Prevent Theft, Let’s make Things Worthless

situation

A recent large-scale robbery of consumer electronics shows that stealing valuable goods can still be lucrative.

The big question is, could this robbery have been “Avoided by Design”? Let’s take a look…

Most of today’s electronic products work seamlessly out-of-the-box.

Trackers, anti-theft locators, alarm systems and son on. For decades manufacturers, logistical partners and retail parties have developed mechanisms to prevent theft of valuable goods like gold, diamonds and, you guessed it, consumer electronics.

Here’s a new idea for protecting goods; what if consumer electronics are completely useless until they’re unlocked with a special mechanism after purchasing?

Some of you might be thinking that the unlocking-procedure might jeopardize the Quick-Start experience. Or that having to create and distribute unlocking codes would complicate things.

considerations

All very good points. But now let’s take a look at the plus-sides to ‘worthless electronics’.

1. First, consumers are already used to things like entering discount codes and serial numbers.
2. Second, when offered the extra safeguard against theft, consumers would be willing to jump a hurdle such as having to unlock their product. Think about how many times people have used the ‘find my phone’ or ‘lock my phone’ functions without complaint!
3. Third, consider the new opportunities it would give suppliers to extend their business models and build direct relationships with consumers. End-users could be offered additional services and benefits in return. Benefits such as extended warranties, life-time security updates and tempting freemium features?

de leveranciers en importeurs

So, here’s the question: Is it worth doing all this just to prevent theft?

While thieves might still be able to get a hold of products, they won’t be able to re-sell or use them without an unlocking code. The product would be effectively worthless. Labels on parcels, packages and trailers showing ‘Worthless-By-Design’ will surely raise eyebrows. But the market of stolen goods could dramatically decrease - who wants to steal something that's remotely disabled or even announces it's a stolen good?! Food for thought...

Adding value by using a Worthless-by-Design approach might be a small step, but please note that IoT-services can strongly increase the value of products.

If you’re considering a worthless-by-design product and want to know how to start, please feel free to call me. I'm sure you've noticed it in the image above.

Robert Heerekop

Robert Heerekop is an independent senior IoT-consultant supporting organizations (ranging from strategy to hands-on implementations) and author of the IoT-Novel “Disrupted, when the Internet of Things takes over”