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OSS NewsWatch for March, 2008

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In only the third month of the year, news in the telecom world is offering plenty of food for thought. Yahoo! is suddenly in turmoil due to Microsoft's proposal for a takeover, and other companies are stepping out of the woodwork to offer possible solutions to the issue. At the same time, yet another lawsuit has come up that may force everyone to take a hard look at the state of patent laws and the validity of intellectual property firms. Consumers have also succeeded in winning a skirmish against telemarketing. Many things have already occurred in 2008 that seem to be precursors for major change and I, for one, am definitely looking forward to seeing how they pan out in the next several months. Here's your NewsWatch for March.

In times like these, one can't help but wonder about the validity of patent laws. Are they doing what they're supposed to? Is there some way that they could better define the creations they are in place to protect? After seeing all the patent suits between companies like RIM and NTP, or between Verizon and Vonage, we have once again to look at yet another suit, this time against major company Cisco. Network-1 Security Solutions, a company that acquires and licenses intellectual property (Does this sound familiar? It should to anyone that followed the RIM/NTP case.) is now suing Cisco, along with Foundry Networks, Extreme Networks, and 3Com for an infringement on the "Remote Power Patent," no. 6, 218, 930. Said patent has to do with technologies that are used in equipment complying with the IEEE 802.3af PoE standard. Network-1 is looking to receive financial reparations and royalties, plus possible other damages. It seems as though patents are becoming similar to the lottery. If an "intellectual property" company buys just the right one, they've hit the jackpot. Not only do they stand to receive significant financial payouts, they are also making a name for themselves in the press, taking revenues away from sometimes large, sometimes small companies that are actually using the patents for their intended purposes, and also setting precedents that will hurt these companies, and others like them, in the long run. I personally find that this type of suit is getting mildly tiresome. Patent reform, anyone?

It looks like Yahoo! is trying to avoid a takeover by Microsoft. Microsoft made an unsolicited offer of \$44.6 billion to Yahoo, which Yahoo rejected as being too low. Some sources have said that Yahoo! may look into a partnership with Google in order to avoid the Microsoft takeover or perhaps may try to get a larger sum from Microsoft. If they are taken over by Microsoft, it may mean a lot of money for

Yahoo! but a complete change in their business practices, which differ quite a bit from that of Microsoft. Several of Microsoft's investors seem to be opposed to the idea and Microsoft's shares have fallen in value since the offer was made. As of our publishing date, AOL has also stepped in to discuss numbers with Yahoo! to avoid a Microsoft takeover. In any case, it's looking like Yahoo! may be unable to remain an autonomous entity for much longer.

Google has pulled out of the 700 MHz race, leaving the C block licenses available to its competitors. However, even though Google didn't win the licenses, it still had somewhat of a win because of the granting of its request for an open wireless network if a \$4.6 billion reserve was met. Google's final bid came in just over that, at \$4.7 billion, so it seems that Google got what it wanted and it cost them nothing. Whichever company ends up winning the license is going to have to abide by the open wireless network rules, which will leave Google, and other companies, a chance to profit from it, no matter who owns the license.

Sonus Networks unveiled a new product at Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain, called the Centralized Call Routing Database that "answers wireless network operators demands for advanced IP solutions that drive network efficiency and streamline the rollout of network expansions," or so claims the press release. It will be deployed in CDMA and GSM-based networks, utilizes SIP technology, and is available immediately.

Digital Fairway, an On-Demand software solutions company, has announced their Provergent™ Circuit Manager as an On-Demand offering. The service promises to help customers access "an advanced Communications Asset Management software solution with minimal infrastructure expenditure or startup costs." The service is hosted in an Enterprise-class data center and will back up client data nightly to an offsite storage network.

Telecom Italia has reorganized its network infrastructure and technology in the hopes that it will "enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and make the access network even more transparent." These changes will fall under the Technology & Operations category, will be headed up by Stefano Pileri, and will be divided into four groups: Open Access, Network, Information Technology, and Technical Infrastructures.

AT&T Wireless has formed an agreement with Alcatel-Lucent where the latter would support the expansion of AT&T's UMTS/HSPA wireless network. The companies say that the agreement will allow AT&T to "expand capacity while offering sophisticated next-generation services..." This is good news for Alcatel-Lucent, which started its relationship with AT&T per another agreement in 2004.

LapGreen, a company that offers telecom services in Uganda, Rwanda, Ivory Coast, and Niger, has chosen Lifetree Convergence Limited, a software company headquartered in Gurgaon-India, as a technology partner for its networks. The decision was made after researching at twelve different software vendors. Lifetree's applications will first be deployed at Uganda Telecom Limited in Uganda.

The Commerce and Entertainment division at Amdocs took an opportunity at Mobile World Congress to introduce the Search and Digital Advertising solution, a new

platform for mobile service providers that will offer personal advertising to the end user as a part of Amdocs Customer Experience Systems (CES.) It "integrates the Amdocs Search and Digital Advertising solution with the mobile commerce solutions of Amdocs Qpass to offer service providers new business models and revenue streams, such as ad-sponsored content." "Combining our solutions into one ecosystem helps service providers offer a more cohesive and personalized experience for their customers without heavy investments in negotiating digital commerce relationships," said Charles Born, vice president of corporate communications for Amdocs, in a press release.

Neural Technologies, a fraud and risk management solutions company, along with T-Systems North America, have been contracted by T-Mobile USA for the Minotaur™ risk management tool. "T-Mobile will use the fraud management solution to automate many manual processes with state-of-the-art detection methods to react even quicker to potential fraud events," says the press release. According to Scott Hines, VP of Sales, Industry Line Telecommunications at T-Systems North America, Minotaur™ is scalable to all levels of systems. Hopefully, an implementation such as this will help keep costs, and anxiety levels, down for T-Mobile customers.

Congress has finally made the Do Not Call list permanent. Telephone consumers had to previously renew their wishes to avoid telemarketers every four years but, as of February, 2008, that is no longer the case. Let me be the first to cheer. Hurrah!

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