

SPs Tap Hosted User Storage Service With Eye Toward More Applications

Bell Canada, BT Put Casero Vault Suite to Use as Value-Add Draw to Subscribers

BY PETER LAMBERT

In one of the latest examples of third-party platforms delivering Web 2.0 service support to broadband operators, Bell Canada and British Telecom are tapping the online “personal vault” storage service from Casero, Inc. to offer media-sharing and other advanced products to consumers.

Bell Canada has rolled out the personal vault service as part of its security offering by packaging Casero Vault Suite client software with the operator’s anti-virus and other security software. Bell Canada offers single-tier pricing for that service, then offers incremental storage. For example, a customer purchasing the top tier of broadband access service may get the Casero Vault service free for 6 months or may pay for a larger 20-gigabyte service.

BT offers a free 2-gigabyte service that is advertising funded.

“The aim can be to hook the customer on the value of the service for free, then charge for more capacity,” says Jay Deen, vice president of technology for Toronto-based Casero. “Unlike Web companies who generally do not have long-standing monetary relationships with end customers, Bell Canada and BT aren’t going anywhere, so they have a vested interest in maintaining a trusted service relationship with consumers.”

In early October, Casero Inc. laid the groundwork for providers to deliver such products with the addition of a backup module to the Vault Suite online storage service. The Casero service enables service providers to offer a centralized location for subscribers to store, share, manage and access their personal media for all devices. The new Backup Manager upgrade provides protection of user’s PC data and files through automatic and continuous backups, ensuring that photos, videos, music and

other data will be protected from loss, corruption and theft.

Features include password protection, multiple PC support, automatic scheduling of backup, block level incremental backups and bandwidth throttling.

“We’re adding user experience sophistication,” Deen says. “If you have a large file, once you push it up into the network one time, you don’t have to push it all again, only the updates. That decreases network traffic, but it also provides a quicker, better user experience.”

Casero also believes service provider customers can get hooked on Web 2.0 applications layered atop the Vault, such as sharing of photos, not only via personal computers, but also mobile handsets and emerging devices like Wi-Fi-connected picture frames.

“We’ve launched a mobile client that allows you to push user generated content into the network to the vault, including photos or videos, but also allows you to download certain pieces you want to share,” Deen says. “We don’t expect the mobile device to be a major sharing screen, but if you’re sitting in a pub you may want to download pictures to show friends there on the spot.”

According to Deen, the storage and protection solution forms the cornerstone for a developing suite of Web 2.0 applications that service providers can offer to subscribers in a context of understandable digital lifestyle utilities.

“People understand security and the basic premise of file storage and backup, but most don’t understand the value of Web 2.0 services,” Deen says. “Once people have content in the network, we can help service providers educate their customers on how they can re-purpose content for a digital lifestyle, through functions like creating photo albums, listening to music and sharing it all with selected friends and family.”

In January, Casero plans to introduce features that enable synchronization of calendars and contact lists across multiple fixed and mobile devices, Deen says. “Once you have a single contact look-up, that provides an easier way to share with few steps. BT has



Jay Deen, vice president, technology, Casero

our application on the handset to take a photo and post it where it can be shared. Simple workflow can automatically send it to a photo frame in the grandparents’ living room.”

Service providers may tie-in Web 2.0 applications with a range of hardware and home networking offerings going forward, he says.

“Carriers are now getting into product fulfillment. Bell Canada is selling PCs. BT is selling home hubs and other devices. They want to offer digital lifestyle enhancements, and they insist it all has to be simple and fast,” he says. “The cost of adding Wi-Fi is becoming a small part of the overall bill of materials for devices. Things like Wi-Fi radios are possibilities we have on our roadmap. They create value for carriers simply by being connected to the network.”

Deen says Casero is “gaining traction” with some U.S. telcos and cable operators who are submitting demonstration and proof-of-concept requests. “Service providers get the value-added services, but in haste to create them, many have deployed multiple platforms. We can deliver services that replace four or five systems, so we need to talk to multiple product management groups, all of whom could enjoy savings through shared infrastructure.” ■