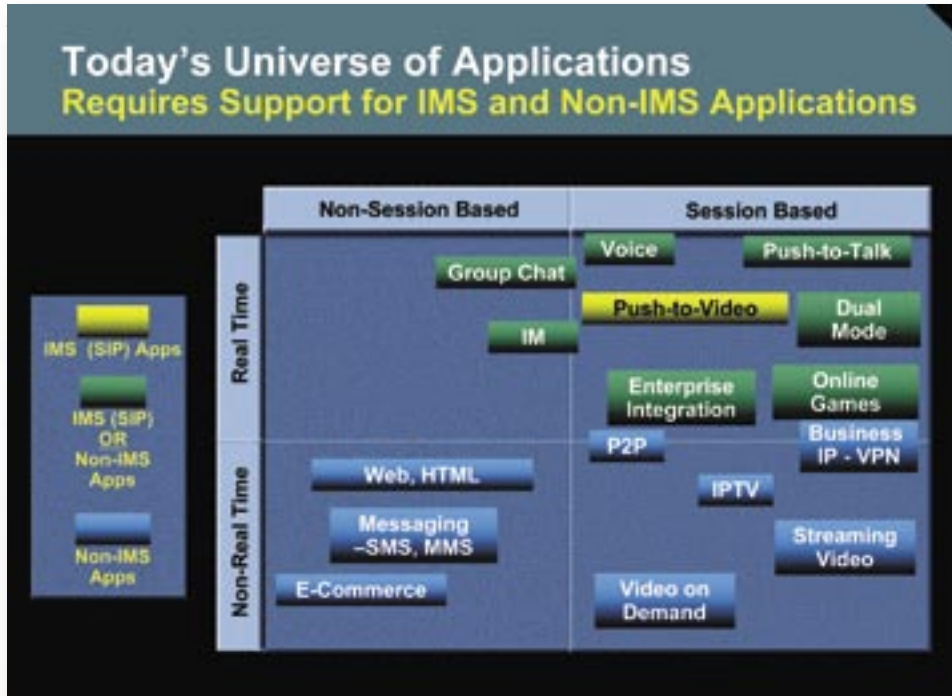


# ScreenPlays

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STRATEGIC INFORMATION FOR THE BROADBAND MARKETPLACE



Cisco graphic illustrates where IMS does and doesn't apply.

## IMS Is Great, but You Need More, Cisco Says

### Vendor Enhances Framework with IMS and Non-IMS Components

As service providers contemplate the migration to converged services the perspective offered by Cisco Systems suggests carriers who give too much weight to the IMS standards-setting process might delay progress unnecessarily.

In December Cisco added many enhancements to what it calls the Service Exchange Framework in its next-generation architecture, which is a reference to the service convergence layer between the network operations and applications layers of the architecture. It is at this level that policies affecting specific applications direct how network functionalities are applied, whether those policies are about QoS, configuration of bit streams for

specific devices, set-up of sessions between peer-ing points in the network or any of a myriad of other functionalities.

At this SEF level there are many applications that can be managed through policies falling under either the IMS (IP Multimedia Subsystem) domain or some other set of application management specifications, notes Suraj Shetty, director of marketing in Cisco's routing and service provider technology group. "It's important that you have a network operating environment where you're addressing everything that's outside the IMS framework as well as the things within it," Shetty says.

"IPTV, for example, hasn't been defined by any standards body and is outside the IMS domain," he adds. "Over time, such applications might be incorporated into IMS, but it's important to address these applications now."

Indeed, he says, Cisco's monitoring of actual traffic data shows that IMS-related applications today have a very small impact on network traffic.

"There are a lot of applications where you want to be able to have the sophisticated management capabilities of the Service Exchange Framework that are not part of the IMS domain, such as peer-to-peer traffic, streaming video, business IP VPNs and SMS, as well as IPTV."

The Cisco SEF enables support for virtually any IP service regardless of whether it is manageable by IMS with respect to things like real-time monitoring of quality and integration with third-party anti-virus, security and intrusion detection appliances, notes Mike Volpi, senior vice president for routing and service provider technology at Cisco. "The SEF is designed to help service providers address the sheer complexity and diversity of IMS and non-IMS applications across any access network while raising their average revenue per subscriber and lowering costs," Volpi says. Using elements of the SEF, providers can bundle voice, video and data services to offer personalization through self-selection, detailed billing and usage models and prepaid and postpaid options, he adds.

Along with adding IMS Session Border Control, IMS Call Session Control Function for multimedia services and MPLS-enabled, IMS-compliant media gateway products (see story, p. 1), Cisco's latest enhancements to the SEF platform include release 3.0 of its Service Control Engine, which utilizes the deep-packet inspection and applications classification technology it acquired with purchase of P-Cube in 2004. "Service providers are looking at how to go from managing rich media flows to millions of customers so that the network doesn't fall apart," Shetty says. "It's the natural evolution in response to what we're seeing with things like iPod video and Google video search."

With deep-packet inspection capabilities built into major routing points SPs are putting in place the means by which they can establish policies for different tiers of service flows, Shetty explains. This allows a high level of call granularity and reporting in VoIP that lets third-party providers know whether best-effort is sufficient or whether they need to pay for higher quality guarantees. And it allows SPs to set up premium paths for video content suppliers who are willing to pay for something beyond best effort.

"You can do all this on a modular basis," Shetty says, "but Cisco's strategy is to put key functionalities where they are needed in the network path."

As SPs move to negotiate with third parties for such capabilities (see accompanying story) "it makes natural sense to have this capability located in the 12000 (series Cisco router), where edge functionalities can be managed around one location," Shetty adds. "This is innovation for immediate needs, and it's all unrelated to IMS." ■