

Wi-Fi Monetization and Engagement Issues and Answers – A RaGaPa White Paper

As one statistic follows another, the evidence becomes clear. “60% of people can’t go without Wi-Fi for more than 1 day”, claims Iconic Displays, while Retail Touch Points says that “Up to 70% of consumers in-store have a Wi-Fi capable device in their pocket”, and Hotel Chatter finds that “64% of hotels now offer free Wi-Fi”. In other words, people want Wi-Fi, are prepared to use it, and expect it for the most part to be free and secure.

Where does this leave business that want to draw customers into their stores, hospitality venues, theme parks, and transport networks, among others? Without offering free Wi-Fi, for example by setting up a guest Wi-Fi network, they are at a disadvantage compared to competitors. However, simply providing this service at no charge to their customers is still only a “table stake” in the game to attract customers and increase revenues. It lets them play, but they need more to win. There are two important goals:

1. **Wi-Fi monetization.** Ideally, any business initiative is self-funding, generating its own revenue and profit, without draining cash from others. Providing Wi-Fi to its customers has a cost to the business, one to which customers are unlikely to contribute directly by paying to connect.
2. **Wi-Fi engagement.** Visitors using in-store (in-restaurant, in-hotel...) Wi-Fi can surf the Internet freely, but the business providing the free Wi-Fi should leverage this favor to establish a closer relationship with its customers, inciting prospects to become customers, casual purchasers to become loyal patrons, and so on.

The Need to Focus on the Customer

The starting point for successful Wi-Fi monetization and engagement is the end-customer. Getting to know customers and their preferences is essential for properly designing or enhancing free Wi-Fi connectivity to meet these two goals.

- **Right time, right content.** Marketing revenue opportunities are determined by their relevance. In the first instance, business may have to use experience and judgment to decide how and when to engage with their customers via their Wi-Fi service. If sending special offers, satisfaction surveys, or useful information to customer’s mobile devices starts like this, business should then rapidly be able to gather data about the relative success of each tactic. The data can be analyzed to optimize the timing and content of further engagement and monetization.
- **A quality customer experience.** There is a fine line between providing useful and interesting Wi-Fi content that customers appreciate, and interfering with quality of the customer’s Internet experience. Ad insertion for monetization and notifications for engagement must be visible if they are to have any effect, yet must also remain sufficiently discreet. Likewise, both should work seamlessly on all mobile platforms, browsers, and screen sizes without obliging customers to manually download apps or files.

Other Conditions for Wi-Fi Monetization and Engagement

There are also certain prerequisites for businesses that want to leverage their Wi-Fi deployment and set the scene for closer, more profitable customer relationships:

- The underlying Wi-Fi network must offer good performance and security. While possibilities exist to limit the amount of data downloaded by a single customer (no video or music downloads, for example), guest Wi-Fi connections should be both fast and safe. Without these basic conditions, neither monetization nor engagement will succeed.
- Any technical solution for business to insert their content into customer Wi-Fi connections and gather data on customer behavior must be simple, yet powerful. Businesses must be able to use such a solution effectively, but without needing specialist staff.
- The technical solution must also be affordable, for SMBs (small and medium business), as well as large chains of stores, restaurants, hotels, and others. Any on premise hardware should be inexpensive and easy to install (“plug-and-play”), while software applications can be provided on a rental or pay-as-you-go basis. A cloud-based solution may be suitable, for these reasons and if it also offers good ease of use (see previous point).

Opportunities to Build Revenues and Customer Loyalty

Wi-Fi monetization opportunities are available in two ways. A business providing guest Wi-Fi service can seek to sell more, by pushing its own promotional content to connected users via the captive portal or In-session through content insertion or both. Redeemable coupons, price reductions, package deals, and other special offers can all be provided to customers using the guest Wi-Fi network at the best possible time – when they are physically present in the store or venue, and can immediately make a purchase. More sophisticated setups can take advantage of information about the physical location of a customer in stores. Promotional content can then be adapted to the specific range of goods or services in the location of the customer.

The second possibility for monetization is to sell Wi-Fi advertising time to business partners. A fashion store might carry advertising in this way for a local restaurant, a hotel might sell Wi-Fi advertising time to a local sightseeing tour operator, and so on. The only condition is for the host business running the guest Wi-Fi network to pick its advertisers in a way that makes marketing and merchandising sense, both to the host and its partners, and to the customers receiving the inserted content.

Wi-Fi engagement beyond captive portal using content insertion runs along similar lines. Informational content helps patrons get the most out of services and amenities. Customer surveys provide customer feedback when it is the most pertinent and valuable, meaning when customers are experiencing the service offered by the business. An important bonus for a business such as a hotel or restaurant is to be able to take immediate action to correct any issues or problems flagged in the survey, thus showing customers directly that they and their feedback are valued.

Data Analytics to Understand and Act

Wi-Fi connections can generate large amounts of data concerning type of usage and customer preferences. The more data becomes available, the higher the chances of gleaning insights that can help a business tailor its promotional content and engagement tactics for the most positive effect on its customers. Bigger datasets also require better tools for analysis. Data analytics functionality allows businesses to pick out patterns and trends from data such as:

- Breakdown of logins and sessions
- Device and browser type
- Top accessed sites

- User Demographics (name, age, gender, email etc.)
- Geographical location
- Ad and message impressions
- Ad and message clicks and CTR (Click Through Rates)

The effectiveness of engagement can also be increased by using synchronized multi-channel delivery, in which content is “pushed” to mobile consumers across several digital platforms, such as on premise guest Wi-Fi, the business’s website, and social media.

Characteristics of a Solution

The right solution can address the needs and opportunities above.

The CaptiveXS solution from RaGaPa combines all the essential Wi-Fi services for Wi-Fi monetization, branding, and user engagement into a unified platform with cloud-based management.

CaptiveXS captivates the user Experience end-to-end by enabling monetization on captive portal, in-session through content insertion, block page advertising used in tandem with Content Filtering.

CaptiveXS functionalities include:

- **IoT Security** - Discover, management and protection of all IoT devices in the network with out-of-the-box security features.
- **Captive Portal with Social login** - Show the terms and conditions as well as have users login with their social login. All collected user demographics and other analytics are shown on the cloud dashboard.
- **Content Filtering** - Category and domain based options. Block bandwidth heavy applications - e.g. [Youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com). or categories such as porn, violence etc.
- **Content Insertion** - Insert any promotional content during the users’ browsing session.
- **User Management** - Bandwidth and user session control. Control user session timeout as well as have bandwidth control per user enabled with this feature.
- **Deep user analytics** - Collect all the user analytics and provide the info through our dashboard. This info can help to know your customers better and better target them.
- **Cloud management** of all the features and multiple locations

Three Wi-Fi Monetization and Engagement Use Cases

The following examples show how businesses and venues in different verticals can make use of Wi-Fi monetization and engagement.

- **Hospitality.** A hotel uses CaptiveXS monetization features by increasing guest exposure to its special deals and offers. It also sells Wi-Fi advertising time and space to local business partners, such as car rental companies, to provide an additional revenue stream. This revenue can also pay for the initial acquisition and installation of the solution in as little as one year. To enhance engagement and build customer loyalty, the hotel also pushes invitations to complete customer satisfaction surveys and responds immediately to customer suggestions and comments.
- **Leisure.** A theme park delivers video clips and full page interstitials to its visitors for in-park and partner promotions on the captive portal as well as in-session. The theme park operator

also has access to additional statistics on visitor activity and behavior. CaptiveXS' Wi-Fi user data analytics show the theme park management information on the kinds of mobile devices visitors use, the number of ad impressions made, and the click-through rates of visitors. One of the partnerships developed by the theme park is with a mobile gaming company, using the content-insertion technology to get users to click on ads for immediate access to download and play the game, helping to make wait times for rides fun as well.

- **Transport.** A short-haul ferry link operator inserts content into its guest Wi-Fi for passengers from one end of a crossing to the other, including the terminals at each end and the time spent on the ferry. The content that customers see, as RaGaPa's CaptiveXS provides discrete yet visible content insertion on their mobile device screens, is mostly targeted content from third parties and advertising relevant to the users connecting via the Wi-Fi service.

Conclusion

Wi-Fi monetization and engagement possibilities follow logically from the Wi-Fi usage habits and expectations of customers. Businesses that do not use these possibilities run the risk of being outpaced by those that do, as they fail to recoup their Wi-Fi investment and lose customers who gravitate towards venues that engage better with them. On the other hand, RaGaPa's Wi-Fi monetization and engagement solution - CaptiveXS, is now available to all business locations and outlets, no matter what their size or its industry sector is. CaptiveXS' easy-to-use, yet powerful functionality can help them compete successfully with other physical venues and online rivals, and build a solid base of satisfied customers and repeat business.