



Integration demands force vendors to rethink strategies

Operator demands are changing vendors' strategies in the telecoms IT sector. The much tighter integration between components required to deliver services over legacy and IP networks is making single-product companies consider expanding their portfolios. The trend is evident in Apertio's recently announced acquisition of Berlin-based Netzwert, a privately held vendor that specializes in policy-driven AAA software.

"The acquisition is a perfect fit for Apertio's consolidated customer-profile database, because access to the customer profile in real time and AAA policy functions are the cornerstones for new-generation IP services and need to work very closely together," says Paul Magelli, CEO and founder of consolidated-customer-database vendor Apertio.

He adds that Netzwert's bootstrapping server function (BSF) would also be an asset, since it allows for the preliminary authentication of customers when

a call or session is initiated. BSF provides a foundation for subsequent levels of security and thereby controls access to content and is part of the 3GPP specification for digital-rights management. Magelli says operators have identified the integration of such functions as vital to the viability of services such as mobile television, which encompasses a wide range of content and subscription offers with varying degrees of service quality.

Apertio is not alone in looking to bind other service elements into its core product offering, however. In a recent discussion with *3GWB*, Dan Geiger, Kabira's director of telecoms markets, hinted that the road map for the company's new convergent charging platform might include other elements closely related to charging functions (*3GWB*, 10 Oct, 2007). The need to reduce mediation among functions such as customer profiling, AAA and charging is pushing many other independent software vendors down the same path.

Magelli also says the search for cost savings over legacy systems is driving sales of telecoms IT systems much more strongly than ever. He adds that software originally developed for next-generation architectures, such as IMS, is finding traction among operators looking for cost savings while they move to all-IP networks, embrace fixed/mobile convergence and roll out new services, such as mobile TV.

Each of the company's customers, most of which are major operators, has a convergence strategy, and many are migrating to, or already have, all-IP networks, he says. "The result is the need for greater capacity, the means to converge customer experience across disparate networks and the ability to consolidate different platforms," he said. "I think interest in IMS is slowing down everywhere. Yes, it will have a role to play eventually, but I think openness will become more important in the long term."