

Multi-DRM Cost Cheat Sheet

The cost formula · 2026 price ranges · the two real levers · DRM-to-device coverage

The monthly cost formula

```
licenses/mo = subscribers × watch_hours ×
licenses_per_hour
variable cost = licenses/mo ×
price_per_license
monthly total = variable cost + platform_fee +
integration/12
```

Same per-license bill for 1 DRM or 3 — CENC serves all from one encryption.

Worked example — 500k subs

```
500,000 subs × 20 h × 1 license/h = 10M
licenses/mo
10M × $0.02 = $200,000 per-license fees
+ $500 platform + $2,500 integration (/12)
= ≈ $203,000/mo · $0.41 / subscriber / mo
```

Per-license line ≈ 98.5% of the bill.

2026 managed-DRM price ranges

Per-license (retail)	\$0.01 – \$0.05 · mid-point \$0.02
Per-license (commit)	\$0.005 – \$0.01 with volume contract
Platform fee	\$100 – \$2,000 / month, flat
Integration (one-time)	3–6 weeks; full iOS/Tizen/webOS test pass

Device → DRM (each device forces one)

Widevine	Android, Chrome, Firefox, Linux, Android TV
FairPlay	iPhone, iPad, Mac Safari, Apple TV / tvOS
PlayReady	Tizen, webOS, Vidaa, Xbox, Edge-on-Windows

The levers that move the bill

Lever 1 — persistent licenses

Cache the key in the CDM so a binge session = 1 request, not 6. Cuts licenses/hour to ~0.3. The biggest single saving for VOD.

Lever 2 — volume commit

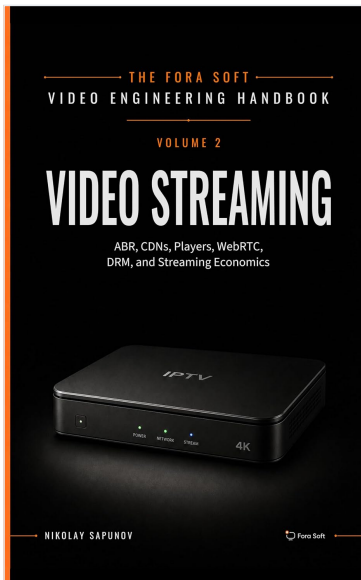
Negotiated price drops from ~\$0.02 retail to ~\$0.008. At 10M req/mo that is ~\$120k/mo.

Non-lever — DRM count

Shipping 1 DRM instead of 3 saves \$0. Same encryption serves all three via CENC. Dropping a DRM only removes an audience.

DRM stack vs audience coverage

DRM stack	Reaches	Leaves out
Widevine only	Android, Chrome, Linux	Apple + TV/Xbox
FairPlay only	Apple iOS/macOS/tvOS	Android + TV/Xbox
PlayReady only	Tizen, webOS, Xbox	Apple + Android
Widevine + FairPlay	Web + mobile + Apple	Smart TV / Xbox
All three	Every household device	Nobody



GO DEEPER · VOLUME 3 OF 7

Video Streaming: A Complete Guide to Video Delivery

From ABR and CDNs to Players, WebRTC, DRM, and the Economics of Streaming

By Nikolay Sapunov, CEO at Fora Soft · 1,182 pages · Kindle & paperback on Amazon

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This sheet gives the licence cost formula, 2026 price ranges and the two levers that move the bill. Volume 3 puts that bill in context: DRM and licence servers, persistent licences in the player, CDN and delivery costs, and the full economics of streaming per subscriber.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND INSIDE

- The economics of streaming per subscriber
- Persistent licences and licence caching
- Choosing DRM systems by device reach
- CDN and licence costs in one model

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Want to know what DRM will really cost at your subscriber count?

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