

Introducing the Metrics Group

This new online discussion group will help shape the future of next-generation service delivery in multifamily housing. Owners, service providers and others are welcome to join.

By David Daugherty ■ *Korcett Holdings Inc.*

In April, at the Broadband Properties Summit, we introduced an extension of this column in the form of a panel discussion. The discussion of performance metrics is evolving quickly. However, if we hope to do more than talk about issues, developers and service providers need a much better understanding of underlying business drivers.

Many developers do not understand what is required to deliver highly stable, reliable Internet services. Service providers, on the other hand, do not typically understand what developers lose when Internet services fail to meet minimum standards of performance. The objective of the panel discussion was to open a dialogue between developers and service providers and explore a vernacular of performance using business terms. Now, we hope to continue this dialogue via a Metrics Group on LinkedIn.com to facilitate a common understanding of how we, as an industry, should build and manage Internet services.

The disconnect between service providers and developers arises from the fact that Internet performance discussions have been largely technical and therefore the province of service providers. As developers have come to understand the correlation between sustained occupancy and performance of the Internet amenity, their level of frustration with service providers has risen, and they have increasingly relied on legal instruments to control service providers' behavior.

FRAMING THE DEBATE

A consensus is forming within the Internet service industry that next-generation Internet services must include real-time management and a much greater level

of customization and control by end users. In other words, Internet services cannot be delivered by simply building pipes; future Internet solutions must include active human support and problem resolution. Equally important, and complementary, is the ability to capture and reuse experience; we don't want to constantly reinvent the wheel.

A developer cannot ensure that a service provider can achieve certain standards of performance unless it can specify how the network will be designed and managed. Without such standards, developers can never be sure exactly how services will be delivered, regardless of any assurances from the service provider. The lack of standards makes the process of soliciting competitive bids for Internet services nearly impossible.

Service providers, on the other hand, cannot be expected to deliver superior performance at commodity prices. In many cases, service providers are forced into competitive bidding situations based entirely on pricing because there are no standard metrics for comparison. This forces service providers to use the least costly equipment and support practices to generate the target return, invariably leading to lower performance. Service providers often fail to understand that many developers would likely pay more for reliable services. This suggests that a mutually acceptable business relationship

between developers and service providers might be based on performance – if only they could agree how to measure it.

The Metrics Group will include service providers and developers that demand superior Internet performance and will focus on working together to meet the demands of residents. One of the first topics this group will take up is the need for performance metrics associated with a recent mandate from the Higher Education Opportunity Act. On June 4, the Department of Education issued a letter to remind institutions of their responsibility to combat unauthorized distribution of copyrighted material through college networks. These provisions, which took effect July 1, require colleges and universities to discourage peer-to-peer file sharing and illegal downloading.

The letter outlines functional requirements and reporting that colleges and universities must implement to continue receiving federal funding. Given the inconsistent manner in which campus IT departments provide most of these functions today, there is clearly a need for industry dialogue. The Metrics Group will work on compliance reporting processes and formats for measures such as recidivism rates and reductions in the number of infringement notices.

In the next issue, we will resume our review of the network deployment process. **BBP**

About the Author

David Daugherty is the founder and CEO of Korcett Holdings. Korcett Holdings is dedicated to the development and deployment of next-generation service solutions. To join the Metrics Group, contact Dave at david@korcett.com.