Telecom Industry News

By: Scott St. John

This month's telecom industry news included the first 5G network for commercially available smartphones in Europe, as well as robust new partnerships driving industrial IoT development. Juniper Research shared predictions on the growth of digital content spending and on the increase in cross-border blockchain transactions. Updates on smart home and smart city advancements, VNF service deployments, and the FCC's repeal of the 2011 'rate floor' rounded out the news.

The top telecom industry news is summarized below. To view all the news as it breaks, check out *Pipeline*'s News Center or subscribe to receive our telecom industry news summary each week.

Innovation News

New collaborations and the extension of existing partnerships dominated innovation news this month. Nokia has joined the ARENA2036 research collaboration, an experimental factory project and a collective of automotive industry leaders focused on revolutionizing design of the automobile by its 150th anniversary in 2036. As the sole telecom provider, Nokia will power 4G and 5G New Radio coverage for the factory's campus. Microsoft and the BMW Group have partnered on a new initiative intended to drive open industrial IoT development and advance future Industry 4.0 solutions. The OMP is built on the Microsoft Azure Industrial IoT cloud platform.

In other partnership news, Microsoft and OpenClassrooms have launched a new educational partnership to advance the development of in-demand AI skills and bridge the talent gap in technology hiring, OpenClassrooms will lead recruitment of up to 1,000 promising candidates for the program from France, the UK, and the US. Cisco Systems, Swarm Technologies, and UTStarcom have joined the Dynamic Spectrum Alliance to advance shared spectrum sharing technologies and policies for wireless narrowband and wideband applications.

A new report from Juniper Research predicts that end users' digital content spending worldwide will triple to nearly $90 billion in the next five years. Carrier billing may account for up to one in five digital content sales by value in that time. A second report released this month focuses on blockchain transaction growth: Juniper notes that the number of cross-border transactions recorded on the blockchain will surge to 1.3 billion by 2023, a CAGR of 82 percent over the next 4 years. The value of transactions recorded on the blockchain will thus reach an unprecedented $3.4 trillion and smart contracts will be key for financial institutions seeking security.

Innovations to benefit CSP evolution and transformation also made headlines. Imagine Communications updated its ad inventory optimization platform, xG GamePlan, to ease the transition to impression-based ad buys for its global broadcaster and MVPD customers. Telco Systems has joined VMware by VeloCloud's SD-WAN ecosystem to ease VNF service deployment. As a result, service providers will be able to rapidly deploy SD-WAN services running on any hardware of their choice. In another innovation-focused partnership, Telstra and Broadpeak have together launched an innovative intelligent device detection solution to orchestrate optimizations that reduce telco and content provider costs while increasing customer QoE in video performance. The solution is called Intelligent Device Optimization (IDO). Finally, Windstream Enterprise announced that its OfficeSuite UC® skill is now certified by Amazon and published live

for Alexa, Amazon's cloud-based voice service for additional voice-activated functionality to enhance mobility and ease of use.

Network Evolution News

As ever, network evolution news focused on expansions, enhancements, optimizations, and firsts. In the UK, BT has chosen ADVA's high-capacity, future-proof Oscilloquartz synchronization technology to bring 4G coverage to previously underserved areas and begin the rollout of 5G services across the region.

In other global news, Orange Business Services has signed a five-year contract with Polynt, a leading provider of chemical composites, for a global WAN to connect 44 sites in 15 countries on four continents. The WAN will support Polynt's growth and serve as a platform for unified communications technologies.

By establishing its first Point of Presence in Malaysia, Epsilon has strengthened its global network. Now, service providers and enterprises in Malaysia can interconnect with Epsilon's global network fabric and access connectivity solutions on-demand, via Epsilon's partnership with SEAX Singapore on its Kuala Lumpur PoP.

In the US, Consolidated Communications has launched 1 Gigabit Internet speeds in its rural New York service areas. Via FTTP broadband technology, more than 30 communities now have broadband access, including 10,000 business and residential locations. Consolidated Communications has also launched its next-generation Cloud Secure solution in response to the reality that over 60 percent of small and medium businesses have experienced a security breach in the last year. Its enhancements give businesses greater bandwidth throughput and new security threat and vulnerability reviews to assess risk.

SiFi Networks plans to deliver the first privately funded open access FiberCity™ in Fullerton, California—the biggest network of its kind and the first of several cities already in line to be next. In Fullerton, the investment SiFi and Smart City Infrastructure Fund are making will deliver fiber optic infrastructure as a core utility. HomeGrid Forum declared it sees VLC (Visible Light Communication), modulated with G.hn technology, as the next major innovation in realizing the full potential of smart home and smart city development, touting the technology's low latency, low power consumption, enhanced security, and easy installation. And Juniper Research has released findings that Smart City lighting deployment will save cities up to 50 percent per light in costs by 2023. Conversion to energy-efficient LEDs and the addition of connectivity to monitor and control each individual light will contribute to the savings.

The FCC repealed a rule that passed in 2011 aimed at limiting universal service support by rural carriers whose rates are below a set minimum rate. Known as the 'rate floor,' the rule—by unintended effect—would have raised local telephone rates for many rural consumers by nearly 50% by July 2019.

5G News

News of 5G advancements came in from several areas in Europe. In Switzerland, Ericsson and Swisscom switched on the first European 5G network for commercially available smartphones. The partners had prepared in advance by having the component parts in place, so the launch, which took place on April 17, depended on the issuance of a commercial license. A1 and Nokia have expanded their existing partnership for deployment of next-generation 5G mobile communications in Austria, building on their successful past roll-outs of 3G, 4G/LTE, and the country's largest fiber-optic network.

Stateside, AT&T has launched mobile 5G in areas of seven additional cities, including Austin, Los Angeles, Nashville, Orlando, San Diego, San Francisco, and San Jose. These cities bring the total number of US cities with mobile 5G from AT&T to 19 since the carrier launched service last December.

In the southern hemisphere, ANTEL and Nokia completed the first 5G call on a commercial network in Latin America, conducting the call on the 28 GHz frequency band using a VR sports application called "Penalty Kick."

And, with the transition to 5G coming ever closer, mobile operators preparing to deploy 5G networks discussed the potential for cloud gaming to account for 25 to 50 percent of 5G traffic by 2022, given recent trends, at the 2019 Openwave Mobility Mobile Video Industry Council Livecast this month.

Satellite News

This month, GL Communications released its new mTOP Test Platform to help service providers monitor, analyze, troubleshoot, and manage satellite networks. TIM Brasil has chosen Gilat's satellite backhaul solution to enable 4G services to currently unserved areas in addition to expanding cellular connections in the agribusiness IoT market in Brazil.

IoT News

Advancements and developments toward Industry 4.0 made news this month. Ericsson has launched Industry Connect, a purpose-built wireless connectivity solution for factories, warehouses, and more—to advance Industry 4.0 development through secure coverage with high device density and predictable latency. In related Industry 4.0 and next-generation Wi-Fi news, Wireless Broadband Alliance and Mettis Aerospace have announced the first Wi-Fi 6 Industrial Enterprise and IoT Trial. Mettis will work with WBA members to test several Wi-Fi 6 use cases for the aerospace and defense industry at its 27-acre UK facility in the West Midlands to advance the use of AR, real-time equipment monitoring, and other applications.

Broadband Forum hosted its third annual USP Plugfest in early April, which tested new functionalities and highlighted increased robustness in the rapidly proliferating number of connected and smart home devices on (and coming soon) to the market.

Security News

In cybersecurity news, Orange Cyberdefense and Gatewatcher have signed the first strategic partnership between service providers with French National Cybersecurity Agency (ANSSI) accreditation. Gatewatcher Trackwatch probes will be integrated into Orange Cyberdefense's monitoring services to help customers protect, detect, and react to cyberattacks.