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Sprint Teams With ALU, Ericsson, Samsung To Improve Service

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Sprint has awarded contracts to Alcatel-Lucent, Ericsson and Samsung to bring Network Vision to life. The companies will implement multimode technology to enhance service coverage, quality and speed create network flexibility, reduce operating costs and improve environmental sustainability. The vendors will deploy state-of-the-art technology expected to bring Sprint customers an overall enhanced network experience and deliver financial value to the carrier.

Improving the customer experience business and consumer is the motivating force behind these network improvements," said Dan Hesse, Sprint CEO, in a statement. We are very pleased with the results of our process which selected these three world-class partners. Each company realized the network proposal process was highly competitive, and each responded with innovative, cost-effective solutions. Network Vision builds on our legacy of wireless innovation and represents the next step in the evolution of our networks to best meet unprecedented growth in mobility services. We are well-positioned to take advantage of new technology, chipsets, devices and applications. Working with these three partners, we expect to deliver to our customers the most cutting-edge network capabilities available today and in the future."

Alcatel-Lucent, Ericsson and Samsung will install new network equipment and software that brings together multiple spectrum bands, or airwaves, on a single, multimode base station. The base stations will allow for the flexibility to offer new technologies using any of the 800MHz, 1.9GHz or 2.5GHz bands, as well as other spectrum bands. Sprint and the three companies expect to finalize the implementation schedule and begin the first stages of deployment in 2011. Completion of Network Vision across the Sprint network is expected to take from three to five years.

In addition to implementing multimode base stations, the Sprint Network Vision plan encompasses next-generation push-to-talk (PTT) with broadband capabilities and the integration of multimode chipsets into smartphones, tablets and other broadband devices, including machine-to-machine (M2M) capabilities.

The new vision is getting generally positive reviews from analysts, including Jan Dawson of Ovum.

Sprint faces several major challenges at present, among them: dealing with the complexity of running multiple disparate networks, lower profitability than major rivals, lack of clarity about future network roadmaps, and smaller scale,” Dawson said. While this announcement and the strategy behind it won’t solve all of Sprint’s problems, it will go a long way towards dealing with the multiple-network issue and will also help to improve Sprint’s financial performance and competitive positioning. Specifically, phasing out iDEN over the next few years and migrating current users to CDMA will both reduce network costs significantly and allow Sprint to offer a more competitive, unified device portfolio to all of its customers. The iDEN network and the associated customers have become something of a millstone around Sprints neck in recent years, and finally having a roadmap for solving that problem is a big step forward.

In addition, it importantly opens the door to deploying LTE in the coming years on Sprint’s own network, which would allow Sprint to bring its 4G strategy back in house and eliminate the uncertainty and lack of control associated with its dependence on Clearwire’s WiMAX rollout,” Dawson added.

This is a very bold move,” said Berge Ayvazian, senior consultant, Heavy Reading. Sprint was first with an all-digital wireless network; the first to upgrade to EVDO; and, more recently, the first to broadly offer 4G services. Sprint is once again first to deploy a common converged mobile network that will strengthen its 3G services; enhance its 4G technology options; and continue delivering the industrys leading push-to-talk offering.”

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