

Published: October 21 2008

# Choice, control, consent: The future of mobile

By **Jim Meskauskas**

**Increasingly, media is rendered as transportable and -- to the chagrin of companies in the distribution business -- transferable packets of content. Here's why bundling is the answer to mobile's future.**

[Two weeks ago](#), I mentioned three different formats that emerging -- and in some cases, emerged -- media are taking. The discussion revolved around how more and more, the media we consume (varied as the formats seem) are all increasingly enabled to be one thing: portable.

Mobility is the near future. Progressively more and more media are being rendered as transportable and - to the chagrin of those companies in the distribution business -- transferable packets of content. Whether that content is entertainment, information or even a useful application, what matters is a person's ability to "move it around."

The device we use that ultimately best realizes that portability remains to be seen, but it is going to be the kind of "compumediaphones" that are out now. Media consoles, mobile devices like the iPhone, Nokia's 5800 Xpress Music, the BlackBerry Curve, Samsung's Omnia (not available yet in the U.S.) and others are going to be how most of us are communicating, working and accessing entertainment and information.

What all this means, however, is that we are going to be asked more frequently to have the utilities and applications that either enable or enhance our media experiences. This means we are going to not only be confronting software everywhere we go, we are going to be choosing which applications we want to bring with us.

This time out, I'd like to focus on the utility aspect of our media near-future -- something called bundling.

Bundling is something we are likely to hear more and more about, even though it has been around for some time. Bundling is how the browser wars were carried out back in the late '90s.

To get a better sense of just what bundling means for the current and future media consumer, I spoke with Rob Weber, VP of business development and co-founder of the company [W3i](#), one of the more experienced companies in the space, and the developer of the very first TrustE certified installer. W3i positions itself as the deliverer of integrated desktop marketing and mobile marketing solutions, but the way the company accomplishes that is unique. It "bundles" these solutions together into one easy, frictionless downloadable package.

"User expectations have evolved," Weber says. "They expect to get their content for free." That expectation of "free" can be extended to the applications people want to have, either on their desktops or their mobile devices. For those developing the applications, they can get distribution with scale.

One of the concerns about bundling is that it could conjure up thoughts of the good old days of "drive-by" downloading.

"Bundling is not a dirty word," Weber says. "Popular software producers have been doing this for years." Microsoft is a perfect example. It just so happens that all the software that is coming from the same source is operationally related.

W3i distributes Install IQ, a small program installer that helps guide people through the setup of the application that's starting up for the first time. The company's point of distinction between drive-by downloaders and other installers in the past is that they offer bundling on an opt-in basis, which works through a shopping cart interface. The offer is listed on each subsequent screen, so the downloaders know what it is they've selected all along the way.

Weber likes to say that his company advocates the three Cs: choice, control and consent.

The first two Cs have been what most of us in the media business have been talking about for the last couple of years as it pertains to the use of content. The third C pertains to marketing. W3i is offering all three together. In an all-mobile media environment, these three Cs are extremely important. Our media are going to be with us, up close and personal, every waking moment. These three Cs will eventually become every media outlet's mantra.

As more and more people look for applications and software to enable and enhance their media experiences, they are going to be looking for simpler ways to do it, and a simple, one-stop solution that can serve as a marketing vehicle.

Given the direction media usage is going, I asked Weber if he thinks this is a model that could work for content as well as software/applications?

"Yes," he says, adding that there are "big problems facing the music and video industries." Instead of suing their fans for piracy, they should encourage use of their content. Bundling solutions might be an excellent distribution methodology.

"We're just starting to do some test marketing around music," Weber says.

For now, marketers using a bundling tactic are more common in a category where "free" is the emphasis. Companies like Yahoo, RealNetworks, Microsoft, Dell and the Weather Channel have worked with W3i. But they are starting to see more with "transactional-style" software, and software that appeals to the digital lifestyle and techie.

That market is fast becoming all of us.

*Media strategies editor [Jim Meskauskas](#) is vice president and director of online media for [ICON International Inc.](#), an Omnicom company.*