3G Wireless Broadband

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CORE NETWORKS

T-Mobile consolidates customer data

T-Mobile says it is laboratory-testing a consolidated HLR platform that will compile customer data and service profiles for 37 million subscribers on the operator's networks in Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic. Completion of the system is scheduled for end-2007, with a pilot planned for end-2007 to early 2008.

"Our legacy hardware in Europe is 15 years old, so we had to do something of this kind," said Uwe Janssen, executive vice president of core-network engineering at T-Mobile. Although widely regarded as a prerequisite for IMS, the move to a consolidated subscriber database was not indicative of an early migration to IMS by T-Mobile in Europe, Janssen said.

T-Mobile USA, which is deciding whether to undertake a similar project, is more likely to make an early move to IMS, Janssen said. "There's no question that they'll take the technology," he said. "It's just a question of who will supply it. T-Mobile USA used to be seven different networks, which they've consolidated, so that is more of a driver for them to go fast towards IMS."

And a request for proposals has been initiated by T-Mobile in the UK, he said.

There had previously been no place in the network where the operator could have a consolidated view of its customer data, said Peter Brune, vice president of innovation, strategy and architecture at T-Mobile. "We have a lot of information on our customers, but it is not optimized for reuse," he said. "Each system holds valuable customer information, but with silos, we cannot reuse this data. We store one and the same data several times over."

The T-Mobile implementation uses Apertio's One-NDS equipment. Apertio says an operator with 25 million subscribers and running 10 legacy vendor applications could expect to see a return on investment of 210% over three years, compared with ongoing legacy expenditure. It would also gain by bringing new services to market, said Mark Trawicki, Apertio's T-Mobile account director.

According to Apertio, the move will significantly reduce the physical footprint required for T-Mobile's core network, cutting the number of sites requiring support from 11 to three, with associated savings in cost and maintenance.

The three-site architecture requires a complex IP backbone, Brune said. The need for real-time access to customer data means that critical applications require a minimum response time of 25 milliseconds, requiring transmission lines with a latency of less than 10 milliseconds.