

# Pipeline

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[www.pipelinepub.com](http://www.pipelinepub.com) Volume 4, Issue 5

## OSS NewsWatch for October

by Alana Grelyak

Another month has passed and we are already nearing the end of 2007, which still seems like it just began. Bundle packages are growing, prices are dropping, and companies are merging. Here is your October issue of NewsWatch, where you can read on to find out more about all of the above.

Swedish company TerraNet has developed a peer-to-peer calling system that works between mobile phones without the need of a central tower. The phones transmit to other phones up to a half-mile away. However, if there are many phones in the same area, they can network off of each other, making their calling range far larger. TerraNet has recently begun testing the system and is mostly targeting it toward undeveloped countries and desert areas that don't have cell phone service. What's really grand about this idea is that the service between phones is completely free. What could this mean for mobile phone carriers? If TerraNet's technology catches on (and they already have backing from phone manufacturer Ericsson), it may mean some serious trouble, if not the possibility of extinction entirely.

As usual, the iPhone has made the news again. Apple dropped the price of the iPhone to \$399, which is a \$200 savings from its original sale price. Customers who bought the gadget in its first month of sales are now feeling a bit miffed at their own eagerness to own the iPhone, although the price drop has only increased sales by up to 200%. Apple has already hit the 1 million mark in unit sales well before their expected end of September projection. Apple has also announced their very first Wi-Fi capable iPod, called the "Touch." Touch users will be able to purchase new songs away from their laptops and desktops.

Canadian wireless provider Rogers Wireless has introduced a service that allows subscribers to have two phone numbers but only one handset. Customers will also have all of the features they subscribe to on their primary line available to their second line at no extra cost. If this type of service gets picked up by more mobile carriers, customers will be able to carry only one handset for both business and personal use.

NTP, who famously sued RIM in 2006 for a patent infringement relating to BlackBerry software (and won a sum of \$612.5 million), has now filed a patent-infringement suit against Verizon Wireless, Sprint Nextel Corp, AT&T Inc, and T-

Mobile USA, who are, essentially, the top providers of mobile service in the United States. What are they suing for this time? Once again, it comes down to patent infringement. This time, NTP claims that the carriers have infringed on eight patents that relate to wireless e-mail.

On a similar note, Nokia is being investigated by the ITC for a possible patent infringement by its N75 3G phones. The investigation should be completed by mid-October.



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The advertisement features a woman in a red and white polka-dot tank top holding a mobile phone to her ear. The text is arranged in a vertical stack on the left side of the image, with the event title in large red letters at the top, followed by dates and location in red, and promotional details in purple. A call-to-action link is at the bottom.

The FCC has begun looking into reviewing cancellation fees that telecom and cable companies charge customers when they cancel their service. FCC Chairman Kevin Martin said that the FCC should also investigate the fees that the providers charge for the cancellation of contracts pertaining to Internet, land-lines, and cable TV. The providers argue that a cap on the fees may raise the service costs. However, in a time where customers are demanding lower prices and the rates are currently dropping in response to those demands, customers may be unlikely to sign on with a company who is raising its prices instead of cutting them.

The FCC is also cracking down on mobile 911 services. The organization has proposed a fine for Alltel, U.S. Cellular, and Sprint for failing to meet coverage requirements set by the FCC in 2005, which stated that 95 percent of the mobile networks had to be capable of carrying E911 services that revealed the location the call was coming from. The fines could total up to \$2.8 million.

In a time where bundle packages are becoming more and more popular with customers, Bell Canada is offering its Quebec customer-base a \$25 per month savings if the customers choose to add home phone service to their Bell Bundle package.

On a similar note, NTT DoCoMo, the Japanese mobile provider, is lowering its family calling plans by 50% in order to try to stay competitive. The company estimates they'll lose about 20 million yen with the deal but they hope to gain 5 million new customers. Of course, if anyone cancels the required two-year contract before it has

expired naturally, they'll get slapped with an early cancellation fee of almost 10,000 yen.

Verizon Business is currently upgrading its VoIP service to include voice e-mail, synchronized contacts and calendars, and text messaging services. The new services are available to customers who subscribe to Verizon's Hosted IP Centrex package and will be available in this fall in the US and at the end of the year internationally.

Verizon Communications is giving customers the option to lock in rates for life. If the customers are willing to commit to a two-year contract, they'll be eligible to get their DSL service for either \$14.99 or \$27.99 a month for life on Verizon's 768 kbps and 3 Mbps plans, respectively.

Google's phone number for life service called GrandCentral Communications has hit some bumps recently. The service allows customers to have a central number that controls all of their phone lines and gives them the ability to filter their incoming calls. One of Google's carrier partners (who has so far been unnamed) stopped service, causing Google to have to relocate 400 numbers, thereby negating their original idea of one number for life. Currently, Google provides the service for free.

Also in the realm of free stuff, Skype has given its paying customers a free week of service to make up for the outage, which was caused by a major Windows update. It seems to have occurred, oddly enough, when a large number of users rebooted their computers at the same time in order to implement the Windows patches.

It would appear that Comcast slapped a few wrists by cutting off services to people who were using too much bandwidth, thereby slowing down the connection rates for other users. Comcast's "unlimited" service apparently has a limit, although Comcast seems to be loath to disclose what those limitations are. Charlie Douglas, spokesman for Comcast, said that the cut-offs happen very rarely while ConsumerAffairs.com reports that hundreds of people in fifteen states have had their services cut off in the last five months.

Qwest has welcomed Stephanie G. Comfort as its new Senior VP of Corporate Strategy. Comfort previously led Qwest's investor relations program.

On a brighter note for T-Mobile, the European Commission has approved T-Mobile's takeover of Orange Netherlands, a subsidiary of France Telecom. The take-over will make T-Mobile the second largest mobile network in The Netherlands.

Korean mobile phone producer SK Telecom has announced that it will be taking a \$1 billion stake in China Unicom, giving it a 6.6% stake in the company and making it China Unicom's second largest stake-holder.

Xfone has acquired NTS Communications, Inc for \$42 million. NTS is a Texas company that provides integrated voice, data, and video solutions. Xfone hopes that the acquisition will substantially increase their U.S. presence.

Chicago, Illinois has cancelled its plans to offer a municipal Wi-Fi network. Officials

announced that Chicago would rethink its approach at getting the Wi-Fi access to the whole of the city because the current plan would use up far too much of the city's financial resources. Back to Starbucks, everyone.

Clarity has won a contract with Sri Lanka Telecom to install its new unified OSS solution, Clarity 10 (C10). "C10, the first carrier grade OSS to offer a tightly integrated provisioning, inventory, service assurance and workforce management solution on a single unified platform, will be deployed to support SLT's transition to Next Generation Networks."

A recent poll by Comptel Corporation shows that a large percentage of operators are unsure of whether or not they want to adopt an IMS architecture within the next two years. Only 32% of those polled said that they had decided on the move, while another 32% had no plans to go ahead with the move and the remainder of those polled were looking toward a two to four year or longer possibility for the move.

***If you have news you'd like to share with Pipeline, contact us at [editor@pipelinepub.com](mailto:editor@pipelinepub.com).***