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OSS NewsWatch

by Alana Grelyak

This month, the telecommunications world has made it through plenty of new product launches, lawsuits, mergers, and new leaders. Here are some of the ones we thought you should know about in your June OSS Newswatch column. For the latest in news from TMW-Nice, check out our Nice feature story.

Vonage is in the news again this month for several reasons. First of all, their request for a patent retrial in a suit brought against Vonage by Verizon has been denied by the courts. Not surprisingly, Vonage's business is falling behind because of all the tribulations brought on by the suit. All the while, cable companies like Comcast are building their subscriber bases in the VoIP market, causing Vonage to lose some major ground. However, Vonage has recently unveiled a new service that turns its customer's voice mails into text messages that can be read on mobile devices and computer screens, which could be popular with customers who are often in situations that don't allow them to access their voicemail.

Verizon Wireless is engaged in another lawsuit against "autodialer" telemarketers. Verizon filed the suit against unnamed telemarketers in New Jersey who were using an "autodialer" to make calls from specific numbers. Verizon claims that over 1 million of these illegal calls were made to its customers in the month of March.

Sprint is also involved in a law suit in a federal court in Iowa in a claim against fourteen dial-in service providers and in-state phone companies who are allegedly making deals illegally that would increase call volumes along with payments they are collecting from other carriers.

A study by a provider of client development has shown that customers who purchase bundled services are 40% less likely to seek out a new service provider. On the same token, the European Commission says that 20% of households in Europe purchase bundled packages, and 24% of households in the U.K. do the same.

Comcast has recently announced an internet connection that can deliver data 25 times faster, at 150 -mbps, than all of the currently existing cable modems. The new technology is known as "channel bonding," and it won't be widely available for several years. However, analysts predict that services like it will completely

transform the Internet in the future. Comcast is now also offering a free add-on service to their high-speed internet and digital phone subscribers. The service would allow subscribers to access email and voice messages over the web. The service would also include an interactive address book and instant messaging.

France Telecom has chosen Sonus Networks to supply the VoIP network in its global expansion.

Google may be interested in providing high-speed Internet access because the company is preparing for the federal government's \$10 billion auction in wireless services licenses.

Telnor has acquired the Denmark-based operations of Swedish company Tele2 for \$151.4 million. "[T]here is a need for a more infrastructure based approach [in Denmark], both when it comes to broadband and mobile services," said Tele2. The sale is expected to close in June.

Mitel Networks is planning to buy Inter-Tel for \$723 million in the hopes that it will double Mitel's sales.

Verizon Business has just announced its plans to buy out CyberTrust and ICSA Labs, CyberTrust's independent subsidiary, for an undisclosed sum. The deal should close within the next 3 months.

Alltel is up for grabs for a predicted \$30 billion. Interested parties include a partnership between Providence Equity Partners and The Blackstone Group, TPG Capital and Goldman Sachs, and Carlyle Group and Kohlberg Kravis Roberts.

Motorola is paying \$1.80 per share for Terayon Communications Systems, a company that makes the CherryPicker digital-video-processing system. Motorola is paying about \$140 million total.

Telecom Italia gave up control to a group of companies for the sum of \$5.58 million. Telecom Italia will now be controlled by a new company, specifically created for the job, called Telco SpA.

Vodafone Americas has relocated its corporate headquarters to Denver. The headquarters were originally in Walnut Creek, California. Only fourteen employees will be working from the new headquarters in Denver, but some of the company's research-and-development units will continue to function from California.

Sigma Systems has announced the release of 3.2 3rd Generation Broadband IP Solutions. The release is the "assembly of the industry best practice for OSS service management and relevant order management, service authorization, resource management, provisioning activation, and self-care of HSD/ISP, VoIP, and digital video services." Rick Mallon, Vice President of Product Management, said, "As the global leader in OSS service management, our solutions help operators automate operations and rapidly deploy HSD/ISP, VoIP, video and converged services over any broadband IP access network infrastructure - whether fixed or wireless."

Sigma Systems has also announced the launce of a new Voice Service Package. The package "encapsulated the voice services domain expertise and best practices that Sigma has gained from working closely with some of the world's largest communication service providers... this solution is applicable to any cable, telco or broadband IP service provider looking to offer small-to-medium business voice services."

Frontier Communications is now providing a new service that will enable customers who subscribe to its digital-calling plan to have the calls ring on both their wireless handsets and home phones simultaneously. The service costs \$10 per month.

Wal-mart is now carrying Skype airtime cards and compatible VoIP hardware products. Customers can purchase prepaid airtime cards in \$20 increments and sample three months of unlimited PC-to-Phone calling for \$8.85.

Clarity has announced Clarity 10, a product that "will be the first carrier grade OSS to offer a tightly integrated provisioning, inventory, service assurance and workforce management solution on a single unified platform." The product will be implemented by June of this year.

In the world of new appointments, Clarity has welcomed William Tickner as the Vice President, Europe & CIS. Williams plans to focus on "strengthening Clarity's strategic partnerships and business development activities to drive growth in these regions." Williams was previously the VP of Sales & Marketing with Datanomic.

AT&T CEO Ed Whitacre has announced his impending retirement and has named Randall Stephenson, the current chief operating officer, as his successor. Whitacres plans to retire this June.

If you have news you'd like to share with Pipeline, contact us at editor@pipelinepub.com.