

Insights Broadcasting Digital Migration

THE DIGITAL TICK

Look out for the logo before you get conned

Measures are being taken to inform and help the public

IT IS important to protect consumers from purchasing or acquiring non-standardised or unnecessary equipment in order to ensure their experiences of digital migration are positive and thus promote adoption of the new technology, says Loren Braithwaite-Kabosha, a member of the Digital Dzonga, consumer interests.

She says it is clear from engagement with experts involved in digital migration in the UK that a conformance scheme to approve of equipment and protect consumers from unscrupulous or unskilled equipment suppliers and installers is critical to this.

Braithwaite-Kabosha says that in the UK a scheme has been developed to ensure conformance to standards of equipment and register installers.

"Wide publicity has been given to a conformance logo (a 'digital tick') to indicate approval of equipment and/or installers. This was necessary after it became clear that 'rogue traders' and 'cowboy operators' were conning consumers into purchasing sub-standard equipment and/or installing unnecessary equipment for exorbitant prices.

"In line with this, it is evident that SA should develop a conformance scheme to ensure that the set top boxes (STBs) work in the way they are intended and to

test and authorise STBs. A recognisable logo to enable customers to identify approved equipment would also need to be developed and awareness should be created about this," Braithwaite-Kabosha says.

The Digital Dzonga sees this as a crucial part of its responsibility for facilitating public awareness of the digital migration process and protecting consumers from unscrupulous practices or traders. The Dzonga is in the process of developing such a scheme.

The Digital Dzonga is further focused on ensuring that television viewers' needs are met and putting in place mechanisms to protect consumers, which include:

- Ensuring the development of a conformance framework so that equipment available meets specifications and consumers are

aware (through a logo) that equipment purchased meets the relevant standards.

- Developing systems to ensure effective installation of aerials and other equipment where necessary.
- Development of an effective and efficient customer call centre so that consumers can raise questions, get help and lay complaints.
- Development of a help scheme to assist vulnerable groups with the migration. Such a help scheme would provide practical assistance to those groups and individuals who are most likely to have difficulty in adopting digital TV.

The help scheme would assist both those qualifying for subsidies and other groups such as people with disabilities and the elderly with, for example, installation and operation of equipment.

Braithwaite-Kabosha says one of the main consumer concerns is correct information. "Some consumers have been taken advantage of by salespeople who have been misinforming consumers as to how they will be able to access DTT.

"Some retailers are promoting high definition television (HDTV) or other types of TVs that will not necessarily enable them to access the digital signal. Consumers should not rush out and buy a new TV for the purpose of being able to watch DTT. Consumers do not

need to do anything different at the moment besides become better informed."

She explains that when STBs become available on the market later this year consumers will then be able to access DTT with its greater range of channels.

Another issue of concern is how the government's scheme to subsidise the cost of the STB for low-income audiences (the scheme for ownership support or SOS) will be implemented. However, discussions are taking place between various government departments on implementation of this subsidy plan and details are being finalised.

Braithwaite-Kabosha says while it is clear the STBs will be plug-and-play in terms of being able to immediately watch DTT for the vast majority of South Africans, there will be some consumers who will require additional installation expertise, for example in areas where transmission is not robust or because of topographical considerations.

Another issue that has to be sorted out is how the warranty of subsidised STBs will be handled in case of damage or faults.

She believes it is important that a call-centre is established as soon as possible to not only offer technical support but information of the roll-out of DTT.

SA will need to develop a conformance scheme to ensure that the set-top boxes work in the way they are intended and to test and authorise these boxes

Queen Communication poised to make a public appearance

A campaign to educate the public in digital migration will soon begin



SMSer: Pat Govender, managing director of Draftfcb Social Marketing, is devising the campaign to guide the public.

SA's migration to digital television will be accompanied by a two-and-half year public awareness campaign funded by the Department of Communications.

Acting Director-General at the department, Gerda Grabe, says the purpose of the campaign is to guide television viewers through the process and make the change as easy as possible.

"We have a short dual illumination period and need a comprehensive public awareness campaign to ensure the national television audience continue to watch television uninterrupted after the analogue signal is switched off.

"We want the television-watching public to clearly understand the benefits DTT has for them and enthusiastically take-up STBs."

Grabe says international best practice has shown that a thorough public awareness campaign is a key success factor to broadcasting digital migration (BDM).

She says another issue that needs highlighting is the manner in which the digital migration process will help bridge the digital divide by ensuring the set top boxes (STBs) have the capability to access government information as well as other value-added services. As the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) says in a submission to the Digital Dzonga: "If content is king, then communication is queen ... the move to digital television can only be a success if the consumer has a sense of belonging and ownership in the whole process."

The department recently appointed Draftfcb Social Marketing as a service provider to develop and implement a public awareness campaign.

Pat Govender, managing director of Draftfcb Social Marketing, says the objective of the campaign, from a behaviour change perspective, is to ensure that South Africans adopt digital television by obtaining their STBs and follow the advice of the Digital Dzonga and the government.

The campaign is expected to launch in October 2009 but will probably be preceded by a publicity drive to communicate the government's policy on digital television and the information age to the South African public.

As STBs become available and the switch-on to the broader public begins, the message will become more practical and will provide step-by-step guidance to households. "We want South Africans to understand the direct benefits of the BDM campaign," Govender says, "and therefore welcome the migration to digital television as the exciting development it really is. It is part of our country's drive towards economic efficiency and social cohesion. At the same time, we will provide the public with information about the subsidisation process once the details are finalised and also where and how to acquire their STBs."

He says that a wide range of media will be used to communicate with the South African public. This will not entail simply engaging in the traditional promotions or road shows, Govender says, but instead it would mean working closely with organisations already existing in communities such as trade unions, civics and stokvels and working in a full partnership with such organisations to reach the South African public.

The use of interactive mediums like the internet, sms, mms and a call centre will support these initiatives. "This approach helps to ensure that our campaign has credibility and also means more effective two-way communication," Govender says.

Going, going, gone Digital

FROM our fixed line connection to mobiles, laptops or digital music players, all our "must-have" ICTs are powered by digital technology.

Although it may sound familiar, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) points out that for many people the idea of "Living the Digital World" where digital technologies are set to play an increasingly important role in all our lives, remains a futuristic concept.

Gone are the days when our everyday lives revolved simply around our home town or village and the workplace was just around the corner.

Now, thanks to advances in technology, we have entered a world where we can work for a company based in London yet live in Spain,

where we can acquire whole new personae and sets of friends online overnight, where everyone can be a film star, release a hit single or be a comedian reaching out to a global audience. And this is only the beginning. Welcome to the Digital World, and all that lies therein.

The ITU says the Digital World is a world where the best possible use is made of digital technologies. "Propelled by explosive broadband growth and soaring mobile numbers, our transition to the digital world has been rapid and innovative. Indeed many of us are probably not even aware of how important a role these technologies already play. We use a growing array of digital lifestyle technologies at home, in the office, on the street, in cars, in

trains, and in planes — they have transformed every aspect of our daily lives.

"Devices such as MP3s or mobile phones with video capabilities are becoming increasingly popular. As we continue the shift towards IP-based networks we can expect even more advanced technologies to become commonplace. Voice over IP use is on the rise, with applications such as Skype fast gaining ground, while services such as IPTV now add a whole new dimension to watching television. Multiple Play models, which combine voice, video and the internet over the same network are all being launched in a number of countries worldwide."

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GET READY TO SWITCH TO THE MAGIC OF DIGITAL

Since South Africans first switched on their TV sets in 1976, we have been watching analogue transmissions.

SOME OF THE GREAT BENEFITS DTT WILL FEATURE INCLUDE:

- More channels
- Better quality
- Improved reception
- New features

If you're still unsure or have any questions, give us a call on 011 686 6000, we'll be happy to help.

