Will network operators start charging for Wi-Fi?

CNET

Wi-Fi is quickly becoming a key part of almost every broadband providers' network strategy. But is the day soon coming when Wi-Fi will no longer be free?

That's a big unanswered question as operators signal they'd like to get more value out of their Wi-Fi networks.

According to a recent survey from Analysys Mason, on behalf of Amdocs [1], more wireless and cable operators than ever have deployed Wi-Fi networks. But many of these service providers see these networks, which are often offered to subscribers for free, as potential revenue generating assets in the future.

Most broadband service providers -- 89 percent of them -- have deployed Wi-Fi in some fashion to either offload wireless traffic or extend services to customers, according to the survey. And 40 percent of service providers indicated in the survey that they expect Wi-Fi to be more than a solution for simply offloading congested networks and are interested in using it to provide incremental value to their customers.

There are already a large number of operators who have begun monetizing their Wi-Fi networks. In fact, according to the survey 57 percent of service providers with Wi-Fi networks say they're making money in some way from those networks.

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