Technology. "The primary reason we chose Widevine to secure our service is that their technology has been accepted by Hollywood around the world and provides a fully integrated, end-to-end, video security solution."

Faster Time to Market

SaskTel had an aggressive roll-out planned and is the first in Canada to offer competitively priced digital VOD services. Widevine's proven global deployments at major operator around the world gave SaskTel the confidence they needed to get the system deployed on-time and with minimal effort.

Open Content Protection Platform

SaskTel selected Widevine not only for its CA/DRM capabilities but also for its wide integrations with leading video servers, middleware and consumer premises equipment. Using an open content protection platform enabled SaskTel to remain flexible in their choice of video distribution equipment. With Widevine, SaskTel knew they would stay in control of their decision to swap video distribution components to meet emerging market dynamics. It also enabled them to support multi-vendor environments seamlessly, should the requirement arise.

Widevine Products Deployed

- Cypher Certificate Authority: Centralized key management, entitlements and digital rights management
- Cypher Virtual SmartCard: A renewable security client designed to protect STBs, PVRs, PCs and mobile devices
- Cypher Broadcast: Real-time encryption for linear broadcast protection
- Cypher VOD: Pre-encryption for file-based video such as video-on-demand.

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