

## The Video at the End of the Tunnel

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The introduction of 3G and video calls was not met with the fanfare response that was expected by the industry. Even now with over 100 million (and rapidly growing number of) subscribers, 3G mobile users still remain a rather small part of the overall two billion mobile subscribers worldwide and video usage within this video enabled community is still deemed as a disappointment. Point to Point video calls are evidently not a big enough draw to encourage people to jump on the 3G bandwagon, and with an estimated 1 in 10 mobile phone users actually owning a 3G phone, it seems unlikely that person to person video calling will be the phenomenon that SMS has become. Though most share the notion that video will become mainstream and a major revenue source, we still need to address the question of what then will make video communications a success?

### **The UMU Factor**

Much has been said about the limiting factor of 3G video, stemming from peoples' reluctance to accept "intrusive surprise" video calls. That's where the User Motivated Usage (UMU) Factor comes in. The UMU Factor is related to video applications where an entity is generated, at a given moment, to motivate users to make (rather than receive) a video call and is the key to elevating the level of video usage over mobile devices by taking out the "surprise call" element and the absolute necessity to be seen.

For 3G to be a success, users need to be motivated to use it and be given an easier way to adopt the technology; rather than having to wait for their friends to catch on too. With the UMU factor, 3G can be used by anybody today for an exciting experience that is independent of the 3G availability of other participants.

Naturally, "traditional" video communication is happening now. Take a group of female friends, for example, getting ready for a night out together. The advent of 3G mobile to PC communication opens up a new avenue for these women to get their friends' opinions on how they look in a particular outfit. Using their 3G phones, or webcams on their PCs, the group of women can 'meet' in their own online community and compare clothes from their separate homes before meeting later in the evening.

Another example is that of a businessman who is traveling. While traveling through France on the TGV, he can still take part in a face-to-face briefing with a client based in Scotland using his 3G mobile phone to his client's PC, while conferencing in his partner who is sat at her desk in Brussels.

But wouldn't it be appealing to those avid sports fans to see and hear the Most Valuable Player right after a major basketball game? Members of the team's fan club can call to see and hear what the MVP has to say, and maybe even be selected by a moderator to be seen by all of the viewers in the fan club community to ask a question. At the same time, someone sitting in their living room watching the game on their new HDTV can join the live video session as well because their cable STB is also a video-enabled client. It could be just your luck that you are stuck at work, but you can enjoy this live from your desktop PC.

## The secrets of success

For 3G to be a success, operators and service providers need to answer the following questions:

**1. Have we secured a strong enough trigger/interest for usage?**

Without a reason to use 3G, why should users start paying out extra to make video calls on their 3G phones? Users need to be given something to inspire them to pick up their 3G phones and make a video call. No matter what the lifestyle, users need to know that 3G can benefit them; that it is there for everyone.

**2. Is there a specific context/timing for when a service will be used (here and now)?**

A 3G mobile device is always smaller, with lower quality and is more expensive than any other media (PC,TV, STB etc.) but it's the only real mobile device and always available. An event or community that triggers a use at a specific time or context that motivates the user to join at that moment will create the need and reason to use a mobile device. If the service is timed with the end of a sporting event, and targeted to the viewers who are at that time mobile, then the usage trigger exists. When a service is geared for people on the move, then the user motivation is created.

**3. What is the guaranteed success and completion rate?**

Successful services must have high completion rates. The way to guarantee this is to deploy a service that is not dependent on a high ratio of other 3G enabled handsets - for example where participants and content can also originate from the IP. In this manner, those who do own 3G phones will be ensured a successful service, with a 100% completion rate. Furthermore, a converged environment, including video-enabled PCs, expands the boundaries of the relevant communities, and increases the levels of participation thus increasing adoption rates.

The more limited or complicated a medium is, the more necessary it becomes to correctly understand the above factors” to ensure usage and success. In the context of video and the mobile handset, the success factors are definitely challenging, and given the low usage rates experienced by the industry today, it can safely be said that the answers as indicated, still need to be integrated into the 3G services provided by the operators.

### Pulling the trigger (of usage)

Users need to be shown and delivered true benefits of what can be done with 3G and what advantages it has. What video over mobile has to offer, besides a small screen and limited quality, is unprecedented mobility and availability; no matter where you are and what you’re doing (within reason, of course) you can always see your friends and family, make that meeting, and enjoy video content. By taking advantage of the mobility and availability of 3G and considering the four success factors, an interesting and promising future for mobile video can be seen.

If the UMU Factor is put into effect, then the usage possibilities are endless. Even now, some of these possibilities have become reality.

Imagine how many such UMU “events” we are missing every day!

The options for 3G are infinite - imagine how much mobile video traffic can and should be generated when influenced by the UMU factor. Consumers just need a little push in the right direction and before you know it they will be saying: “I’m here, I’m interested and I’m ready to pay! And I will use the best device and access method that is available to me at any given moment.”