

Integrated Billing and Customer Care Billing Engine

FLEXIBLE LIST PRICING, PRE-PAID, DISCOUNTING AND CONVERGENT BILLING SOLUTIONS

Part of the Irdeto integrated customer care and billing solution, the Irdeto Billing Engine is designed to provide pay TV operators the ability to provide innovative pricing to their customers through flexible list pricing and discount setups, which allows them to easily create new product offers.

In a large-scale pay TV operator's implementation, Irdeto customers may recognize a greater return on investment due to the billing engine flow and components that make up the system.

Built with a separate discount engine, the Irdeto Billing Engine is the critical driver of the Irdeto integrated customer care and billing solution.

BILLING ENGINE FLOW

When a new customer calls the customer service representative to set up new service, a financial account is set up, which contains agreements about the products and services purchased, such as the delivery of a set-top box, shipment of a smartcard and setting up basic programming.

The customer service representative goes through the steps listed below to set up a new service, and to provide the new customer with an accurate invoice:

1. Price

Get list price – Determine price for services requested by the customer as well as related requirements which have an accompanying price, such as a set-top box or a special movie package.

2. Discounts

Apply discounts – If the new customer was responding to a direct mail piece mailed to his home, the customer service representative will ask for the code included on the mailed item; this is an applicable discount code. Other discounts, such as for new service regions, or membership-based discounts, are also used.

3. Financial Transaction

Create financial transaction – Once any applicable discounts have been applied to a customer's account, tax rules are implemented, which results in a total bill, called a financial transaction in the system.

KEY BENEFITS

BUILD CUSTOMER LOYALTY

By ensuring billing is handled correctly the first time, customers are more satisfied and may be more inclined to stay with a provider they know can handle their multi-faceted products and services.

SHORTER TIME TO MARKET

The Billing Engine allows operators to quickly respond with updates to price lists.

FLEXIBLE

Flexibility is built into the application to address new products, services and business models.

SINGLE SOLUTION

With billing and customer care, operators can bill business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) customers with a single billing engine. Data, video and voice can be handled easily; the Billing Engine can also ingest rated VoIP call detail records.

LOW TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP

Automated billing and invoice runs through business workflows provide a more effective use of staff time and an overall lower cost of ownership.

4. Invoicing

Create invoice – When the financial transactions are complete, invoice runs are performed, which results in an invoice which is sent to the new customer.

PRICING

While there is a default price for a large set of customers – such as those in the same town, city or prefecture, pricing can also be modified in the system to utilize a pay per view price tier or unique pricing per product or service. This pricing can be either on a once-off or recurring basis.

Price increases in the integrated customer care and billing solution are scheduled, and allow customers to have the same product at different pricepoints. If the operator is cross-promoting a rugby package to an existing customer base that has purchased sports packages, the pricing can reflect this test by supporting different price points based on testing timeframe, or geographic area.

DISCOUNTING

The integrated customer care and billing solution utilizes a rulesbased engine, and can single out a small set of customers or prospects to promote a single product or multiple product discounts. Types of discounts include percentage, fixed amount and a nominal amount reduction. A discount can have many conditions, such as address information, value, “must have,” “must not have,” or a required product combination; all conditions must be valid for the discount to be applied.

The integrated customer care and billing solution also handles bundled discounts – these are comprised of either a single commercial product, or multiple commercial products. Based on the level of discount applied, a special discount (dollar amount or percentage), may be defined.

FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS

In customer care and billing, there are two types of financial transactions – once-off and recurring. The once-off charges occur in real time, are event-based, and revenue recognition can be set up using date formulas. Recurring charges are created in the invoice run, which includes prorating, and are never event-based. Prorating is initiated when certain specified events occur, and can be set using date formulas. Cancellations and disconnections are prorated financial transaction reversals. Recurring is only supported for product records, which contains a “charged until date,” and a “charge period.”

PRE-PAID

The integrated customer care and billing solution supports two broad categories of prepayment methods — deposit (or wallet), and voucher. The deposit method is where a customer prepays a certain amount and receives services on a subscription or pay-per view basis until the deposit is exhausted. The voucher method is where a customer prepays for the right to use certain channels until a certain date.

Operators often rely on third-party retailers to sell pre-paid services to end users; the billing engine provides support of thirdparty retailers and payment kiosks.

To support pre-paid services, an operator’s billing and customer care system must be able to handle reversals, such as when customers prepay for services that they later cancel — which Irdeto’s solution can provide.

INVOICING

Once an invoice has been created, all of a customer’s financial transactions pertaining to their account are linked to the invoice, and submitted to the invoice run procedure. Deviation checks and verifications are performed, and invoices can be exported to banks or made available for printing and mailing to customers.

Advanced invoicing features include the ability to suspend invoicing, set up invoice installments, and view next invoice.

BILLING SOLUTION FOR PAY MEDIA OPERATORS

Operators can easily manage multiple price lists and price increases with the Irdeto Billing Engine, and easily apply bundled discounts. Convergent product offerings can be quickly set up in the system and made active.

Discounting is a critical need for operators, who need to be able to provide customer discounts to promote new membership, and upsell or cross-sell related products and services. The Irdeto solution allows operators to easily manage cross-product and multiple discounts.

Third-party charges are frequently utilized by operators, and can be easily processed in the Irdeto solution. This ensures that business and commercial customers are billed correctly, in an easy to understand format.