

Time Warner Cable's Interest in W3C Web on TV Workshop

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The Importance of the User Interface

The user interface or Navigator is the software components that allow Time Warner Cable customers access to all of our services. For most of our customers it is the face of Time Warner Cable. It must provide simple and easy access to all of services without getting in the way. Most importantly it just needs to work. When our UI is performing optimally it should be almost invisible to the user.

Our current generation of Navigator was designed to help customers find linear content for immediate viewing. On Demand content was added later as was recording and playback of content (DVR). As service offerings expand the Navigator must be modified to handle more linear channels, more on demand content, interactive advertising, switched digital channels, etc. These types of modifications require an architecture that is robust and flexible.

In the current Time Warner Cable Navigator, the application logic, data processing, and UI presentation are all contained in a monolithic application that is downloaded to a digital set-top box (STB). Modifications to any of the components of the application require an extensive testing and deployment effort and service interruption to our subscribers. Service offerings are limited by the amount of memory in our STBs and the capabilities of our software.

To support the desires of our next generation architecture, we must have an application and user interface methodology that allows rapid development of new services. Scalability of service offerings cannot be limited by technology. New sources of content (internet, etc.) are driving consumers to seek alternative providers, to compete in this new media marketplace we must have a user interface and application platform that allows TWC to be flexible and efficient.

HTML5 and the Future

Time Warner Cable feels that technologies that make up the Web and are specified by the W3C, i.e. HTML, CSS, Javascript, are the right choice for providing an advanced user interface to our services, but in its current state has a few deficiencies that need to be addressed. HTML5 adds some of the necessary elements, but there is still more work to be done. An open dialog with the industries that provide TV services will help in our desire to make HTML5 the standard and open user interface technology for delivering TV services.