SAMENA TRENDS

EXCLUSIVELY TO SAMENA TELECOMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL'S MEMBERS

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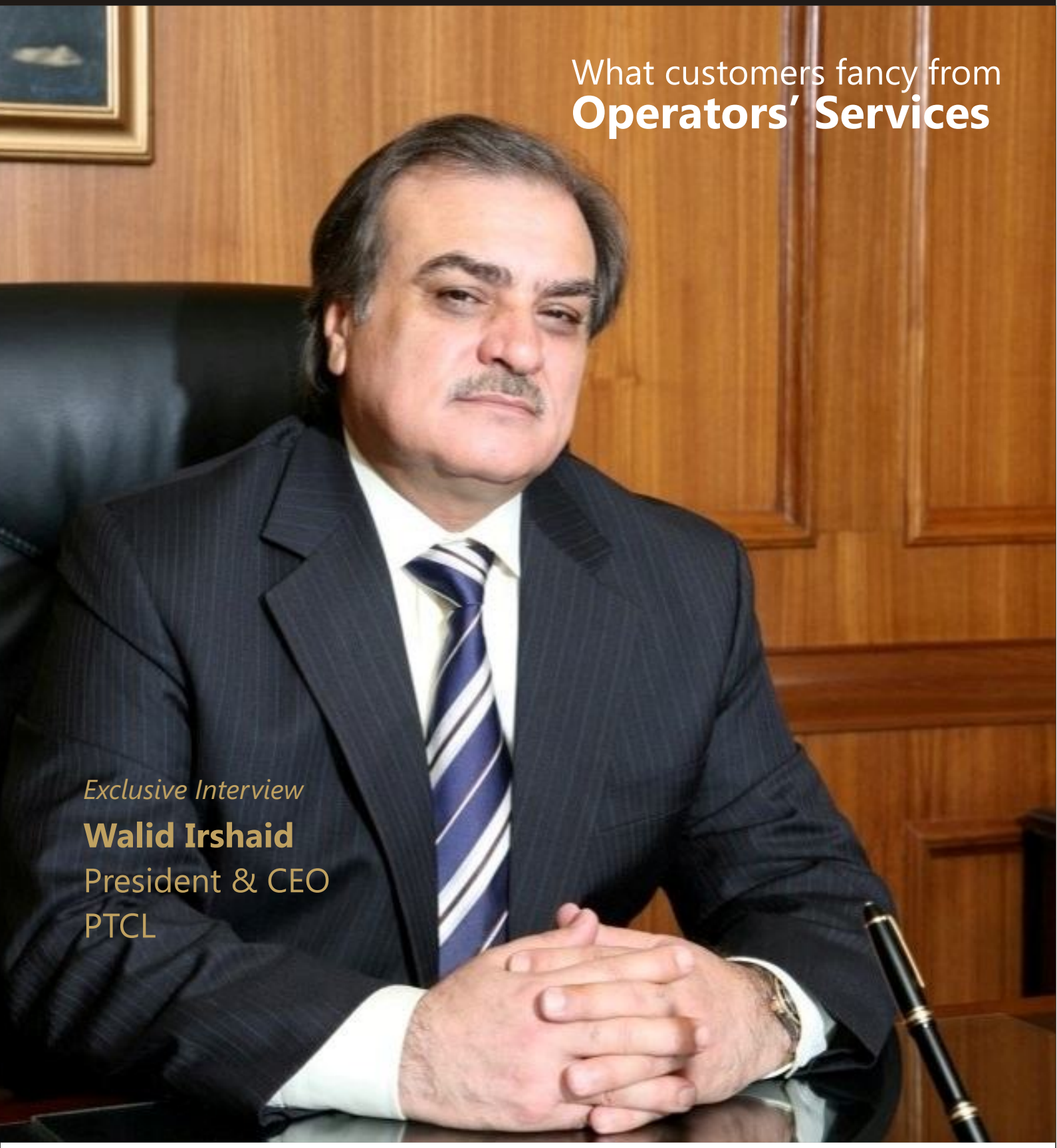

What customers fancy from **Operators' Services**

Exclusive Interview

Walid Irshaid
President & CEO
PTCL

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EDITORIAL

Cross Connect

A recent new development with the announcement of AT&T's planned acquisition of T-Mobile, a strategic asset of Deutsche Telekom, which has already received approval by both of their respective boards. While the news is exciting for many, it still has huge hurdles to climb with regard to gaining clearance from the US Department of Justice (ensuring no violation of US antitrust laws and others) as well as from the FCC. A clever bid for about 33 million subscribers, as per latest news release, would increase the total subscriber size to around 120 million subscribers for the new AT&T. This would put the US carrier first in its domestic market place in number of subscribers, while Verizon would fall to second, having been in the first position for some time, since the latest acquisition of its own. This acquisition would leave predominantly three large national mobile carriers operating in the 300 million plus size US market.

What this brings may be quite interesting, depending upon how things work out. What is intriguing is the merged carrier 3G networks are not currently capable of using similar handsets. At least not yet, due to the different frequencies which each carrier currently operate their ownso-called 3G networks. AT&T has a plan to construct a much faster mobile broadband network than it currently does, which is using an extended version of HSDPA. The latest numbers on the new CAPEX investment is around eight billion US dollars and is predominantly going to be spent on covering rural areas, as well as roaming capabilities. There is hope that the business and governmental environment may support such investment for it must return positive equity to its investors or why would they invest in the upgrade?

This act of consolidation may have considerable lessons for which others can watch and learn from. Is there true synergistic value in the pairing of the second and fourth largest operators in the US. Is spectrum the core component of the merger? Will the networks merge their pricing plans without harming existing post paid customers? Will the networks actually be able to share and bring aboard new higher revenue smart phones, which currently can't operate on both networks as of yet? Will the access to both fixed and mobile broadband at higher speeds increase? T-mobile subscribers do potentially and possibly gain the iPhone but this is chiefly by having to switch to a probably proposed new rate plan from the old AT&T for them to move to the Apple program. Bandwidth caps and throttle down bandwidth is currently already in practice by each carrier respectively, however some sort of continuity of pricing, marketing, handsets, development on the 4G future networks and other very important activities will be quite complex.

Carriers such as Etisalat Group, STC Group, Orange, Batelco Group, Orascom, MTN Group and others in the SAMENA region who already or will have similar statistics in subscribers are all facing some of the same issues. Where does conformity to standards across borders come to play and how far will consolidation go. The issues are actually quite different for the SAMENA region carriers as opposed to those in North America or in other large population developed markets, where there may be one single policy maker / regulator across the board for the entire one hundred twenty million plus subscribers. There is the good side, where mobile operators such as Verizon and AT&T can concentrate on one body such as the FCC, which is responsible for regulations and policy (sometimes stretching their understanding of what policy making and policy enforcement actually mean and for what they are authorized to enforce and etc.). However with one entity for the most part such as the FCC making creating regulatory framework and policies (within certain restrictions) such as net neutrality recently, having only one policy maker / regulator sort of forms an "all your eggs in one basket" sort of situation, or as they say, an all or nothing proposition and this for a population base of about 300 million people.

EDITORIAL

Unlike the situation in the US or even to a certain extent in the EU, operators in the SAMENA, African and Asian regions, who own and operate multiple operators across multiple borders, must deal with the interests of multiple facets, including in most cases, both the legislative (Ministerial) institutions and the sometimes totally independent and sometimes not so independent regulatory bodies. The task itself is quite vexing for the operators to manage, let alone with different policy makers and regulators in each country market where an operation is located. This causes an extended need for the operators across the region, for an understanding with a certain dose of continuity and yet flexibility for each market's special conditions. SAMENA and its member operators are working hard to work with each market's stakeholders to bring the very best out of each situation for all stakeholders. This includes the socio economic dividends from the investments that the industry makes on a continual basis, where the consumers, policy makers, regulators and service providers all work to affect positive development and growth in the market specifically tailored to the needs and requirements of each specific region.

This environment calls for the operators to constantly review where to consolidate internally and how to capture greater value for its invested assets (monetary, human resources, infrastructure(s), customers and much more) across the spectrum of countries where the operators lie, along while having to manage dealing with a constant new flow of policies and potential regulation with regard to convergence, net neutrality, content stress on the network, unbundling, shared infrastructure and many other important issues. This is in addition to handling the stress on investment return and the need for the development of multiple positive investment friendly infrastructure policy environments. All stakeholders have a very important role in the market place, where dialogue, creative new business models and ideas, along with and positive interplay between all vested partners is absolutely a must.

These times are different. The market has changed. The actual platform of choice has changed, where the internet is the new method of communication, where traditional voice percentage of total message traffic is declining in ratio to data message traffic, where smart phones that have the best social network interfaces tend to outsell all others as far as growth in the market, where fiber and high speed wireless transmission help in assisting in determining the revenues of an operator rather than the number of switch ports, where e and m mean the connotation of electronic (digital) and mobile to (E)health, (M)payments, (E)inclusion and many other means of value add proposition rather than the old legacy meaning of ear and mouth (E&M). These are different times, yet we are certain the future will ring loud and clear with vibrancy not yet experienced in earlier times. The adopted saying of "change is opportunity and the ICT industry is always changing" may apply here most assuredly.

Truly Yours,

Thomas Wilson
CEO & Managing Director
SAMENA Telecommunications Council

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TOP REGIONAL & MEMBER NEWS

Algerie Telecom to Roll out Fiber Optics in Tebessa

Algerie Telecom has announced plans to develop 228 kilometers of fiber-optic cables near Tebessa. The new cables will be deployed as follows: 90km between Tebessa and Ouenza, 78km between Cheria and Bir El Ater, 30km between Cheria and Hammamet and 30km between Ouenza and El Aouinet. This would mean that around 50 percent of homes in Tebessa would have access to fiber-optics. It is expected that following the project's completion, the total length of fiber-optics in Tebessa will reach 446km.

Microsoft to launch Lync in Qatar

Microsoft Qatar announced that it will organize an exclusive event in Doha to launch Microsoft Lync, the next generation of unified communications solution from Microsoft. Organized in partnership with Jabra and Polycom, the event will give businesses in Qatar an exclusive opportunity to learn more about how Microsoft Lync can meet their needs for real-time collaboration and give them access to an integrated solution that enable users to communicate from anywhere in a cost-effective and secure manner. Microsoft Lync connects users in new ways, regardless of their physical location providing a fresh, intuitive user experience.

PTCL EVO WiFi: Share Internet with Others

Introducing yet another first of its kind in Pakistan; PTCL's EVO WiFi cloud is a mobile hotspot that intelligently converts home/work space into a personalized WiFi zone and is sure to revolutionize the way internet is used in the country. It is a similar to old EVO device, but it can broadcast internet over WiFi protocol with a range of 30-40 feet. Currently, this product is offered in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Karachi. The devices would however be functional at EVO 3G speeds throughout the 106 cities currently covered by the EVO 3G wireless broadband network.

Tetra Communications to Distribute Thuraya's Broadband and Voice Solutions in Europe

Thuraya has announced the signing of a key distribution agreement with European telecommunications specialists, Tetra Communications. Under this agreement, Tetra Communications will market Thuraya's voice and broadband data services in Greece and surrounding NATO countries.

"Our consumers in the Government and Military sectors face mission-critical decisions every day. They demand communication solutions that are mobile, secure, reliable and robust. Through our partnership with Tetra Communications, Thuraya is well-positioned to meet their needs with leading-edge products like the world's most rugged handset, Thuraya XT and the smallest data terminal Thuraya IP," said Thuraya's Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Samer Halawi.

Mr. George Strouzakis Executive Vice President from Tetra Communications added, "Thuraya's portfolio of data and voice products will uniquely attract a lot of market attention due to their superior design and functionality."

Thuraya's superior technology enables a congestion-free satellite network covering 140 countries across strategic geographies in Europe, Africa, Middle East, Asia and Australia, to support these industry-leading products.

Alcatel-Lucent and SWU TeleNet Assist Rural Connectivity in Germany

Alcatel-Lucent and SWU TeleNet assist rural connectivity in Germany. As part of their plans they will provide 50 mbps broadband for residents and businesses in 14 districts of rural Ulm region in Germany. It will connect 12,000 households by the end of 2013 by using a blend of copper and fiber-based access technologies. In many cities across Germany, broadband providers are strongly competing for customers. Due to the low ROI, rural areas have generally been excluded from high-speed broadband access. SWU TeleNet is now tackling this situation in the Ulm region, closely cooperating with its mother company SWU, telephony service provider G-FIT and solutions provider Alcatel-Lucent.

STC Launches Central Reservations Service for Tamayouz Customers

STC and Saudi Arabian Airlines launched the Central Reservations service for its Tamayouz customers as part of the 24 hours Concierge service. By the new service Tamayouz customers enjoy monthly discounts and exclusive special offers, making reservations at family entertainment centers, obtaining movie and theatre tickets, arranging attendance at fashions shows and access to first class passenger lounges at some airports. The Tamayouz program is designed specifically for STC VIP customers.

Friendi Launches 3G Service in Oman

Friendi Mobile, an MVNO in Oman, launched 3G services. The service, which is called Friendi Mobile Internet, is the first 3G package in Oman to offer monthly pay-as-you-go payment terms. Customers will pay OR9.9 ($25.7) per month for the "all-you-can-eat" data package, subject to a fair usage policy, according to CEO of Friendi Mobile. He also confirmed that Friendi's 3G customers have the option of buying dongles, allowing them to access the mobile broadband service on their PCs.

Etisalat Launches Construction Site Management Solution in Collaboration with NoteVault

Etisalat has announced a strategic collaboration with NoteVault, to jointly offer Construction Site Management Solutions in the UAE. The unique Construction Site Management solution, jointly offered with NoteVault, fills a huge void in the construction industry by enabling field workers to easily report project activity directly from their mobile phone. Project Managers can simply speak their daily notes into their mobile, which gets generated in a project report, available through email or a web-based interface.

STC Announces an Industry First: 40G Per Wavelength Upgrade for SEA-ME-WE 4

STC has announced that SEA ME WE 4, is being upgraded with leading-edge 40G technology in order to meet the international bandwidth requirements of STC and the other consortium members. By upgrading from 10 Gbps to 40 Gbps, the resulting significant increase in international

capacity will help to meet the growing demand for internet and other data services in the Asia Pacific, Middle East and European regions.

Sky-Stream Launches New IPTV Streaming Service Based on iDirect's VSAT Platform

Sky-Stream has launched a satellite IPTV streaming service over the iDirect platform. Sky-Stream's IPTV service provides on-demand, high-quality streaming for movies as well as news and sports shows offered through Apple TV. The new offering is an expansion of Sky-Stream's standard Voice over IP (VoIP) and Internet service that it provides to military and civil defense customers in Iraq, Afghanistan and parts of Africa.

Ufone Becomes SAMENA's First Cellco Member from South Asia

SAMENA Telecommunications Council has announced that Pak Telecom Mobile Ltd, operating in Pakistan under the brand name Ufone has become the first cellular operator from South Asia to join its membership of 80-plus organizations. Ufone is a leading operator in one of the SAMENA region's most competitive markets and ranks among the largest cellular networks in the country, with a subscriber base that exceeds 20 million. Ufone's CEO, Abdul Aziz said, "Ufone is a believer in innovation to further equip the consumer with the latest in technology. Ufone's stride towards being a leader in innovation has earned acclaim off being among the region's most innovative top players. SAMENA gives a platform to inform and share real-time exchange of ideas with other regions. Ufone finds SAMENA's direction and progression to be of much strategic significance."

Inmarsat Wins Digital Studio 'Satellite Services/Provider of the Year' Award

Inmarsat, a global mobile satellite communications services, was awarded the Digital Studio Industry Leadership Award for 'Satellite Services/Provider of the Year'. The ceremony was held at the Al Multaqa Ballroom, Dubai World Trade Centre, and attended by the region's leading professionals in the broadcast, TV and film production and post production industries from the Middle East and Africa. In its seventh year, the Digital Studio Industry Leadership Awards acknowledges the efforts of individuals and companies that have contributed to the growth of the broadcast and production industry in the region. "We are truly honoured to receive this award and remain committed to offering our premium services to professionals and organizations in the broadcast industry," said Helene Bazzi, Senior Area Manager Middle East and Africa, Inmarsat.

SAMENA's Public Relations partner, TRACCS, has been named Middle East Consultancy of the Year 2011

SAMENA's Public Relations partner, TRACCS, has been named Middle East Consultancy of the Year 2011 by the Holmes Report, one of the world's most influential reports dedicated to the Public Relations industry globally. TRACCS is one of the largest public relations networks in the Middle East & North Africa with over 200 professionals covering 14 markets. According to the Holmes Report's assessment, the volume of business generated makes TRACCS the only Middle Eastern firm to rank among the world's top 100 independent public relations agencies.

Omantel's 2010 Revenue up 9.8 Percent

Omantel posted a 9.8 percent increase in its revenue for 2010 to OMR 417 million. Net profit reached OMR 112 million for the year, and Omantel posted a 50 percent jump in quarterly net profit to OMR 29 million. The subscriber base grew 9.8 percent over the full year to 3.33 million. Number of customers increase by 14.1 percent to 2.13 million. Oman Mobile network increased its base by 18.1 percent to a total 2.49 million at the end 2010. The company has completed the installation of 795 3.5G stations across the Sultanate.

Orange Jordan Unveils New ADSL2+ and 3G+ Packages

Orange Jordan unveiled its new ADSL2+ and 3G+ package, offering unprecedented broadband speeds of up to 20Mbps and 21Mbps respectively. The new ADSL2+ and 3G+ package will be made available to consumers in a variety of highly affordable offers throughout the Kingdom. Internet users in the Kingdom will be able to experience new heights in broadband connectivity, making use of bandwidth-intensive services like live streaming of high definition media and large file downloads without delays or limitations.

Qtel Offers Dawli bonus with Hala SIM Packs

The offer has been designed to ensure that customers get the most out of local and international calling with Hala. Dawli International Cards provide some of the most affordable international calling rates in Qatar, with special rates for Asian and MENA regions, and with the bonus QR25 call credit, customers can make local and international calls at incredible rates. Dawli MENA International Calling Cards provide affordable rate calls to Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen.

Etisalat & Huawei Sign Agreement to Deliver the Middle East's First LTE network

Etisalat, Middle East and Africa's leading telecom operator, and Huawei, a leader in providing next-generation telecommunications network solutions, has announced the signing of a commercial LTE contract to commence deployment of the region's widest LTE network in the UAE. Mr. Nasser bin Obood Acting/CEO Etisalat UAE, and Mr. Yi Xiang, President for Huawei Middle East witnessed the signing ceremony at the Etisalat-Huawei Summit 2011 in Barcelona, Spain. The advanced LTE technology which has already been tested and deployed on the Etisalat network, enables the existing network to reach a download speed of 173 Mbps. LTE can accommodate multimedia applications such as video conferencing, high definition content transmission, high speed video downloads and social networks.

Fujitsu and NEC win Asia cable deal

Fujitsu and NEC have won the deal from NTT, StarHub and Telekom Malaysia to construct the Asia Submarine cable Express system, a high-bandwidth submarine cable system that will link Japan to Singapore, Hong Kong, the Philippines and Malaysia. The ASE plane to operational this service by the end of 2012 and designed for optical transmission speeds of 40 gigabits a second and will have capacity of at least 15 terabits a second. The project will cost US$ 430 million. The cable has the capability for further links to other countries like china and other and to be upgrade up to 100 gigabits a second. The route is designed to avoid earthquake and typhoon-prone regions, such as the Bashi Channel south of Taiwan, while at the same time covers the shortest possible distance between Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan, in order to ensure maximum reliability and minimum latency.

STC "Groupy" Service Allows Subscribers to Build Groups via AlJawal Portal

STC is now offering the exclusive "Groupy" service that allows subscribers to build groups and invite their friends to join via the AlJawal website www.aljawal.net.sa. The "Groupy" service allows postpaid Jawal, SAWA, and LANA customers to create up to five private groups for friends, colleagues or family members and to connect with them by sending SMS or MMS to multiple members with one simple and fast click.

MPLS Core Service of Omantel Certified with ISO 27001 Standards

Omantel has achieved the distinguished milestone of having its Multi-Protocol Label Switching (MPLS) Core services certified under the internationally renowned ISO 27001 Standards. MPLS provides an integrated network that can simultaneously handle multiple types of network traffic with systems designed and implemented to protect customer data, and to ensure MPLS service availability, thereby meeting operational objectives and customer commitments. Omantel Chief Executive, Dr. Amer Al-Rawas commented, "We are very proud to announce that we have achieved the internationally recognized ISO 27001 Standards on MPLS services."

PCCW, Telstra Complete Reach Restructure

Australia's Telstra and Hong Kong-based telecom service provider PCCW have completed their Reach restructure. The two announced in January that the international assets in their 50/50 Reach joint venture would be divided between both parties. The remaining joint assets will continue to be managed by Reach in Hong Kong. The restructure represents a milestone in Telstra International's strategy to drive greater customer and shareholder value. Telstra International's expanded platform in the Asia Pacific region enables business growth and increased control over the end-to-end service delivery platform. This will allow its enterprise and global service provider customers to experience enhanced customer service, improved service management and delivery and more competitive market positioning.

Cisco Announces New Initiatives to Help Cloud, Collaboration Partners

Cisco has announced a series of customer and technology innovations across the Unified Fabric, Unified Computing System and Unified Network Services technology portfolios which form the foundation of its Data Center Business Advantage architectural framework. Cisco announced that it has shipped its one millionth Nexus 10 Gigabit Ethernet port, bringing the total number of Nexus ports in customer production environments to more than 7,000,000. The company also surpassed 10,000 NX-OS customers and neared 4,000 Unified Computing Systems customers at the end of its fiscal second quarter, demonstrating the platforms are quickly becoming the infrastructure of choice for next generation data center virtualization and private clouds in enterprise, public sector, commercial and service provider markets.

Turk Telekom Purchases Pantel International

Turk Telekom has purchased Pantel International that has 30,000 km fiber optic network in 16 countries. Turk Telekom's Director General Mr. Gokhan Bozkurt said the company had spread its communication infrastructure to Europe by purchasing the leading wholesale capacity and data services provider in the CEE region. According to Bozkurt, Turk Telekom invested around US$5.6 billion in technology and infrastructure over five years. Turk Telekom Group's consolidated sales income was up 2.7 percent year-on-year in 2010 and reached US$6.7 billion. The net profit of the group was US$1.4 million in 2010.

Alfa Awards 3G Contract to Ericsson to Upgrade its Mobile Network in Lebanon

Alfa, the first Lebanese mobile operator managed by Orascom Telecom Holding, and Ericsson announced earlier this month that they have signed a partnership agreement for the deployment of the third-generation (3G) mobile communication technology in Lebanon. Under the contract, Ericsson will be responsible for the upgrade and modernization of the current Alfa mobile network to 3G/HSPA+ technology, across the country. The announcement coincides with Alfa's ongoing efforts to bring latest mobile technologies to users through introducing and delivering new and innovative services, while at the same time, expanding coverage and outreach.

Q-Post Branches to Offer More Vodafone Products

Q-Post and Vodafone Qatar have inked a partnership that would see more Vodafone products sold at Q-Post branches. Under the agreement, customers can now sign up to Vodafone and receive a Welcome Pack at Q-Post's branches all over the country. Visitors to the Q-Post branches can buy Red recharge cards and also the popular International Calling Cards. With 30 Q-Post branches located all over Qatar, customers greatly benefit from the agreement, and can take advantage of other services offered by Q-Post, from making e-government payments, to renewing licenses and health cards.

Operator Leader's Vision

Walid Irshaid
President & CEO
PTCL

What are your current corporate ventures in the pipeline?

PTCL Corporate Ventures remain centered on enhancing its market share and growth in highly competitive market of Pakistan. One of the critical tasks on hand is to maximize gains through synergies between PTCL and Our Mobile Operator of Ufone. We strongly feel that there is huge value to unleash if we can timely manage and implement given that both Companies have unique opportunity and position.

Tell us about your latest Value Added Services (VAS), how do they differentiate your brand identity relative to other operators?

Our VAS offers are aimed at different customer and product segments. In the voice segment our conference call facility is gaining popularity. Online gaming and Buzz have proved to be the leading VAS applications on the Broadband side. Our Time shift application on IPTV has also received a very warm response from our customers. We PTCL however are no more making or classifying services to be " Basic " or Value Add in the conventional definition of the two terms. We see what is essential and required by our Customers and places all the emphasis and priority. I strongly believe VAS is now becoming core to the business and therefore can't be any longer regarded as value –Add.

> *I strongly believe VAS is now becoming core to the business and therefore can't be any longer regarded as value –Add.*

What are the types/categories of Value Added Services (VAS) that is getting big response from customers as opposed to other types of Value Added Services (VAS)?

PTCL has a very wide portfolio of VAS as we are the only integrated Telecom Company in Pakistan with country wide reach that offers voice as well as data services to its subscribers. We have recently launched Personal Global Number service for our high end users that allows our subscribers to get a unique number that enables you to use one single number as your identity for receiving or making calls from land line or mobile services.

On our PTCL Buzz portal we have provided a lot of infotainment content for our broadband subscribers for streaming and downloading without any additional charges as we want our valued customers to have a unique experience in availing PTCL's broadband services Similarly, our Smart TV has a time shift feature that allows you to rewind the most viewed channels up to an hour so that you don't miss your favorite programs in case you miss the time during which a specific program is relayed. This feature during live sports matches such as World Cup Cricket creates a lot of excitement in our Smart TV subscribers to review the critical events during a match.

What have been the major milestones you have achieved as one of the well-known telecom players in the region?

PTCL has always strived to introduce products & services that add more value to our customer's lives. One such product aimed to give our customers a far more enhanced user experience of instant connectivity while on the move is PTCL EVO. EVO is a diverse suite of products launched by PTCL that is offering a world of convenience in terms of broadband and wireless connectivity to the customers in Pakistan. With two innovative launches following the launch of EVO (Rev-A), EVDO technology has made its mark in the broadband world of an emerging market in Asia. Among the major milestones that PTCL has achieved in the wireless broadband market.

> *Following Rev A launch, is the launch of EVO 3GNitro- a Rev B powered device that offers unmatched internet speeds of upto 9.3 Mbps on downlink & upto 5.4 Mbps on uplink with the largest Rev-B network in the world with spread in metropolitans and surrounding areas.*

Following Rev A launch, is the launch of EVO 3GNitro- a Rev B powered device that offers unmatched internet speeds of upto 9.3 Mbps on downlink & upto 5.4 Mbps on uplink with the largest Rev-B network in the world with spread in metropolitans and surrounding areas. This launch not only made PTCL the global pioneer in the commercial launch of Rev B technology but also made Pakistan the first country in the world to commercially launch the Rev B. The latest innovative addition to EVO's Product portfolio is EVO Wifi cloud which is Pakistan's first intelligent mobile Wi-Fi device that combines the best of two technologies, EVO 3G 3.1 MBPS wireless internet and Wi-Fi in a smart 3G enabled, sleek, pocket fit sized, wireless broadband device, allowing our users to carry their own Mobile Wi-Fi hotspot wherever

they move across the country. EVO Wifi cloud combines the functionalities of a modem, router and an access point in a device small enough to fit the pocket yet powerful enough to provide internet access to 5 Wi-Fi enabled gadgets and users simultaneously ;just by the touch of a button.

Another major milestone has been the launch of the robust, resilient, redundant and diversified international infrastructure of three submarine cables namely SMW3, SMW4 and the most recently launched IMEWE. Our latest investment in IMEWE submarine cable will play a major role in the expansion of broadband services enabling PTCL to offer quality service to all Customers with restriction or limitation. We, in PTCL, strongly advocate affordable Broadband for every household. And shall diligently continue work and investment towards this milestone.

Can you tell us a situation where you facilitated a complex project that spanned across several departments/functions? What challenges did you faced and how did you overcome them?

In PTCL, Having gone through enormous and major transformation from state- owned and state-monopoly into Market- driven and Customer- oriented Corporation we continue to face major challenges throughout irrespective of the size of the project we undertake. However I can sum it up by saying that we took holistic approach to transformation and change involving our Service, Network, Systems and Processes Human Capital and our Culture. PTCL was rebranded and its market image and perception had to overhauled.

What are the current market provisions that operators are training themselves to adapt in the SAMENA region, especially keeping in view the customers' demands?

I perhaps can't comment on what operators are training themselves to adapt in the SAMENA region but can say what we are training ourselves in PTCL to adapt and that simple and plain: How to hear our Customers and respond to them quickly and swiftly. To Retain Customers, we must make it easy for them to do business with us.

From the industry overview, it appears that the demand from the customers on localized content is growing rapidly. How do you plan to embark upon that opportunity?

Pakistani market is more receptive for local content on entertainment services but equally interested in foreign content for information services. To address the growing needs of local content PTCL recently launched Music Station and song dedication for PSTN and Vfone users. To further capitalize on local content market we are planning health helpline and PTCL Kissan (farmers) service etc.

"Pakistani market is more receptive for local content on entertainment services but equally interested in foreign content for information services. To address the growing needs of local content PTCL recently launched Music Station and song dedication for PSTN and Vfone users."

In TV market PTCL is honored to relay the biggest number of local channels covering the regional representation, cultural and linguistic demand. In our existing 107 channels offering we are carrying around 80 local channels including 15 regional channels. We are going to add two more channels of local content in addition to existing 07 in house channels (Awakening, Smart Products, Smart Classics like black & white songs, smart melodies like coloured songs, smart comedy and smart films).

We believe that for local content development there is a lot of opportunity and we have partnered with many such providers and developers to bring the benefits to our subscribers.

Please tell us about your customer services. What challenges do you expect that may arise in future or have arisen in the past to retain the customers?

PTCL has established the customer service network through 133 One Stop Shops and Contact Centers, and are equipped to handle customer Queries, Sales, Complaints and also provide Directory Assistance Service. A dedicated Outbound Contact Center is responsible for carrying out retention campaigns, customer satisfaction surveys, verification of fault rectifications, Churn prevention campaigns and Telemarketing services.

Primary challenge for PTCL is continuity of service to its customers and to assure un-interrupted service, and when it comes to provisioning of services through copper and fiber networks, there are many external factors affecting service continuity, including development works by other agencies which involve damage to our underground networks, malicious cable cuts, power outages and natural disasters. In this regard, convenient channels are available to register complaints, and the registered faults are consistently followed-up for early resolution. These constraints are being addressed through extensive and prompt restoration of networks, in order to retain our customers.

What is your opinion on regulatory policies; do you feel they are providing impartial opportunities for industry players, how are your relations with other industry players?

In Believe that the regulatory policies provide equal opportunity and level playing field to all licensed Telecom Operators in Pakistan. Keeping every operator happy and content perhaps difficult given that market is seemingly over-crowded with more than forty (40) active players and therefore the market is becoming overly competitive. In all this maze, PTCL being the incumbent is surly taking the toll of this liberalization challenge.

All players to live and co-exist. What is more important and vital to us in PTCL are the abundant market opportunities which are still available and possible.

What major contributions have you made to the market, which, consequently, inspired trend formation or technology adoption?

In the recent past, telecom sector has kept its pace to bring innovative changes in the state-of-the-art information communication technology (ICT) services all over the world. PTCL being the leading integrated information & telecom service provider of Pakistan focused its efforts to change customers experience from narrowband to enriched broadband with cutting-edge technologies and multimedia applications. PTCL's emphasis is on ensuring that customers receive a variety of new telecom services through stream-lined business operations, deployment of latest technologies and attaining higher levels of Customer satisfaction at all the contact points. Some of these are worth mentioning as below:

Wire-line Broad band As telecom revenue now has shifted from simple voice domain to broadband and available technologies and applications in the market are also broadband & multimedia focused than the simple voice based solution. Broadband is now driving the future business everywhere in the world and only one would be in the leading position that gets this infrastructure in its network well in time. In May 2007, PTCL launched its DSL Broadband service with the strategy of proliferating Broadband in the country. Launched under the brand name of 'Broadband Pakistan', PTCL by the end of Dec 2010 had taken Broadband to more than 1000 cities with a installed base of over 1 million lines.

"PTCL's emphasis is on ensuring that customers receive a variety of new telecom services through stream-lined business operations, deployment of latest technologies and attaining higher levels of Customer satisfaction at all the contact points"

Wireless Broadband

PTCL started its wireless broadband business in year 2009 by launching its EVDO product (Rev-A). PTCL flagship product (EVO) has gained significant attraction and popularity with its user friendly and plug-n play features. PTCL not only put the title in its name as pioneer of 3G Wireless Broadband service in Pakistan by launching "EVO 3G Wireless broadband" in year 2009 but it also continued its Journey and launched the World's first & most cutting edge EV-DO Rev.B commercial network in 2010. PTCL is the first operator in the world to commercially launch EV-DO Rev.B products i.e. EVO 3G Nitro, which offer blazing fast speeds of up to 9.3 Mbps. EVO 3G Nitro is all set to meet the next-generation's need for ultimate speed & superior performance. Super fast 3G wireless broadband services were launched using CDMA EVDO Rev B technology at major cities of Pakistan, which are expanded to other cities. Rev B services will be instrumental in achieving optimum QoS standards, customer experience and revenue targets. Rev B enabled BTS will also be LTE ready, which is an upcoming 4G technology for the future.

PTCL Landline

Since the deregulation of the telecom sector, a large number of foreign investors opted for licenses in LL, LDI and cellular operations, identifying Pakistan as an emerging market. In this situation, we focused on efforts to modernize network for the delivery of new services beyond voice. Most of the network elements augmented to deliver VAS & multimedia applications in order to beef-up the company revenue.

Smart Services

PTCL built advanced & state of the art IPTV middleware to deliver a lot of smart services that put PTCL on the path of a paradigm shift. Branded under 'PTCL Smart Line', the service included Interactive Television, Broadband and voice Telephony all at the same time on PTCL's telephone line. The 'Smart TV', for the first time offered TV viewers the power to control the TV channels interactively. This included the ability to rewind and pause live TV channels, block / unblock any TV channel for parental lock and search through video on demand content.

Corporate Business

For corporate customers, we are providing diversified and innovative technology based products, in line with market needs. Starting from business connectivity to managed network solutions, now PTCL is delivering state of the art products like Unified communication, Tele-presence, iSentry, security, Video conferencing, Managed WAN, Managed LAN etc. PTCL has established world class Data centers at Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore to serve its corporate customers with the offering to store data on the cloud and offer their hosted services worldwide. These Data Centers conform to latest standards and have been certified by international bodies (EPI) for Tier-III and Tier-IV level that is the highest level in the industry.

PTCL has also enhanced its footprint by deploying Tele-presence centers at multiple locations across the country for delivering converged Tele conferencing facility to corporate segment. Now corporate customers could leverage this product for saving its travelling expenses and valued time.

How do you look at other operators as a competitor when it comes to fulfilling the customer needs?

The customers are educated and are exposed to customer services not only with the direct competition but also across the service industry. Today, the customers compare customer services of PTCL not only with the customer service provided by a telecom provider, but they also compare the customer services offered to them by other industries like airlines, banks, mobile operators, etc. This has resulted in highest levels of expectations from customers, and has brought every service provider in our competition. While fulfilling customer needs and expectations, the fulfillment of competitors services are swift as those services are provided through certain commands through the customer care systems or sales networks, however, the fulfillment of our customer needs is significantly dependent on the physical visits and physical work, e.g., repair of a faulty line or provisioning of a new service requires physical visit of Technicians and hence requires time. Nevertheless, PTCL is working on bringing the turn around time to minimum possible, by setting KPIs for service provisioning and fault resolution.

> *"We have emphasized on availability of customer service channels at customers convenience, and Contact Centers have been established for technical support, fault registration as well as for ordering new services. These contact centers are operational on 24 / 7 basis and customers can contact at a time of their convenience."*

Which vital steps you have taken in order to maintain your quality and satisfaction level of your customers?

Customer satisfaction and ensuring quality service is a continuous process. Service improvement measures are taken efficiently and regularly. Customer satisfaction surveys and mystery shopping activities are performed to ascertain the customer satisfaction and to identify customer needs, and corrective actions are taken based on customer feedback. Similarly, refresher courses, training of staff at OSS and Contact Center are carried out to ensure a positive customer experience. We have emphasized on availability of customer service channels at customers convenience, and Contact Centers have been established for technical support, fault registration as well as for ordering new services. These contact centers are operational on 24 / 7 basis and customers can contact at a time of their convenience. The customer service channels are being further enhanced and a state of the art CRM is under implementation, and we have plans to offer more channels for customers to contact us through email, internet and SMS etc.

In addition to Contact Centers, PTCL Customers can reach us by visiting one of our 133 One Stop Shops (OSS) offering one window operation and these One Stop Shops are strategically located to ease the reach of our valued customers. These One Stop Shops have been designed to facilitate customers and to provide all the services including Order booking for Wireline services, sales of Wireless products, Billing services, Information services and fault registrations under one roof. The staff is trained to handle customers from varying backgrounds and different walks of life.

Please share your thoughts with us regarding SAMENA Council as a knowledge sharing platform?

I have personally been associated with SAMENA since perhaps its inception witnessing its expansion and evolution. To date. One can only say that SAMENA has come long way and its today established as the only Forum serving the ICT Community in this Region. The Telecom and Information subjects being debated and discussed are all of critical and strategic importance and value enhancing bonds and relationships between all Stakeholders in this Region.

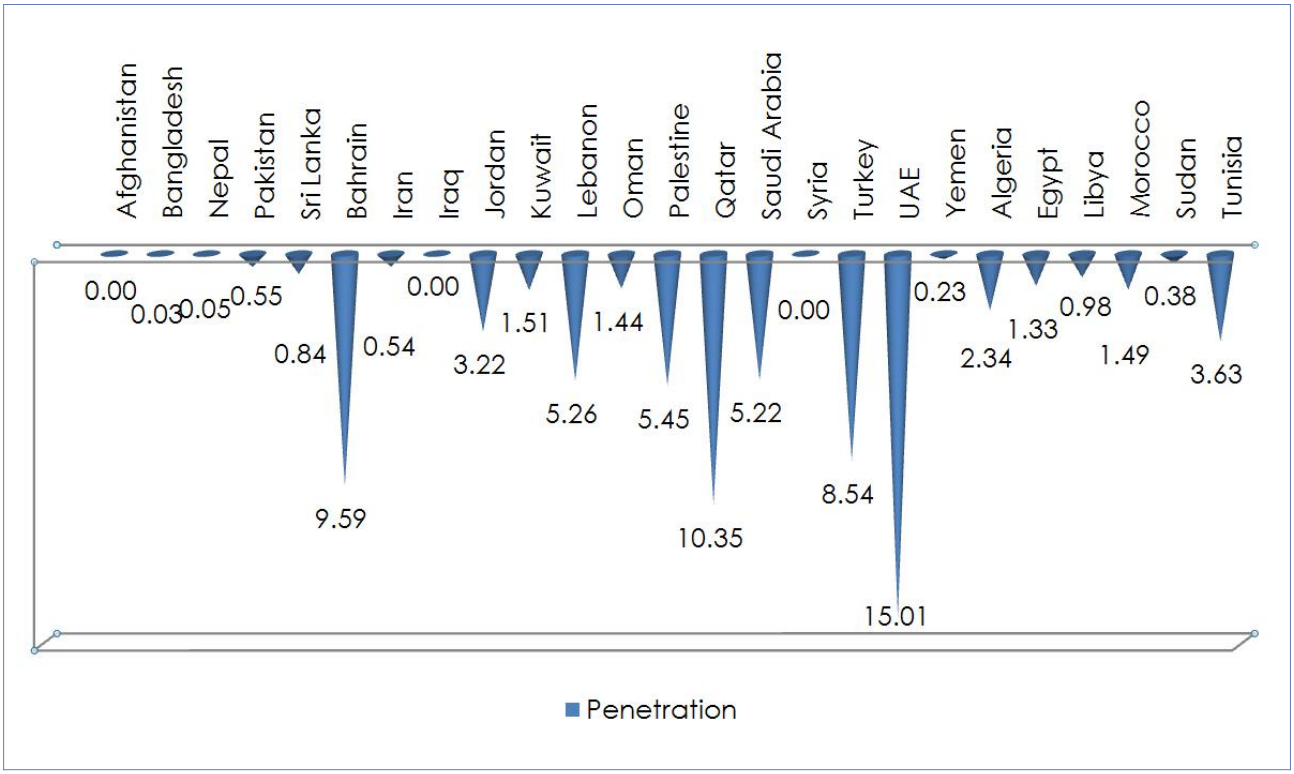
Please describe your style of leadership as a CEO. How has your style of leadership contributed to the success of your vision and mission?

Leadership style is here revolves around creating team spirit and harmony focused on delivery and timely execution. Whatever we do here we always feel that we are in race with time and this implies instilling the strong sense of empowerment and ownership.

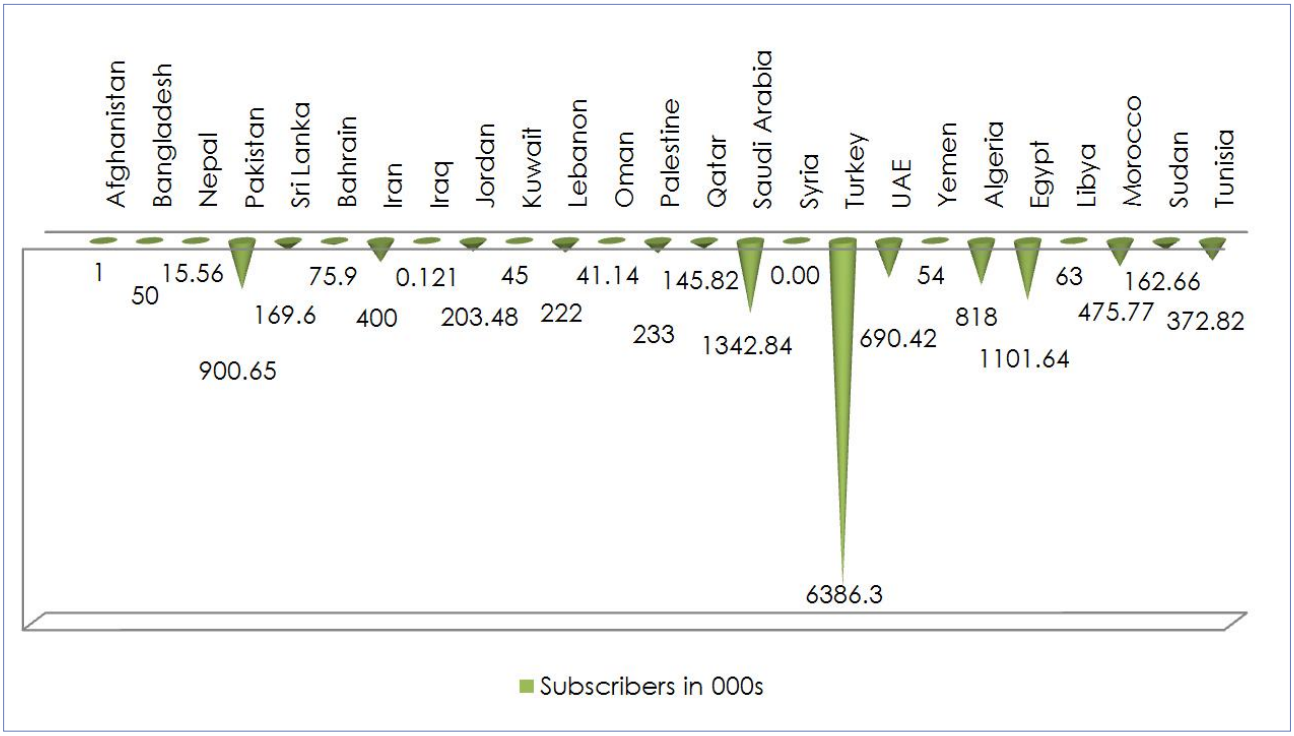
We apply full strength and passion to deliver results and judgment we leave to our Customers and certainly to our shareholders.

> *"We apply full strength and passion to deliver results and judgment we leave to our Customers and certainly to our shareholders."*

SAMENA Region Broadband Penetration



SAMENA Region Broadband Subscribers



REGULATORY NEWS

Ofcom Unveils Mobile Broadband Spectrum Trading Plans

Ofcom is considering allowing network operators to trade spectrum for the first time. New proposals for freeing up radio spectrum to improve services such as mobile broadband have been announced by the regulator. Ofcom said the plans will, for the first time, allow network operators to trade the spectrum that is used by mobile devices to communicate with masts. Under the proposals, carriers that have a greater need for spectrum will be able to bid for it from their rivals that require it less. "One important way of meeting demand is making the acquisition of spectrum as flexible as possible," insisted Ed Richards, Chief Executive of Ofcom. Mobile broadband usage could be set for further growth in the near future, as both Ericsson and ABI Research have predicted the global total of these connections will reach one billion in 2011.

Federal Communications Commission Awards Authorization for Comcast NBC Merger

The FCC awards authorization of the Comcast NBC combination. About 51 percent of NBC could be taken over by Comcast and Comcast has promised to add 1,000 hours of informational and news programming. Specific regulations have also been put in place to help prevent the Comcast-controlled NBC from using its control to discourage competitors in both internet and TV programming arenas. "After a thorough review, we have adopted strong and fair merger conditions to ensure this transaction serves the public interest," FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski said in a statement. The FCC said the Comcast-NBC merger will be required to take steps to increase competition in the video marketplace. In addition, Comcast has committed to expanding local news coverage, expand programs for Spanish-speaking viewers and offer Internet access to schools and libraries.

Sri Lanka Sets Outgoing International Call Levy

The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka has set a levy on outgoing international calls of LKR 2 per minute. The amendment also allows operators to terminate international calls on pre assigned PSTN numbers. The termination levies have been set at USD 3 per number per month and USD 1.50 per minute for every minute over 1,500 minutes a month.

Icasa to Tackle Digital Dividend Spectrum

The Independent Communications Authority of SA (Icasa) says it plans to develop a regulatory strategy that will include a 10-year plan for managing spectrum that could be used for broadband roll-out in SA. According to the statement of Icasa chairman "The strategy will seek to bring a holistic approach to regulatory activities that are relevant to meeting government's policy goal of achieving universal access to broadband by 2019." The new 10-year plan will not only provide more information on the imminent auction of spectrum in the 2.6GHz and 3.5GHz bands but will also examine the allocation of the "digital dividend" television spectrum when it becomes available in a few years' time.

UAE Expands Spectrum Monitoring and Control System

The UAE's Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) expanded the spectrum frequencies monitoring and control system by adding seven stations to the existing mobile stations. The system can be controlled electronically from the authority headquarters in Abu Dhabi or Dubai sub-headquarters, and it doesn't require the presence of any staff at the stations. The system also means to reduce harmful interference in order to achieve the highest quality of radio services.

Qatar opens consultation on telecom sector development

Qatar's telecommunications authority ictQatar published a consultation document which assesses the sector's performance against the five main objectives of liberalization, namely to encourage competition, to increase customer benefits, to support the health of the industry, to create sustainable investments, and to encourage ubiquitous services. The purpose is to point out some of the most important issues affecting the market and telecom operators comment and share their views.

Ofcom Calls on ISPs to Advertise More Realistic Speeds

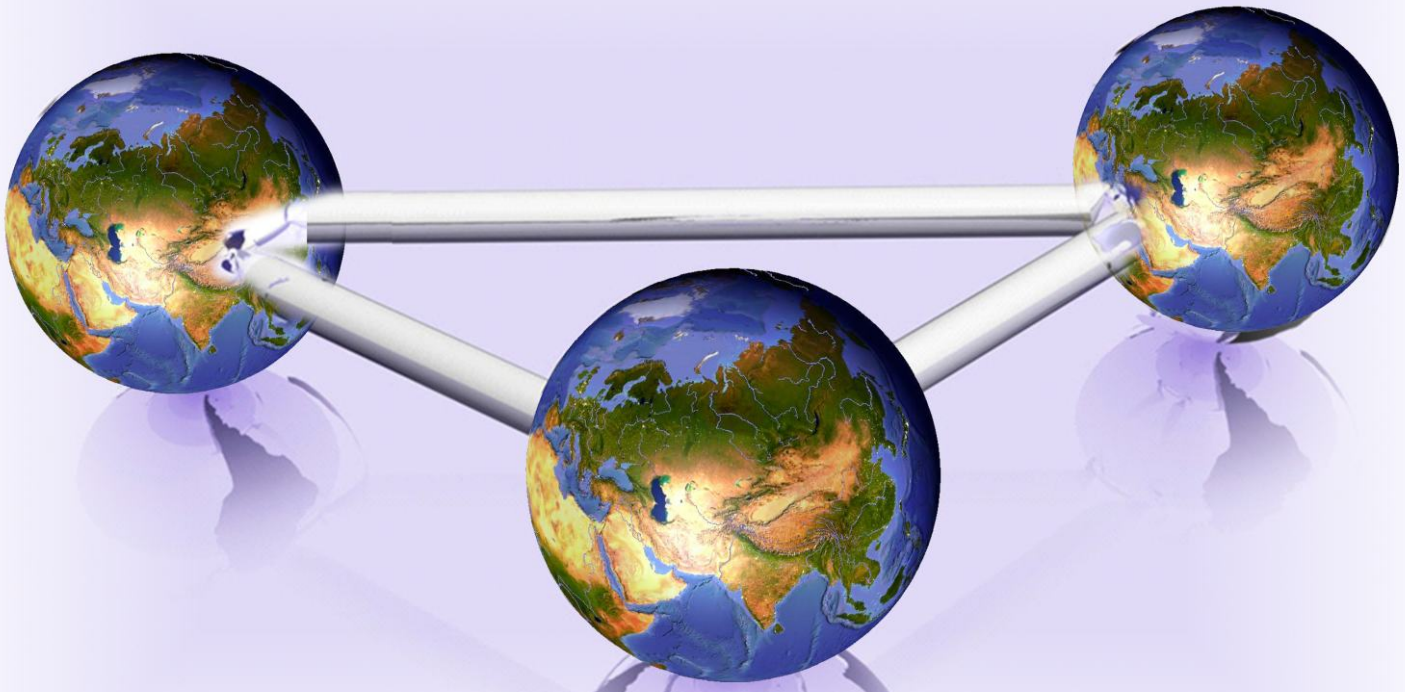
UK telecoms regulator Ofcom is to introduce a new code of practice later this year under which it hopes ISPs will be more realistic in their advertising of broadband speeds. The watchdog has released figures showing that the average advertised speed in the UK is currently 13.8Mbps, whereas the actual average speed being delivered to UK households is only 6.2Mbps. The new code will be introduced in July and ISPs will be expected to accompany any "top end" speed boasts with a typical speeds range (TSR) of at least equal prominence.

ictQATAR Launches Qatar Domains Registry

The Internet is one-step closer to being more accessible to speakers of Arabic in Qatar and around the world with the official launch of the Qatar Domains Registry (QDR), which was officially unveiled to the public this evening by the Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR). QDR, which will be managed by ictQATAR will begin making Qatar-specific Internet domain names in Arabic and Latin-scripts available to select organizations in Qatar immediately, with general domains available to the public by August of 2011.

Romania Consults on Awarding of Mobile Broadband Licenses

Romania's telecommunications authority Ancom opened a public consultation concerning the principles, terms and procedure for the awarding of the rights to use the spectrum in the 2500 2690 MHz and 790 - 862 MHz frequency bands. The consultation's aim is to establish the strategy on the introduction of broadband mobile communications in the above-mentioned two frequency bands. Considering that the broadband mobile communications services are also provided in the 900, 1800 and 2100 MHz bands, one of the objectives under this strategy is to ensure equitable spectrum portfolios for all the operators holding usage rights in the frequency bands intended for the provision of broadband communications networks and services.



A SNAPSHOT OF REGULATORY ACTIVITIES IN SAMENA REGION

In this aggressive telecom market, the intangible market share is more than just a goal as it's a business essential. The Operators are spending a large chunk of investment to win new customers and spending even more to maintain the customers. In today's world telecom is one of the basic necessity not only for general public but also for business community in particular. All consumers want it to be just reliable and ubiquitous. The customers want reliability, consistency and filling their needs. The price is generally of no big consequence to the consumer as he or she is willing to pay premium price for their preferred satisfactory service. That is why customers not always go after the supplier with the lowest price. The customer always prefers a boutique provider as he or she believes that they are paying the low price and enjoying full service with peace of mind and most importantly everything under one roof. Customers are very touchy about the tariff plans and bundling of services. They are also conscious about protection of their personal information and most significantly they feel high about their service provider if it is engaged in community services. Due to breaking of the monopolies of telecom Operators, competition between Operators become more and more intense and in SAMENA region Operators are dedicatedly enhancing the quality and level of their customer services centers. Towards the end of last two decades, the potential of telecommunication Operators to focal point effectively on the customer has demonstrated to be one of the most aggressive issues and consequently customer satisfaction has been set be as an important Key Performance Indicator (KPI). Inadequacy to spot and resolve customer service issues leads to loss of market share, loss of repute, and eventually loss of profits, resulting in the worst of all, every lost customer is a new customer for the competitor.

Country-wise Regulatory Activities

Afghanistan

During the reporting month telecom industry saw a wave of jubilance in Afghan government circles on winning the Mobile Industry's most prestigious annual Government Leadership GSMA Award in 'Mobile World Congress 2011' held in Barcelona. This award recognizes the immense achievements made by the Afghan Regulator in its commitment to the widespread expansion of mobile communications. In just ten years the Afghan government has taken a country with no mobile infrastructure to a point where 80% of the population is now covered by telecommunications networks. It has licensed four GSM operators and has created an environment of healthy, transparent competition and low-cost, broad accessibility.

Algeria

The Regulator withdrew the operating licenses of 34 internet service providers (ISPs) with immediate effect due to nonpayment of their annual license fees or 'number management service charges'. The Regulator said that the license cancellations do not affect its right to pursue legal action and recover the debts in court. The 34 companies stripped of their licenses include: Algerian Wireless Network, Alonecom, AT & IT, Call Contact, Computing Communication and Control Engineering, Compass, Daya Net, DZ Line, Fatna Industrial Equipment Rental and Public Works, Net-Force, ICM Global Net, Informatique Generation Technique (IGT), Houa Imtihan, Internet Way, IPAT, International Satellite Communication Algeria (ISCA), Kourty Electronique, Korea Telecom Algerie, Mediterranean Network, Medianet, MTEL, Net Access, Nomad Phone, Phonitel Technology, Provider Internet Services (PIS), RT Bouyema.com, Solution Electronique Informatique (SEI), Servnet, Skynet Works, Visonet, WebPhone Network and Wont.

Bahrain

The Regulator announced a new consultation initiative with the formation of the Radiocommunications Consultative Committee (RCC). The RCC will principally focus towards the users of equipment and radio frequency spectrum which are subject to the Telecommunications Law; however the committee will also monitor international activities and discuss other issues of importance to the sector. Establishing RCC was one of the regulator's objectives to facilitate the effectiveness of the management of the radio frequency spectrum used for telecommunications services in Bahrain. Regulator has issued invitations to fixed link licensees and service providers as well as equipment suppliers and installers to attend this meeting on March 27, 2011 with the hope that RCC will become an essential part of the regulatory framework within Bahrain.

Bangladesh

During the month the Regulator on the recommendation of Domestic Network Coordination Committee and the Ministry of Posts & Telecommunications issued a guideline on 'Rural Telecommunication Network Development & Utilization'. In its latest release the regulator reported the total number of mobile phone subscribers in Bangladesh grew to 70.34 million in January from 68.65 million in December 2010. The Regulator is also in process of revising the existing Telecom Policy. On the recommendation of the Regulator government is planning to reduce SIM taxes and plans to rationalize fees for 2G license renewal and spectrum charges in the upcoming budget.

Egypt

During the reporting month according to figures released by the Regulator, the number of mobile telephone users in the country grew 25% to 66.87 million as of November from a year earlier. In November 2009, Egypt's three mobile operators, Etisalat Egypt, MobiNil and Vodafone Egypt, had 53.682 million subscribers.

Iraq

The Regulator fined Kuwait-based telecoms provider Zain US$262 million for licensing agreement violations. The Regulator's board of trustees told that Zain had the right to appeal the decision to the commission's board of appeal. Zain used 5 million SIM cards and airdropped them to the market without the knowledge or permission of the regulator. The Zain plans to appeal the government fine for breaching its license.

Jordan

The regulator awarded M/s Omnitele a contract for radio frequency management in Jordan. As a part of the project, Omnitele will create new regulation for the liberalization of a number of licensed bands in the radio spectrum. This will include a structure for frequency license renewal fees and possible compensation, a re-farming process for some of the bands, and procedures for the grant of new spectrum licenses. As the regulator recognized the need to adopt frequency management framework to the changes visible in the industry, especially in the area of frequency license valuation, it wanted to involve one of the top telecommunications consultancies in the development process.

Lebanon

The Regulator under the Capacity Building Project intends to apply part of the proceeds of this grant to payments under the contract for "Building Capacity of the TRA on

Spectrum Policy and ICT Convergence Regulatory Issues. The services include building the knowledge of the staff in technical aspects of innovations and international best practices regarding regulation. The Regulator also issued a regulatory framework that outlined the requirements for all newly constructed buildings where exploitation area exceeds 800 square meters or have at least 3 floors to provide special provisions to carry Broadband Network inside the building. In another development the Lebanese internet service providers (ISPs) Cedarcom and Broadband Plus have filed a joint lawsuit against the Ministry of Telecommunications (MoT) for 'disallowing' them from providing DSL broadband services. The lawsuit, filed on February 7, asserts that the MoT violated a memorandum of understanding between the ministry, national PTO Ogero Telecom, and a number of private sector internet providers. Cedarcom and Broadband Plus complain that they set up equipment in preparation for the introduction of DSL in Lebanon in 2007, only to find that the government prevented them from providing the service, leading to the loss of 'millions of dollars'. The ADSL services were officially inaugurated in Lebanon over Ogero's network in May 2007, with ISPs and Data Service Providers (DSPs) permitted to offer services via wholesale agreements with the incumbent telco. Cedarcom provides broadband services using fixed/wireless platforms including iBurst and pre-WiMAX technology, but also previously announced plans to roll out extensive ADSL services.

Libya

During the reporting month the state-owned broadband provider Libya Telecom & Technology (LTT) confirmed that it has launched Libya's third mobile phone network, under the brand name LibyaPhone Mobile. Although no precise rollout details have been confirmed by the operator, it claims that its network has capacity for around 100,000 customers during the first phase of its operations. Further, LibyaPhone Mobile has pledged to extend coverage to areas under-served by fellow state-owned cellcos Libyana and Al Madar Telecomm Company.

Morocco

According to a recent study by the Regulator, the country's penetration rose by 20 points. The market also saw 26.36% mobile customer growth, reaching 31.98 million at the end of December, up from 25.31 million. The fastest quarter of year-on-year customer growth was the third, at 9.41% followed by the first at 6.46%. Maroc Telecom had a 52.81% share at the end of 2010, versus 33.74% for Medi Telecom and 13.45% for Wana Corporate. In December 2009, they were 60.34, 37.27 and 2.39% respectively. Prepaid accounts for 96.16% of the market. The fixed market saw 6.63% customer growth to 3.75 million, with penetration reaching 11.9%. Residential lines represent 85.37%, business 10.75% and payphones 3.88%. Wana Corporate has a 66.72% share of Morocco's fixed line market, followed by Maroc Telecom (32.83%) and Medi Telecom (0.45%). The internet market, including fixed and mobile, grew by 57.29% to 1.87 million customers. Internet penetration, which stood at 0.38% in 2004, was 5.92% in 2010. Maroc Telecom has a 56% internet market share, Wana Corporate 29.86% and Medi Telecom 14%.

Nepal

The Regulator announced plans to cut the interconnection tariff of international call termination with a hope that the measure will reduce use of illegal VoIP services. Four telcos currently own VoIP licenses. The Regulator also issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Selection of an Operator to Establish Common Service Center for the Provision of Internet and Internet Telephony Services in the Selected VDCs of Nepal. A sub-committee of Public Accounts Committee (PAC) under Legislature Parliament has decided to carry out a detailed study of the frequency distribution and irregularities in Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP).

Oman

The Regulator granted Sama Telecoms the country's third telecom license. Under the first grade license, Sama may set up and operate a system to provide general international telecoms services for 15 years. State-controlled Omantel lost its monopoly in 2006, with the launch of Nawras, a unit of Qtel.

Pakistan

The Regulator and the telecom sector are optimistic about the success of 3G (third generation) telecommunication services in Pakistan, despite resistance from some telecom operators. Experts from the telecom sector are hopeful that 3G will be as successful, when it replaces the current 2G system as 2G was when it superseded the 1G analogue system. The Regulator also conducted two successful raids against illegal call termination setups. These raids were conducted on the basis of information obtained through PTA traffic monitoring facility which detects grey/illegal traffic. The regulator's statistics showed that 3.59 million new mobile phone subscriptions reported in 1HFY11 against 3.24 million connections added by the cellular phone operators in 1HFY10. The overall cellular phone users' base has increased to reach 102.777 million by December 2010 whereas it stood at 97.57 million by December 2009. Similarly, the teledensity of the cellular phone has surged to 61.7% by the end of first half of the current fiscal year 2010-11 versus 59.60% reported in the last year by the end of same month. In the 1HFY09, cellular firms have added only 0.581 connections on their network as against massive subscriber growth of 11.2 million in 1HFY08. Telecom analysts termed the market performance in terms of subscribers' growth as tremendous because of better-than-expected increase in overall base by five operators. Cellular phone operators' strategies to enhance customers with revamped brands have been successful as it attracted new and existing mobile phone users to obtain day and night lowest calls offers on similar network (on-net).

Palestine

During the reporting month the Ministry of Telecom and Information Technology granted two radio communications in UHF Band to local companies.

Qatar: Due to proactive regulatory approach Qatar has become one of the first countries to apply to the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) for creation of an Arabic Domain Name. Qatar-specific Arabic Domain Names will be available starting in March 2011, with government entities and registered trademark holders being given priority during the registration launch phases.

Saudi Arabia

During the month two largest mobile phone operators by subscribers STC and Mobily are considering selling off a large stake in a projected US$2.5 billion merged cell tower business. State-owned market leader STC owns and operates around 11,000 towers, whilst second placed operator Mobily has around 3,500. It is believed that the two companies intend to merge their collective assets, before selling off a large stake in the combined business to an outside investor. By spinning off their cell tower holdings into an independent business the two operators may be able to attract rival carriers as tenants, and boost earnings.

Sri Lanka

The Regulator set a levy on outgoing international calls of LKR 2 per minute. The amendment also allows operators to terminate international calls on pre assigned PSTN numbers. The termination levies have been set at US$ 3 per number per month and US$ 1.50 per minute for every minute over 1,500 minutes a month. The regulator also released the first set of download speeds of 3G mobile broadband for the month of January 2011.To collect random speed test samples, four remote tests were conducted. The tests were conducted for a period of twenty four hours in each location and readings from 09:00 to 00:00 were taken for the purposes of publishing. The test results obtained from the automated system have shown a significant download speed improvement in all three services. The peak time speeds in mobile broadband services have risen by over 80% since the beginning of this benchmarking process initiated by the TRC.

Syria

The auction for a third mobile network operating license in Syria will begin in April with a starting bid of EUR90 million (US$122.2 million). At the end of last year the Syrian authorities set April 12, 2011 as date to auction the country's third mobile license. At the time the Syrian communications and technology minister, added that to facilitate the process an independent regulator would be set up ahead of the auction. However, a separate report suggested that the five firms (Turkcell, France Telecom, Saudi Telecom Company, Etisalat and Qtel) pre-qualified to bid for the license have reacted strongly to the Syrian government's call that they provide revenue projections for their prospective businesses there. In a meeting in Damascus in 4Q10, Syrian telecom officials came under scrutiny concerning 'sections in the tender where investors see risk, and vagueness about certain clauses.'

Tunisia

During the reporting period the Tunisia government has suspended plans to launch an IPO for state-owned Tunisie Telecom after protests against the planned sale. Secretary of State for Communication Technologies said a final decision would be taken in consultation with Tunisia's strategic partners within days over whether to go ahead with the IPO. Tunisia's government holds a 65% stake in Tunisie Telecom, with the rest held jointly by Dubai's Tecom Investments and Dubai Investment Group. In yet another development attributing it to the circumstances Tunisia is living through, the new Secretary of State for ICT during a press conference announced the suspension of the privatization of the incumbent telephone operator TT (Tunisie Télécom). The government has decided the outright cancellation of any intention to privatize TT.

Turkey

The Regulator issued a draft regulation on "Standards for Determination of Exposure Limit Values, Control and Supervision for Electronic Communication Devices Regulations". The Regulations earlier issued on May 16, 2009 have been abolished and shall construe as reference to this Regulation. The Regulator also issued an amendment to the Private Radio System Regulation.

UAE

The regulator, Ministry of Interior (MOI) and the National World Summit of Information Society (WSIS) Committee, through the Higher Child Protection Committee (HCPC), celebrated the global Safer Internet Day, a global initiative organized by Insafe each year in February to promote safer and more responsible use of online technology, especially amongst the young around the world.

TOP TECHNOLOGY UPDATES

ARM Launches New Cortex-R5 and R7 CPUs

ARM announced the launch of the ARM Cortex-R5 MPCore and the Cortex-R7 MPCore processors for use in 3G and 4G mobile devices. The new processors allow the firm's partners to 'future-proof their designs based on a single consistent architecture'. The Cortex-R5 and the Cortex-R7 may be implemented as single or dual-core processors while the Cortex-R7 features SMP multicore technology with new real-time enhancements which the firm said enables performance and energy efficiency to be optimized for the intended applications. These two advanced processors bring together more than 20 years of ARM expertise in low-power design with a host of new high-performance and real-time technologies. IMAQLIQ and Opera Software Bring Latest browsing technology to IPTV

IMAQLIQ, a Russian developer of telecommunications equipment with a broad international footprint, will integrate Opera on its line of devices for interactive TV. Technology, coupled with strong industry partnerships, makes the Opera Devices Software Development Kit (SDK) the ideal solution for IPTV deployments. It is easy to integrate with streaming media players, conditional access systems, and personal video recorders/applications and can be used to create and render middleware portals. The SDK provides maximum performance on the platform is optimized for hardware and supports the latest standards. The collaboration allows customers to have access to the most on-demand applications such as YouTube, vkontakte and Google.

DoCoMo Tests LTE-Advanced; Targets 1Gbps Download Speeds

NTT DoCoMo has announced that it has got licensed to begin pilot trails of 4G LTE-Advanced technology, which promises to provide data rates much faster than currently possible with LTE. The operator aims to launch field experiments to evaluate LTE-Advanced in real radio environments in the cities of Yokosuka and Sagamihara in Kanagawa region. DoCoMo has already confirmed that in trials of the 'true' 4G platform in its R&D centre, it achieved transmission rates of around 1Gbps (downlink) and 200Mbps (uplink). DoCoMo expects to have 1,000 base stations operational by the end of the financial year. The company is confident of having 35,000 4G base stations and coverage of 70% by the end of March 2015.

Blackberry Playbook to Use WiMAX, LTE and HSPA

Research in Motion announced that it will utilize even more high speed networks in the second quarter of 2011 and will have direct support for LTE and HSPA + networks later on, the year. The Blackberry Playbook is launching soon, although it is the WiFi only model with no cellular connection to the internet. So if the basic wireless model is not to your liking of the users, Sprint will be releasing a WiMAX model during the summer time. Evolved High Speed Packet Access (HSPA+) is used by AT&T and T-Mobile in the United States and Rogers and Telus in Canada. Long Term Evolution (LTE) is the new standard that Verizon Wireless, among others, has started to deploy. Both standards are designed to carry increased amounts of data needed for video streaming and large file downloads at improved speeds. Telecom Engineering USA Unveils WDM Lite PON System

Telecom Engineering has unveiled its WDM Lite PON system. The WDM-PON system is designed to give last-mile fiber providers a highly secure and flexible alternative to GPON and EPON. Using Telecom Engineering's WDM technology, up to 44 channels are multiplexed onto a fiber trunk. One channel is dropped at each customer location using a one- or two-fiber drop cable and Telecom Engineering ONU. Each channel at each customer location can support 100 Mbps, Gigabit Ethernet (GbE), OC-48, 10GbE, OC-192, 40-Gbps, or 100-Gbps traffic. This gives services providers significant flexibility and bandwidth expansion capacity, enabling them to maximize their revenues without having to overbuild their network.

High-Gain Linear Amplifier Module Enables WiMAX to Coexist

Avago Technologies has announced a linear power amplifier module for mobile and fixed wireless data WiMAX applications that include WiFi and other cellular radios. The MGA-22103 module features an aggressive gain shape that limits the noise injected into radio receivers co-located in the same device, enabling WiMAX to coexist with WiFi, GPS, PCS and other radios in handsets, tablets, USB dongles and other portable electronics. The MGA-22103 linear power amplifier is cost-effective and meets industry-standard Spectral Emission Mask (SEM) tests operating at 3.3 V. Covering a frequency range of 2.5 to 2.7 GHz, the power amplifier includes fully integrated RF matching. These features are integrated in a compact 3 mm by 3 mm by 1 mm package, allowing designers to achieve standards-compliant performance in space-constrained designs.

Telekom Continues UMTS Network Upgrade in Rural Areas

Telekom Deutschland has upgraded its UMTS network in the Rathmansdorf district of Windorf and Sindelsdorf to HSPA+. This enables inhabitants of the district to access internet via mobile at maximum download speeds up to 21 Mbps. The upgrade is part of the operator's strategy to offer broadband services in German rural areas where currently no broadband is available.

T-Mobile Pulls Plug on Sidekick, to Rebuild with Android, 4G

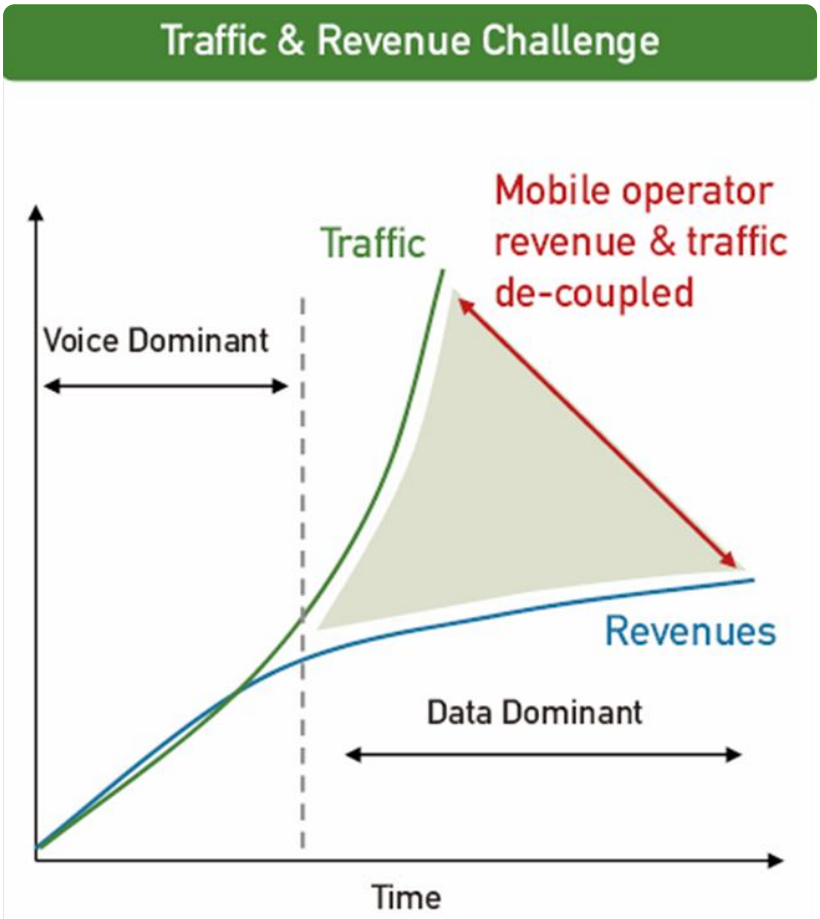
T-Mobile has announced that it is shutting down its Sidekick online contacts and data storage service on May 31, in a move to revamp the seminal device with Android software later this year. The carrier said it will give customers several options to transfer stored data before the cut-off date, marking the official end of a particularly ill-fated stumbling block. In the meantime, the company is planning to release a new Android-based line of Sidekick phones later this spring, rebuilding the device with 4G speeds, using HSPA-plus technology. An early registration page indicates the new Sidekick may be launching soon.

OPERATORS APPROACH TOWARDS CUSTOMER DEMANDS

Operators are looking at new revenue streams, which are increasingly being driven by value added services, content delivery, ranging from streaming video to other data intensive content media. Mobile TV is readily available in only about ten markets of the region, even where there are no 3G networks currently operating; Mobile TV offerings are available, for example, in Pakistan. So, as it appears, the availability and growth of content can be encourages and supported by deploying high speed broadband access networks.

Mobile phone users in the SAMENA region are fond of exploring the world of music the most. Mobile content has gained high popularity including mobile TV and mobile video. Content download such as music download is popular in UAE as compared to SMS or voice-based IVR. Recently, the UAE came top of the 13 markets surveyed with regard to consuming mobile TV and video. This indicates the growing demands in terms of services that operators have been offering. The survey, conducted by research agency Vanson Bourne for Motorola Mobility's 2010 Media Engagement Barometer, looked at 13 markets: Australia, China, France, Germany, Japan, Nordics, North America, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Turkey, the UAE and the UK.

With the emerging broadband business case in the region, areas that of greater importance such as broadband access technologies, pricing, local content availability, regulatory trends and support, operators achievements etc needs to be highlighted. Broadband industry stake holders need to share their experiences in a converged manner to give the industry a boost in the region. This will help industry players in understanding the emerging areas and trends thus highlighting potential opportunities that will result in increased revenues and profits. NGMN deployment has been very positive for the operators; that indeed has provided the room for the operators to develop and strategize their goals efficiently. The main strengths for driving NGMN growth includes:



Innovations in existing services

Text messaging is already growing and will continue to grow, there are other options like laptop cards, games, wallpapers, VOD, music downloads and multimedia bundles; which still has a great potential to grow.

Better market segmentation, targeting young customers

That approach would be more data oriented than the rest, a big chunk of share would be text based though. Young users are always enthusiastic and always willing to spend money on costly data services.

Latest mobile devices

Thanks to blackberry and i-phone for fostering the demand generation. As we all know that blackberry has emerged as anywhere, anytime access to incoming emails especially in growing business needs. On the other hand i-phone is a multi media player with its attractive HTML web browsing experience on touch screen decked with captivating applications that has certainly captured interests of young generation which has consequently encouraged content developers to test their creativity.

Open access and mobile operator –content provider models

There are high chances of having a diversity of business models in future. There are going to be more innovations in technology and mobile devices which means there are going to be a healthy collaboration between content providers and the operators, new platforms and more ground-breaking applications.

But it is expected that operators will continue to maintain a balance of control over the value proposition which very important for their credibility to capture more value rather than being a medium for data traffic.

Social media and multi-media applications

Interaction over the social networks like facebook, linkedIn and Twitter via mobiles is getting more common while other multi-media applications like games, mobile TV, e-books, video downloads are probably the most promising driver for growth.

Mr. Bocar A. BA
President
SAMENA Telecommunication Council

THE RISE OF SERVICE-BASED COMPETITION

When Virgin Mobile launched commercial services in Qatar last May, it sparked intense interest in Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MVNOs) coming to the MENA region. An MVNO is a company that provides mobile phone services without having its own radio spectrum or physical network; in essence, it resells other operator's wireless services under its own brand name. Virgin's venture of reselling Qtel services was by no means the region's first exposure to this business; a few MVNOs have preceded it, mainly in Oman, where Renna and Friendi have been providing prepaid mobile services since mid-2009. The emergence of Virgin Mobile Qatar, however, marked a significant industry development for two main reasons. First, Virgin is no ordinary reseller. This is a popular global brand and a proven MVNO player, having been the world's first MVNO in the UK and successfully expanding into America, Asia, and Africa ever since. Second, and perhaps more important to the MENA region, Virgin's arrival underscores a strategic move by Qtel to boost its number of subscribers, especially among the youth group.

With mobile phone penetration sky-high and market saturation a de-facto reality across the MENA region, incumbent mobile operators face a landscape where subscriber growth has become an elusive target. In Qatar, the situation is especially pronounced; mobile penetration rate is approaching 300% and the country ranks as the most penetrated in the region. That leaves incumbent operators wondering what they can do to attract new customers. In what is called multi-branding or outsourced growth strategies, mobile operators increasingly are experimenting with secondary brands to target specific niche segments, such as the youth or ethnic minorities, leaving their main brand to focus on the mass market in which they are already established. These niche segments typically crave customized value-propositions and have strong brand affinities. However, they are usually poorly-served by the standard offerings that prevail in the mass market. One option for such multi-branding is to create a greenfield, home-grown brand to pursue subscribers in target segments. But market evidence shows that creating and building new brands for niche segments is risky and the pay-off uncertain. A second option is to follow Qtel's example and form hosting deals with selected MVNOs to leverage their established brand equities in order to find pockets of incremental subscriber growth in saturated markets.

Indeed, MVNOs represent a viable and strategically significant way for mobile network operators (MNOs) to grow their subscriber base. They can create value to hosting MNOs on four major fronts. First, MVNOs promise to bring a new revenue stream to MNOs, thanks to the network capacity they lease on a wholesale basis. This positions MNOs to use more efficiently their excess network capacity and ultimately to garner a better return on their network investment. Second, MVNOs enable host operators to penetrate niche segments that they are otherwise struggling to tap into, due to lack of established brand equity or highly targeted offerings. Third, depending on the nature of their business agreement with the host operator, MVNOs can remove all or part of the market risk from MNOs, including subscriber acquisition costs and bad debt, which could make accessing niche segments through MVNOs more profitable than from targeting them directly. Fourth, MVNOs do not usually compete with MNOs offerings, but complement them. This has not always been the case. In Europe, for example, Telmore took significant market share from TDC, its host operator, before the former was ultimately absorbed by the latter. But, lessons learned from both sides throughout the last decade likely will ensure this does not happen again and the relationship between MVNOs and host MNOs is complementary and value-creating for both sides. In addition, MNOs also have significant control over the MVNOs, through wholesale and hosting agreements, and can intervene if there are signs that the relationship is evolving unfavourably for them.

MVNOs also offer significant potential benefits to the markets they serve. MVNOs typically arrive at the scene of a new market with a targeted value proposition that builds on significant research and deep understanding of the customer behavior of the segments they are pursuing. By doing so, they are able to promise and deliver services that strongly match the needs of their target segments, whether these needs are about greater service accessibility, inexpensive pricing plans, international calling deals, or innovative content and applications. Furthermore, MVNOs typically have proved to be very customer friendly and laser focused on improving the end-user experience. This focus has the side benefit of raising the bar of customer service and support in the entire market, and has pushed incumbents to invest in improving their own customer service capabilities. This service-based competition, which emphasizes service innovation and customer service excellence, is generally preferred by all stakeholders, as it is unlike price-based competition, which could destroy aggregate market value, or infrastructure-based competition, which could lead to over-capacity.

On a worldwide basis, we have seen several brand-based MVNO models succeed. Not all follow the same blueprint for success, but rather are defined by their target segments. One model centers on mass distribution and relies on reaching new subscribers through discount mass retailers such as Aldi, Carrefour, Migros, Tesco, and most recently Wal-Mart in the US. Another successful model targets smaller niche segments with stronger brand and lifestyle affinities, the champion of this model being Virgin Mobile. The recently launched Red Bull Mobile also falls under this model. Closer to home, the MVNO wave in the MENA region has only just begun. With mobile saturation an established reality in many MENA markets, we expect more MVNO-related strategic alliances in the future as operators seek to sign on new subscribers. This is a positive evolution that bodes well for the entire regional telecom scene, as both operators and consumers alike stand to reap numerous benefits.

Hilal Halaoui, Partner and
Adel Belcaid, Senior Associate
Booz & Company

THE INCREASING VALUE OF TECHNOLOGY THAT WORKS

As consumers become ever more reliant smart and savvy on technology as a means to live, work and play, they increasingly need technology to work well, and to work when they need it to work. Every day, the tech user community is becoming more dependent on digital devices, not just as the foundation of their lifestyles as consumers, but increasingly, as a key element to maintaining their businesses and the productivity of their employees.

Additionally, since technology business dependency proliferates around the globe, users' personal needs (e.g., entertainment and home management) have become interwoven with their business needs (e.g., their communications, operational and emergency requirements).

Usage of intelligent computing devices such as the personal computer (PC) and smartphone has become part of the fabric of our daily lives, both personally and professionally. Meanwhile, with the seemingly daily improvement and proliferation of new devices and new ways to interact with technology, the digital ecosystem is rapidly evolving.

> *"The market for improving the customer experience through a more sophisticated technology interactions is growing for communications service providers"*

The market for improving the customer experience through a more sophisticated technology interactions is growing for communications service providers.

This is what reveals a comprehensive research program conducted by AMOS (Accenture Mobility Operated Services), a business group dedicated to help both mobile operators and enterprises to easily and cost-effectively develop and deploy new, revenue-generating mobile services to their customers.

Consumer's perspectives on digital lifestyle

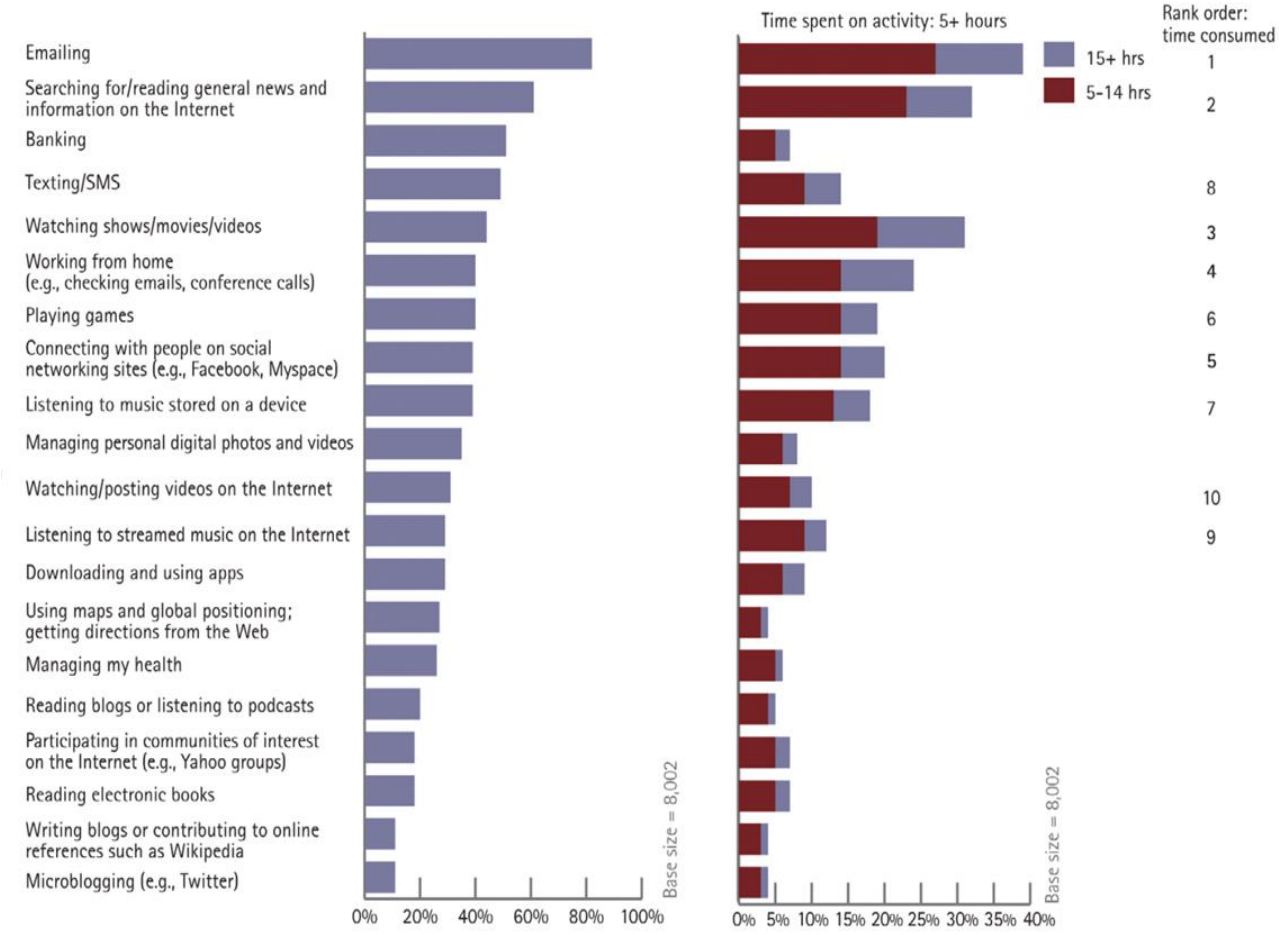
The AMOS research reveals a number of intriguing findings:

1. 64% of customers stop doing business with a provider after a bad customer service experience.
2. Consumers are engaged in an increasingly wide range of technology based activities [Figure 1].
3. Web-enabled mobile phone ownership has more than tripled in two years, and mobile phones have replaced computers as consumers' most important technology.

> *"Tech users need industrialized support across a highly diverse and rapidly changing technology base"*

4. Customer loyalty is increasingly linked to three Service driver/dimensions
   - Quality: The recognition on the part of the service provider that the consumer's individual technology ecosystem is highly personal to them, that it represents a considerable investment, and that it contains highly personalized content that is of importance.
   - Flexibility: The service provider's ability to provide breadth of coverage embracing the problems that customers are most likely to encounter.
   - Simplicity: The ability to keep the user's technology "up and running" without great deals of personal effort by the end user.

In the absence of collective standardization, consumers are making individual decisions regarding the technologies that deliver value for their needs. This trend is resulting in highly differentiated, ever-evolving versions of the digital "ecosystem," with evolving permutations. In short, serving the needs of the "digital ecosystem" really means interacting effectively with thousands of different technical configurations each of which is changing frequently.



Potential opportunity for an array of providers

In a global scenario with a wide array of different technologies and provider, no particular type of technology sector has a competitive advantage yet.

Companies able to capture the needs of consumers with a common platform, excellent service and consistent innovation will be the ones best positioned to achieve high performance.

Topping the list of providers who fit that description are service providers and OEMs (not counting retailers, who already aggressively position these types of services at point of sale). The companies listed above, share the same motivations to improve customer's experience, including:

- Establishing a basis for which to upsell and cross-sell;
- Improving customer satisfaction;
- Reducing customer turnover, or churn

Challenges to improving and monetizing technology services

There is no doubt that providing and monetizing new technology services in a way that meets the expectations of today's growing market of intensive technology users is a challenging goal. It involves dealing with complexities in several areas: the marketplace environment, the breadth of services required, highly demanding customer expectations, and a lack of definition from customers regarding who they expect to provide the service.

Given the findings of research, Operators must focus to launch new premium technology services, according to the following key considerations:

- Addressing today's digital ecosystem requires a systems integration mindset.
- For higher value, technology services should be specialized for the customer. Providers need to create "the right services" that meet customers' expectations and establishes customer loyalty.
- Client interactions with service should be easy, centralized and without complexity.
- Technology services should be capable of becoming a brand differentiator by creating an enhanced customer experience.

For today's end users, technology is not a "nice to have," but a "must have" – a crucial element for managing their lives and their businesses.

Accenture reveals that especially service providers have a unique opportunity to step into the customer's home (digital home) as a means of pursuing profitable growth. This means that now, more than ever, they need to rethink their business models, internal organizations, processes and systems for helping the consumer navigating the technical complexities of the digital home. Part of the answer to helping consumers maneuver through this complexity lies in new ways to make devices and networking easier to use and manage.

Accenture

Arianespace Soyuz to Launch 18 Globalstar Satellites by September

Globalstar will launch its next six satellites in May, along with two additional launches carrying six satellites in August and September respectively. Arianespace, which is under contract to launch 24 of Globalstar's second-generation satellites, will launch the missions on its Soyuz launch vehicle from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. Globalstar will integrate the 24 Arianespace-launched satellites with the eight first-generation satellites that were launched in 2007. The new satellites are designed to support Globalstar's current lineup of voice, duplex and simplex data products and services, including the company's lineup of Spot retail consumer products. "We continue to validate our on-orbit acceptance tests and operating procedures for each of the new spacecraft (launched in October). Once the testing phase is complete, we will be able to confirm a more specific scheduled launch date," Globalstar President of Global Operations Tony Navarra said in a statement.

Abu Dhabi to Launch First Satellite Next Month

Abu Dhabi's YahSat will send two hybrid satellites into the orbit during the year, which will serve the military as well as civilian and commercial purposes. The first satellite Y1A is scheduled to be launched as early as end March. Al Yahsat Satellite Communications Company which is part of Mubadala Development Company announced its plans last year to launch two hybrid satellites designed to provide communication facilities to commercial and governmental users. The ambitious satellite communications programme that would cost US$1.6 billion is set to open new avenues of commercial opportunities in the country. EADS Astrium has been awarded a contract to handle the space segment of the two satellites, while Thales Alenia Space will manage the ground segment.

Greece Consults on Licensing Mobile Satellite Services

Greece's telecommunication authority EETT has launched a public consultation to determine the licensing framework of the provision of mobile satellite services in the 1980-2010 ??z and 2170-2200 MHz bands by Inmarsat Ventures and Solaris Mobile and the calculation of the corresponding applicable fees. These two companies were selected in May 2009 by the European Commission to provide mobile satellite services across Europe.

Comtech Eyes Ku-band Hardware as Growth Avenue

Satellite communications ground equipment provider Comtech Telecommunications has said it hopes to leverage its contract with mobile satellite services provider Thuraya for L-band maritime satellite communications gear to enter the market for higher-speed Ku-band maritime equipment. Comtech Chief Executive Fred Kornberg said the company already has in-house the components of a product line to provide VSAT hardware for maritime satellite links, but has hesitated to enter the market in the past because of the tough competition. Thuraya and Comtech in March 2010 agreed to jointly develop a broadband transceiver for maritime applications.

ROAMING NEWS

Sprint Launches International 4G Roaming

Sprint, has launched international 4G roaming plans in Jamaica and Taiwan. Sprint customers can subscribe to this service for US$ 14.99 a day when they travel to other countries. "Customers traveling to Jamaica and Taiwan will be able to access the Digicel and Global Mobile 4G networks for mobile downloads video-chat capabilities and turbo-charged Web browsing at 4G speeds." The customers will also be able to roam on these additional networks using Sprint's 3G/4G U600 USB 4G enabled mobile broadband modem.

T-Mobile, AT&T Deadlock on 3G Data Roaming Deal

AT&T Mobility and T-Mobile USA have reached an impasse in their negotiations for a 3G data roaming agreement, prompting T-Mobile to reiterate its call for the FCC to mandate data roaming. T-Mobile in November claimed AT&T had rejected its offer to enter into a 3G data roaming agreement. In a filing with the FCC, AT&T promptly responded to the allegation, noting that "we will be more than happy to amend our current roaming agreement to include 3G roaming." But it seems T-Mobile and AT&T have been unable to sort out the details in the intervening months.

Telcel Unveils Lower Interconnection Fee Proposals

Mexico's dominant mobile network operator Telcel has proposed a raft of new, lower fees that its rivals pay for connecting to its network. With a number of operators having long complained to competition authorities about the charges levied by Telcel, arguing that such fees have made it more difficult for them to make a profit, the proposals are in some way a response to such criticism. Published in the country's Official Gazette at the end of last week, Telcel has noted that the new interconnection fees are offered to all Mexico-based fixed line and mobile voice providers, as well as those in the long-distance sector. Those operators that do accept the new fee structure, it is understood, will be required to adhere to the terms of the new agreement for the next four years. The report also cites an unnamed source from Telcel's legal department that claimed eight cable companies and five fixed line providers have already agreed to the new interconnection fees.

Vodafone Unveils New Data Roaming Tariffs for Business Users

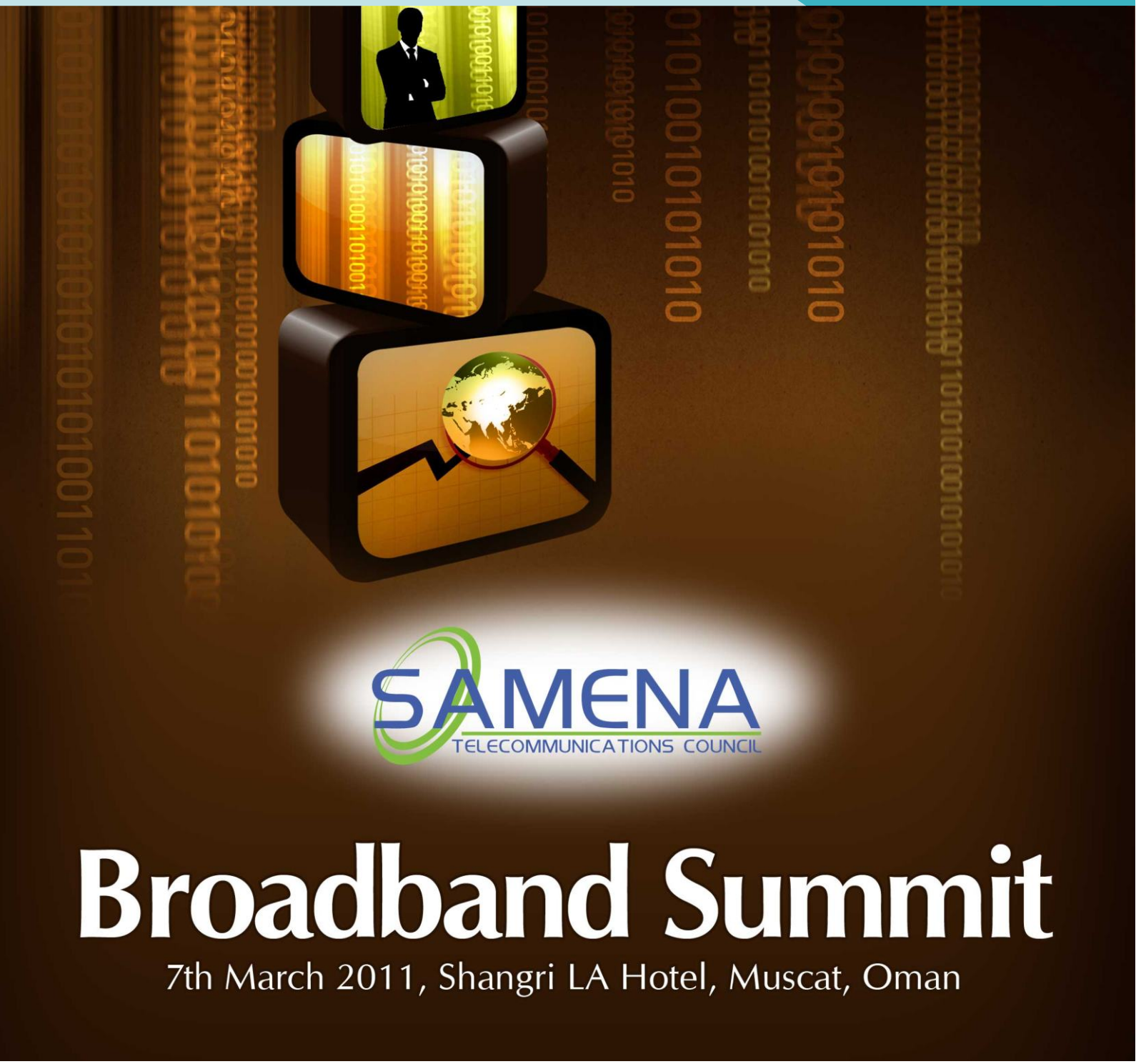
Vodafone Germany has announced new business tariff plans called Professional Plus and Mobile Connect, developed specifically for the overseas data communications needs of business customers. These overseas tariffs cover two zones: Europe and the Rest of the World. The Professional Plus tariffs are targeted at business customers looking to use their smartphones across Europe. The Professional Plus XXL and Premium tariffs offer national voice and data flat-rates plus 60 or 120 inclusive minutes for calls from Germany to Europe, plus 60 or 120 inclusive minutes for use when in Europe. The tariff cost between EUR 84.95 and EUR 109.95 per month with a 24-month contract. The Mobile Connect tariffs are targeted at customers who want to add international mobile data services to their existing mobile contract. Mobile Connect Europe covers Germany and Europe, with Mobile Connect World covering Germany and the rest of the world.

Orange, Deutsche Telekom to Cooperate in M2M, WiFi Roaming

France Telecom-Orange and Deutsche Telekom have agreed to explore potential areas of cooperation in several fields, the first of which are an M2M cooperation agreement and a joint project on improving Wi-Fi user experience while roaming. The M2M agreement will initially cover France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg, and is aimed at increasing service quality and standards for cross-border M2M communications. The operators aim to include all of their affiliated mobile network operators and to expand globally through partnerships with others. It is intended to be the foundation of a seamless network offering reliable cross-border services anywhere in the world, facilitating the development of e-energy, e-health, connected home and connected car services. The Wi-Fi project will see the two groups jointly explore solutions to boost customer experience and roaming conditions on each others' Wi-Fi networks.

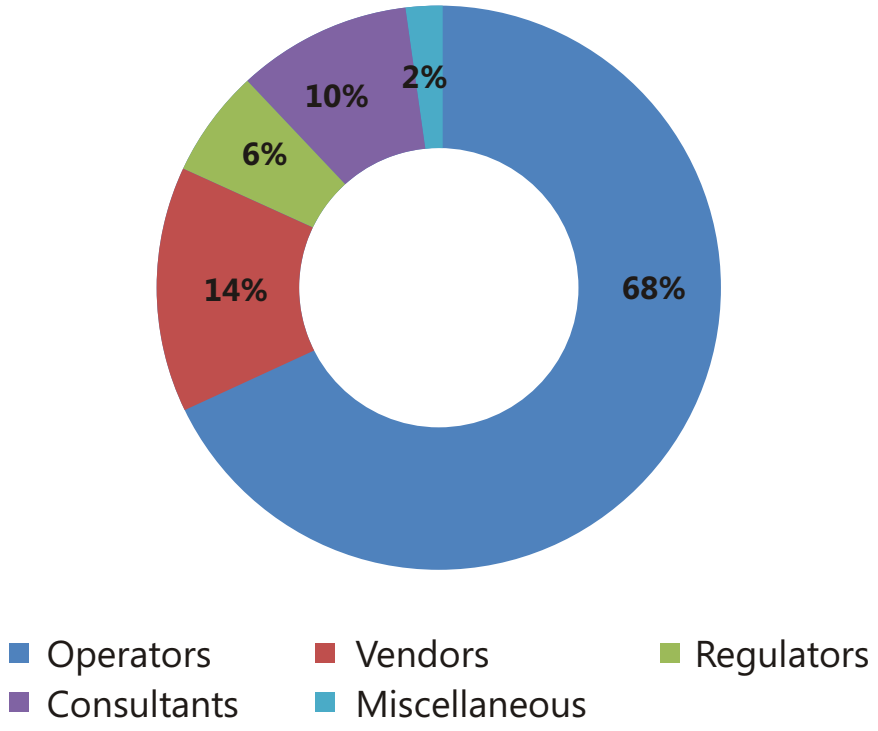
Russian Top Three Mobile Operators Fined For Expensive Roaming

The Federal Antimonopoly Service has fined Russia's top three largest mobile operators (MTS, VimpelCom and MegaFon) for excessive roaming rates. The total fine sum is about 38.1 million ruble. MTS has been fined for 21,892 million rubles, VimpelCom — for 12,018 million rubles and MegaFon for 4,194 million rubles. According to the RIAN, "The Federal Antimonopoly Service started antimonopoly proceedings for roaming services overpricing in early 2010 saying the companies abused their dominant position on the market".



SAMENA Telecommunications Council has been the key figure in the development and promotion of telecoms & ICT, with special emphasis on the key enabler of ICT i.e. broadband, and its growth across the region. The Council since its inception has been playing a strategic role and has come up with various initiatives to help bring the social and economic benefits of telecoms & ICT to the public of this region. The Broadband Summit was held under the patronage of Dr. Mohammed Al-Wahaibi, Undersecretary for Communications, Ministry of Transport and Communications Oman, on March 7th in Oman and discussed some of the significant issues linked to the future of broadband in the emerging markets. Some of the predominantly significant issues of growth, strategy, spectrum management, and digital dividend, among others were also discussed during the Summit. The event's aim was to shift the onus on the industry stakeholders to progressively work towards understanding the dynamics of today's lifestyle and the demands by the consumer market and what path does the industry needs to take further by addressing vital issues such as the demand and supply stimulations of broadband in the region, NGN challenge, broadband growth and strategy, infrastructure sharing, and above all the digital dividend and spectrum management. The Summit was organized with support from Omantel, Nawras, Accenture, Telcordia, and Teralight among others.

Broadband Summit Oman 2011 Participants



Commenting on the sponsorship of the event, Senior Manager Events and Sponsorship at Omantel, Hamdan Al Harasi, said: "Omantel is always keen to support major events hosted here in the Sultanate - and especially those so closely related to our business. Keynote speakers from around the region shared business insights, growth strategies, broadband prospects, market experiences, various other important topics. More than 130 participants coming from a number of organizations in the SAMENA region and other parts of the world attended the event. CEOs and telecommunications experts from leading telecommunication organizations were also present at the occasion.

Dr. Mohammed Al-Wahaibi, in his opening speech said: "I strongly believe that there is no perfect answer or a perfect recipe for rollout of national broadband network that a country can copy and apply successfully." Further emphasizing the importance of national broadband infrastructure, he added that: "the debate around NBN rollout is ongoing around the world, and while there are many success stories from governments around the world, a country should find its own formula based on its market structure, social settings, economic indicators, and the intensity and the geographic spread of its population."

Mr. Thomas Wilson, CEO & Executive Managing Director of SAMENA Telecommunications Council said at the occasion, "Until a few years ago, broadband was something that every one talked about but no one really, truly knew or understood how seriously the subject was to be approached. It all was new and, later, created tough expectations" He added that Broadband is a subject area, with its own semantic and operational characteristics, that SAMENA is working hard to develop its program around. The future has only begun to dawn in, for the strong demand for broadband in its purest sense still is growing on a non-linear basis and that it is allowing for the materialization of new revenue streams.

Omantel's CEO, Dr. Amer Al-Rawas while sharing his thought about "public private partnership options and way forward" said: "operators' role is to build out nationwide infrastructure and provide relevant broadband service to the market." Mr. Hadi Raad, Principal at Booz & Co. discussed broadband growth strategies in light of Digitizing MENA economies. While talking about key communication trends that are gaining pace globally, said: "A new perspective of convergence across industries is breaking traditional silos allowing consumers to benefit from digitization and Digital applications are driving transformation in traditional sectors achieving significant economic benefits"

SAMENA region broadband market needs a coordinated effort by industry stakeholders to drive the broadband market up to the next level. There are certain micro drivers of the broadband industry mainly driven by regulators, operators, vendors, and content providers and aggregators. Regulators can speed up the play by means of drivers such as license cost and conditions, technology-neutrality and local loop unbundling. Operators can revise tariffs to a more acceptable level thus allowing more segments to get into the broadband arena. Vendors community needs to come up with more resilient and cost effective platforms, including access, core, backhaul and metro networks, as well as CPE's. Mr. Stewart White, MESA Head of Telecoms at KPMG shared his thoughts about "Policy & Regulatory framework for NGN investment in the SAMENA Region", emphasized the need for need for constructive engagement' to build trust between all stakeholders policy makers, regulators and operators as well as customers.

Following the emerging trends in the broadband policies and technologies alike, its continuously increasing contribution to the telecoms & ICT landscape of SAMENA region, SAMENA is committed to bring innovative and telecommunications technologies and policies , and congenial policies to this region. In our efforts to continue facilitating collaboration and knowledge sharing in the region, our upcoming events are:

Beyond Connectivity 2011
25th 27th April 2011
The Yas Hotel, Abu Dhab

Mobile Broadband Summit 2011
24th & 25th May 2011
Serena Hotel, Islamabad, Pakistan

Convergence to Qatar 2011
18th & 19thOctober 2011
Qatar

Interview of
Mr. Bocar A. BA,
President of SAMENA Telecommunications Council
for "Beyond Connectivity 2011"
25th, 26th & 27th April 2011, The Yas Hotel, Abu Dhabi

By and large, the telecoms landscape in SAMENA region substantiate that digital technology provides one of the few opportunities for telcos to obtain additional spectrum to tape into the market more effectively. Digital technology utilizes the spectrum more efficiently as compared to analogue, thus after switchover there will be more spectrum available for new services such as wireless broadband, Mobile TV and High Definition Television (HDTV). The inevitable evolution of broadband technology has lead to an alarming increase in global convergence and hence been extremely beneficial with respect to the growing content industry in the region. This has; however, opened up the doors to certain issues that include DRM, IP, and data security issues among others. We need to take actions to quieten down such threats and ensuring that security and integrity of the content is taken as one of the major concerns. Within the SAMENA region at large, the focus toward ICT is no different; both companies and governments are showing an increasingly willingness to invest in and expand high speed connectivity in their markets. This will result in a supportive arena for providing content to the end users.

What is the significance of public private partnership in developing national broadband networks (NBN)?

IT appears that the growing demand for wireless broadband access will lead to greater investments in infrastructure by operators. This trend will increase sunk costs by operators to provide wireless broadband to a wider geographic area. The costs for developing infrastructure for wireless broadband technology is lower compared to traditional method of delivering broadband. This trend will also help narrow the digital divide in developing countries. In SAMENA region there has been less attention towards universal services in terms of broadband. For the purpose of development in broadband Internet and ICT, governments and other stake holders are expected to shift their roles due to the increased focus on applications, content, e- Health, e- Learning and e-Government, as well as establishing national broadband networks. Therefore, the significance of public private partnership and universal services obligations, in providing broadband access has increased a lot. Q: How do you look at the Mergers & Acquisitions in the region, keeping in view the evolving telecommunications landscape in the region?
A: M&A activities were shaking up the ranking order lately. Last year we saw some very aggressive M&A activities in the world. Some telcos were buying for rising technology while others are buying for rising in the global ranking. Today, carriers are in the quest for innovative business model that helps them to triumph over the challenges posed by the rising Opex and Capex. Adjusting their current business model to optimize the Opex and Capex, carriers need to understand the emerging areas and trends thus highlighting potential opportunities that will result in increased revenues and profits. However with M&A, the potential markets can be effectively presented with the ICTs which in turn, may substantially facilitate optimal utilization of capital resources and would help to set up new, more advanced passive infrastructure. This becomes more important with the increasingly important role of mobile content in revenues generations. Broadband is considered to be a good driver for revenues. Fixed line operators are already facing the issues of declining ARPU for their voice services, and thus need to add value to the services they offer.

What is your view of the growing demand for IPTV and other similar services as result of the digital switch over?

With the emergence of digital dividend in the region, new services will likely develop in the broadcasting and wireless broadband domains. This will support access to high-speed broadband services in less urbanized areas, speed up the growth of mobile broadband by the population and pave the way for mobile content. Consumers would be the main beneficiaries, particularly in the remote areas, for they would get better and cheaper access to wireless broadband services, enhanced TV broadcasting services, and a potentially wide range of new innovative wireless services, like 3G mobile phones. With the digital dividend spectrum, Internet users in the SAMENA region, particularly in the remote areas, are expected to get more choice in the way they connect to the Internet.

Do you agree that different amount of spectrum be made available in different areas, such as urban and less urban areas, as result of digital switchover?

Apparently, the full potential of the digital dividend will not be available until the complete switch-over. Although, the ITU has set the end of the transition period in 2015, a number of countries are looking to switch-over earlier. It will not be easy to specify the spectrum which will be obtainable for use of services such as broadband provisioning. Likewise, factors such as topography, population density, the demand level for services, the spectrum usage in neighboring countries, will result in varying size and location in the spectrum from country to another. Also, it is up a country to determine the use of any digital dividend spectrum based on the demand level, socio economic, cultural and political considerations.

What is the potential for Satellite Broadband in the SAMENA region?

Broadband is swiftly becoming a necessity world over. Enterprise, government, military and residential users continue to demand for high-speed internet in areas where traditional broadband services (DSL, Cable, FTTX, etc) are not offered and this is where satellite broadband comes into action. Satellite, no doubt, is one of the cost effective backhaul alternative for cellular operations in areas where traditional approaches such as fiber and copper cable are not available. In the SAMENA region, where satellite broadband is growing, the demand for applications such as digital content is expected to further fuel the growth of satellite broadband. Satellite broadband appears to experience explosive growth over the next few years with services such as video-on-demand, Internet TV, data, VoIP and cellular backhaul.

What choices do we have for wireless broadband? How do you look at the emerging wireless broadband access technologies?

A: Due to the burgeoning competition, SAMENA region is very rich in terms of technologies capable of supporting advanced applications but the lake of effective measures to drive broadband, convergence and innovation has been there. Majority of the markets now have the latest telecom technologies that include EVDO, WiMAX, EDGE, FTTX, and ADSL, among others. The market still has the potential to attract investors, particularly in the broadband sector. What needs to be done is to take effective measures to take the broadband market to the next stage and to provide services capable generating more revenues. This is important because the service providers need to keep pace with the technologies being adopted worldwide and in the region as well. Though various technologies like EvDO and WiMAX have already been adopted across the large markets in South Asian but most of the cellular operators have still to move to 3G. Demand for low tariffs and maximum coverage has been constantly intensifying the competition among the operators ultimately leading to reduced ARPU, and APPU margins.

Today, it's imperative to identify the key elements that make it viable for a country to get involved in country-wide broadband availability, and usage. To me it appears that today there seems to be no stern factor as to why this region is behind in broadband proliferation. This is because we have some very good markets in terms of investments potential that makes a good case for prospective investors in the sphere of telecoms and ICT.

What could be done to facilitate the launch 4G in the region?

As we have seen, in the past few years, growth in mobile teledensity has resulted in a number of merger & acquisition in the region. It appears that the cellular operators will face more challenges in terms of the growing competition and in emerging technologies. You see, various technologies like EVDO and WiMAX have already been adopted on a larger scale to be at par with other regional players. 4G technologies appear to be somewhat pricey in terms of spectrum acquisitions, deployments and revenue generation as the deployments and network upgrades. So, subsidies are essential to facilitate the launch of 4G in the region, particularly in the remote areas where the infrastructure is limited and the cost of deployment is not economically feasible due to the possibly low ROI. It appears that that funds like universal services obligations and government grants, and collaboration in the shape of infrastructure sharing, local content developments, and partnerships, can facilitate the launch of 4G.

What prospects do you see for satellite communication in the region?

A: In fact it depends, in which segment. I think satellite, has been one of the cost effective backhaul alternative for cellular operations in areas where traditional approaches such as fiber, copper cable, and even microwave links are not a viable option. Similarly, enterprise, government, military and residential users alike continue to demand for high-speed internet in areas where traditional communication means are not available, and this is where satellite communication comes into action.

How do you look at the onset of Digitization of the Economy and the vital role of the Role of ICT?

A: ICT can be rightly considered as an vital basis for providing firsthand and most recent information for research organizations, industrial and academic researchers, governmental and non governmental agencies and for SME's and large enterprises. In addition to that, ICT is also providing an influential role of communication and has thus become an exciting part of life. The swiftly growing ICT sphere and the associated domains necessitate congenial ICT policies and regulations to help bridge the digital divide on a global scale.

What are your thoughts about the Evolution of the technology and Next Generation Networks?

A: Many markets in the SAMENA region are looking for a future-proof technology supporting mobile and fixed broadband access technologies such as FTTX and 4G/LTE. While these technologies are emerging in the region, these indeed allow the development of new revenue streams, which are increasingly being driven by content delivery ranging from streaming video to other data intensive value added services through the Triple Play and Quad Play services. However at the same time this also shifts the pivotal balance towards the infrastructure owners, such as the telecom operators and necessitate them to follow through to constantly upgrade there network and improve the quality of service.

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