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Telcos warned to stay out of the content business at London IPTV Forum

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MUMBAI: Telecoms companies seeking to develop IPTV services are being warned to stay out of the content business and instead concentrate on being service providers.

Speaking at the IPTV World Forum in London, consulting director at research/consulting firm Ovum Tom McKeever said the key to success was finding content partners who can offer the service provider some differentiation, adding that it would be a mistake to make the content themselves.

"Telecoms companies are trusted by consumers to provide connectivity around the home. While content is king, content wants to be on every single platform so if you focussed your entire strategy on content then you might miss other pieces like provisioning and customer care, billing and being a trusted provider in the home. Telecoms companies have the tools for that today and it is where they have to focus their strategies.

"Ultimately most content will be available on most platforms and it won't be a critical differentiator," said McKeever.

These sentiments were echoed by BT Entertainment Division CEO Andrew Burke, who told the London audience: "You have to partner for content. We are not a content company but know what we do well, and that is providing a platform and billing and that is what we are going to major on."

Explaining why the UK incumbent decided to offer broadcast TV off-air, using the Freeview DTT bouquet, and concentrate on on-demand video via DSL, Burke said: "We decided we could not afford to broadcast over our broadband network."

Burke told delegates that content mobility will be a key goal of the BT offering, subject to the development of suitable Digital Rights Management solutions. He added, ""Content must go to multiple devices. You cannot say you can only watch something on television. This content must travel."

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