Device Data Demands Pressure Networks

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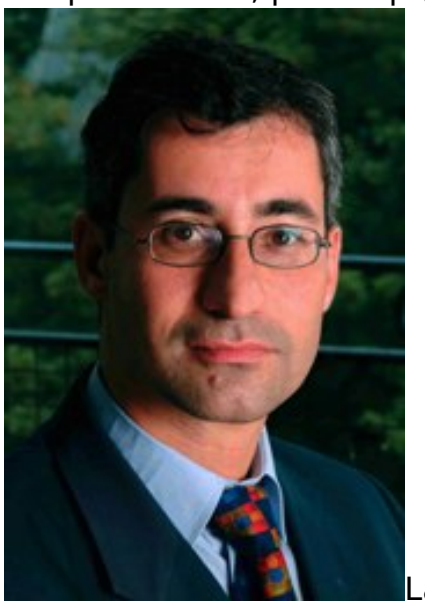

Last week AT&T announced some big changes to its pricing and data models to deal with the increasing number of devices demanding data from the network, particularly with the launch of the 3G version of the iPad. Data demands on the network have been one of the most talked about pressure points on networks, with AT&T being one of the many operators worldwide who have looked to femtocells to take some of the strain off their networks.

However, while people always talk about data putting pressure on the network, another factor is fast becoming equally important. Smartphones actually cause problems when they are not even transmitting or receiving data. Due to apps like push email, social networking and location-based services, a smartphone needs to repeatedly 'check in' with the network to appear 'always on' to the user. As a result signaling traffic is actually outgrowing data traffic by as much as 50%.

This is a completely different issue from capacity. For operators to address signaling requires not only sophisticated phones, but also advanced equipment built into the network. In short, it’s not enough to offer customers the most popular phones – you also need the network to support them.

There are ways of reducing the signaling traffic generated by smartphones, but these need to be implemented consistently: unless we recognize and address these issues, data alone will be the least of our worries.

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