Commentary

It has been a difficult period for the television industry, which knows that it has much to do to retain public confidence. The regulators concerned have shown that they are prepared to take action to protect viewers when appropriate. However, the financial implications for the television industry, which has relied heavily on income from premium rate competitions in the face of declining advertising revenue, have yet to become apparent. The mood is not optimistic.

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Information technology: Industry deadline for two-hour mobile phone number porting

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Ofcom rules

Ofcom has set new rules making it easier for consumers to keep their mobile number when they switch providers. Under the new rules, consumers will be able to receive calls using their existing number within two hours of moving to a new mobile network (down from five days).

Simpler porting

The move follows Ofcom's earlier decision to reduce mobile porting lead times from five days to two days from 1 April 2008. Two-hour transfers for mobile numbers must be implemented by 1 September 2009.

The rules will make it quicker and easier for consumers to keep their number and protect consumers from the risk of losing calls if their old provider's network fails.

In addition, industry will be obliged to ensure that the new porting process includes the necessary levels of protection for consumers.

Common database to handle calls

Ofcom is also requiring industry to cooperate to create a common database to handle calls and to pave the way for more efficient call routing.

The new database will make it possible to route calls to ported numbers directly to the new provider's network without the need for

General Condition 18 updated

the call to travel over the previous network. The database will remove dependency on the previous network.

What changes have been implemented?

Ofcom has updated General Condition 18 to implement the new policy and require communication providers to make the necessary changes. Ofcom is also currently considering whether a mandatory code is necessary to reduce rising levels of mis-selling and slamming.

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E-commerce: Pan-European pricing of iTunes?

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The European Commission has used competition law to equalise prices for consumers across the EU to download tracks from iTunes.

Equalisation of prices

The equaliser

The European Commission has reached an agreement with Apple to equalise the prices for downloading music from Apple's iTunes online store across Europe within the next six months. This should end the different treatment of UK consumers, who currently have to pay nearly 10 per cent more for downloads than in other European countries. Which?, the UK consumer association, had brought a formal complaint to the Commission, highlighting the different treatment of UK consumers, but the Commission has decided not to take any action as a result of the agreement.

Home country principles

Apple's iTunes online store operates so that European consumers can only buy music that is directed to their home country and that contains music that is approved for sale in that country. iTunes checks the consumer's residence through his/her credit card details, so that a UK consumer must use a credit card issued by a bank with an address in the UK.

Pan-European player

The Commission noted that the licensing practices applied by some record companies, publishers and collecting societies can make it difficult for iTunes to operate stores accessible for a European