Prepare for mobile data subscriber growth to be stalled, if in-building coverage is not addressed

By Luma Musa, Zinwave

“In a recent report, ABI forecast that by 2013 more than 67% of all handsets shipped will be 3G/3G+ capable. Growing demands for mobile data services and applications are expected to significantly help wireless operators increase average revenue per user (ARPU) and improve subscriber retention. However as the battle to retain and attract new subscribers becomes more fierce, operators are under growing pressure to not only improve the quality and capacity of their 3G networks but to also ensure a good return on investment on network infrastructure.

In mid 2008, In-Stat cited indoor coverage as one of the biggest challenges facing wireless subscribers and warned operators that success of 3G services, and hence revenues will be limited until the in-building coverage issue is properly addressed. The firm pointed towards smaller and less powerful in-building wireless systems in public spaces, such as microcells, as a way to enable carriers to provide better in-door coverage without making huge capital investments.

Reliance on mobile devices as a business tool for corporate and enterprises is rising, and putting more and more pressure on operators to provide ubiquitous coverage for wireless services whether indoors or out. One example of this can be seen through the recent forecast from Gartner that in North America the number of enterprise mobile phones will overtake the number of fixed access lines, and desktop phones by 2011. In bustling city centres, networks are fast reaching breaking point with too many subscribers placing demands at any given time, and users are becoming increasingly frustrated with reduced data rates and loss of signals caused by obstructions by large buildings. Gartner recommends for enterprises to increase coverage for mobile phones through distributed antenna systems (DAS), repeaters, microcells and wireless LANs.

There are multiple competing technologies designed to address the demand for wireless data and Mobile Broadband, however with so much uncertainly in the market over what technology to support from UMTS to Wi-Fi, or WiMAX etc, how can wireless operators possibly protect new investments in network infrastructure whilst simultaneously addressing end user needs? For example technologies such as femtocells are expected to offer huge potential in this area but are severely limited in that they are only optimised for 3G and are also reliant on subscribers to dig deep into their pockets.

Active distributed antenna systems (DAS) are forecast to have the most significant impact on in-building wireless. In the current uncertain economic climates, operators are far better off focussing on improving in-building coverage by investing in service-independent active DAS to help future proof their investments in new infrastructure and ensure increased coverage and capacity of their networks for today with 2G and 3G, and for tomorrow with 4G and LTE and beyond.

Active wideband DAS is the only solution on the market today capable of providing simultaneous distribution inside buildings for any number or combination of wireless services, independent of frequency, technology, or protocol. Users can therefore be guaranteed improved indoor coverage (whether in public or work spaces), and have the ubiquity and continuity of service connectivity that they desire, whatever wireless technology is used to provide them with it."

About Zinwave

Zinwave is a company at the forefront of wireless technology development, pioneering a new approach to in-building unified wireless infrastructure. With unique patented technologies drawn from world-leading research groups at Cambridge University and University College London, Zinwave was founded in 2002 and is today operated by a management team with extensive experience of international telecoms markets. The company has developed a Wideband Distributed Antenna System that addresses the challenges of providing continuous radio coverage inside buildings for simultaneous services with the same infrastructure and components.

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