

## Telecom Industry News

By: Jim Schakenbach

### Mobile World Congress 2017



It was a busy news month in telecommunications with one of the industry's largest events, Mobile World Congress ushering in the month of March. During which, advances in subscriber services, technology, and business all made the headlines. Technologically speaking, carriers and solution providers focused on improving wireless infrastructure to handle the rapidly increasing demand for connectivity in challenging environments. 5G was a hot topic, as was connecting the multitude of devices in the Internet of Things (IoT). An increased presence of connected cars and robots were smattered across the expansive the event floor, and a buzz of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning was weaved into the many discussions *Pipeline* had at the event.

The Mobile World Congress event itself was felt relatively flat. Attendance was virtually the same as the last year, which is the first year where *Pipeline* attended where this was the case. This isn't to say the event was any less important or valuable, just that it was on par with, but seemed to lack the luster and exciting growth from, previous years. This could also be a result of the GSMA, the event organizer opening up two new events - one in Singapore and and one in the US (San Francisco, CA). Both of which are relatively new and growing, attracting local attendance but perhaps at the expense of MWC in Barcelona.

### Regulatory News

In the US, the new Republican administration-controlled FCC continues to shape its evolving policy under recently-appointed chairman Ajit Pai. Last month Pai announced the commission would be more closely involved in consent decree enforcement activities and that the flurry of "midnight regulations" put into effect toward the close of the previous administration's term would be reviewed and in some cases revoked.

The FCC also took steps last month to help expand and preserve 4G LTE mobile coverage across rural America and in tribal lands by providing \$453 million in annual universal service support through the FCC's Mobility Fund Phase II for a period of ten years.

In Europe, The **Council of the European Union** announced that ambassadors of the member countries have endorsed the wholesale deal that will end the use of [roaming charges](#) in the European Union. Member states' ambassadors endorsed the deal on wholesale caps that will eliminate retail mobile roaming charges in the EU on June 15 this year.

### Enhancing the customer experience

A **J.D. Power** [study](#) released last month indicates that mobile customers with unlocked cellphones (no contracts) are more satisfied with their customer service despite increased contact from their carriers. The study reveals that as the number of customers with unlocked cellphones (phones that can be transferred to other carriers) increases, their frequency of service contacts also increases, and their satisfaction actually improves.

Another study, this one released by **Comptel Corporation**, reveals that 55 percent of mobile data users in the US and UK are eager for more personalized messages and services from their carriers. The [new report](#) highlights the opportunity carriers are missing to better monetize customers and drive additional revenue opportunities by not providing more personalized services and support.

**Procera Networks** announced in February that it is partnering with **Brocade** to produce a joint [subscriber analytics solution](#) enabling mobile operators to more accurately identify and act quickly upon application trends and activities. The joint solution combines Brocade's Envision Fabric visibility product line with Procera's eVolution Virtual Experience Probe to give mobile operators much greater visibility and real-time access to deeper network, subscriber, and traffic intelligence.

**CLX Communications** announced it is working with cloud mobile marketing platform provider **Waterfall** and **Google** to enable brands to reach mobile users with a rich, dynamic, app-like experience using [rich communication services \(RCS\) messaging](#). The partnership is part of Google's Early Access Program (EAP) which will allow brands to reach customers in new and dynamic "mobile app-like" ways directly within Android smartphones' native messaging service, providing features including suggested replies and actions, dynamic rich media, and company branding.

**Sonus** announced it is launching a [new mobility suite](#) that enables MNOs and MVNOs to improve customer experience and lower costs for voice and text services by easily offloading them from 2G/3G networks to Wi-Fi and LTE. Sonus' Wi-Fi and LTE Calling solutions integrate with the native dialer on Android devices to maximize usage and provide a seamless calling experience for subscribers. Sonus' Wi-Fi and LTE Calling extends the reach of the mobile operators' network and improves in-building coverage by routing calls over Wi-Fi or LTE/HSPA.

## The business side of things

**Verizon** announced last month that it has completed its \$1.8 billion [purchase of XO Communications' fiberoptic network business](#) as part of the company's continual plans to build and deliver next-generation networks, extending its suite of high-quality network services to its enterprise and wholesale customers. In addition, the deal will help Verizon with its plans to densify its cellular network and to deploy new 5G technologies.

That was not the only major business announcement made by **Verizon** last month. The company also announced it is [launching a business and technology venture](#) called Exponent, designed to help carriers around the world quickly deploy and launch next-generation solutions and implement digital transformation, as well as expand their Big Data and Artificial Intelligence initiatives, the Internet of Things (IoT), media services and Internet delivery platforms.

**Nokia** announced its [intention to acquire Comptel](#) and is launching a recommended cash tender offer for all the shares and option rights in Comptel. The planned acquisition is part of Nokia's strategy to build a standalone software business at scale by expanding and strengthening its software portfolio and go-to-market capabilities with additional sales capacity and a strategic partner network. Comptel would bolster Nokia's software portfolio by adding critical solutions for catalogue-driven service orchestration and fulfillment, intelligent data processing, customer engagement, and agile service monetization.

## International Update

Internationally, concerted efforts were being made all over the globe to increase service quality and reach, with high-speed, reliable voice and data communications now reaching more areas of the world than ever before.

A new report released last month by **BICS** reveals that [global data roaming has increased significantly](#) and is now available in 143 countries, up from 75 just three years ago, enabling subscribers to take advantage of high quality data services as they travel, according to annual research by BICS, a global wholesale carrier for voice, mobile data and capacity services. LTE

data roaming is now available in 75 percent of the world. The number of operators offering these services has also seen dramatic growth, increasing by over 150% in the same period.

**Quantis Global** has signed an [agreement](#) that will expand and improve its broadband service in Europe and Northern Africa using high-throughput **Intelsat SA** satellites and IntelsatOne Flex services to bring higher performing broadband services across the region. The network leverages Intelsat teleports and will serve NGOs, enterprise, embassies, the oil & gas sector, and maritime customers in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

**ICFLIX**, the leading Internet streaming service provider in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), is now doing [direct subscriber billing](#) through the Gulf's largest telecom, enabling Direct Operator Billing to customers across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia via **Saudi Telecom Company** (STC), the largest telecom operator in the Gulf.

## Technological advances

**Ruckus Wireless**, a part of **Brocade**, announced a collaboration with **Amdocs**, a provider of software and services to communications and media companies, to deliver a [customizable, managed cloud Wi-Fi service](#) to service providers. The joint offering will enable service providers to deliver Wi-Fi and LTE as managed services either as an enhancement to their current solutions or as new wireless managed services to their business customers.

**Baicells Technology** has launched the world's first real [neutral host small cell solution](#) providing a shared infrastructure for multiple mobile operators looking to increase capacity and coverage in dense areas where dedicated infrastructures may not be possible. Baicells' NeutralCell provides a shared infrastructure that can be leveraged by multiple operators and neutral host service providers, delivering what the company calls a true neutral host small cell to meet the wireless industry's growing need for robust LTE technology.

**Sercomm Corporation** announced the launch of the first [Enterprise Small Cell](#) supporting LTE-WAN Aggregation (LWA) enabling telecom service providers to reduce Internet traffic congestion by offloading cellular data traffic more seamlessly for an improved customer experience.

In-building cellular infrastructure provider **SOLID** has announced the wireless industry's first scalable, flexible, multi-operator, [multiband, vRAN signal source solution](#) that can lower on-demand capacity and coverage costs for wireless service providers. The company claims the new technology lowers cost of on-demand capacity and coverage to wireless service providers.

At Mobile World Congress, **Huawei** released LampSite 3.0 for [indoor mobile broadband](#) (MBB). By removing longstanding technical bottlenecks, this futureproof solution enables full bandwidth on multi-frequency bands and extends digital network sharing among operators. According to the company, it also supports a number of innovative technologies, including flexible multicarrier aggregation, distributed MIMO, and 256QAM, paving the way for evolution to 5G networks.

**ZTE Corporation** announced it has launched the world's first software defined networking/network function virtualization [\(SDN/NFV\) technology-based 5G RAN solution](#) to help mobile carriers accelerate network deployment and optimization and reduce overall investment cost.

**NEC** and **Netcracker** introduced a new [collaboration platform](#) that goes beyond virtualized network functions (VNF) onboarding to a digital marketplace of commercially-ready virtualized services that solve operational and monetization issues for service providers. The new platform, called Ecosystem 2.0, covers both the technical and commercial aspects of providing a large and constantly growing ecosystem library of virtualized services.

**PGI** announced the launch of its new mobile collaboration exchange enabling mobile operators to provide [HD audio conferencing](#) on any mobile LTE device anywhere in the world. The exchange enables mobile operators globally, either directly or through an IPX, to interconnect customers in conference calls and collaborations, across operator networks, while preserving HD voice quality with QoS connections.

A new collaborative connectivity solution launched this month aids MNOs in offering IoT services. **Starhome Mach** and **Stream Technologies** announced a new best-of-breed [IoT connectivity management lifecycle platform](#) that helps mobile network operators deploy and manage Internet of Things services more quickly and easily. The new solution provides MNOs with complete visibility and control of all IoT device connections, significantly strengthening their local and global competitive advantages.

## Increased safety and security

**AT&T** announced it is launching a next-gen [IP-based call routing service for 911 emergency calls](#) to provide enhanced emergency call service based on a majority of 911 calls coming from mobile devices. AT&T ESInet is a new solution the carrier is installing in Raleigh-Wake County, North Carolina that provides IP-based call routing services to 9-1-1 agencies. It will help Raleigh-Wake improve 9-1-1 reliability, enhance emergency responsiveness, and improve disaster recovery.

**Smith Micro Software** has introduced a new [white-label, cloud-based platform](#) that enables wireless carriers and cable operators to offer value-added location and device-monitoring services to corporations, enterprises, and educational institutions. Smith Micro announced the availability of SafePath Family 5.0, the newest version of its white-label cloud platform that enables carriers and cable/MSOs to provide device protection services to their mobile subscribers as a value-added service. In addition, carriers and cable operators can now leverage SafePath Fleet, Corporate and School to provide comprehensive management and monitoring services to enterprise businesses with distributed fleets and workforces, as well as to educational institutions worldwide.

Despite the availability of new and improved ways to keep [mobile devices](#) safe, many consumers still do not adequately protect their smartphones, tablets, and other mobile devices. A new report from **Allot Communications** reveals that 89 percent of consumers currently do not pay for any protection against mobile malware, 61 percent said they want and are willing to pay for protection services from their service provider.