

VAS to be sold during 'idle' moments

A Russian mobile operator is aiming to generate revenue via the deployment of a broadcast system that utilises 'idle-time' on handsets to display 'teasers' of value-added content to subscribers.

Should the sample content – such as news headlines, sport updates or games – be of interest to subscribers on Vimpelcom's network, access to fuller services that generate revenue for this operator will be one easy 'click' away, it is claimed.

Just like a screen saver, messages appear silently when handsets are not in use. When subscribers see a message that interests them, they click on an 'OK' button. A menu opens and presents various options. Example teasers on the system include video news reports, automatic links to WAP sites or Web pages and SMS messages with extra information.

VimpelCom's application, known as *Chameleon*, is being offered in partnership with smart card specialist, Gemplus, and Celltick Technologies, a provider of both idle-screen

applications and interactive mobile broadcast technologies.

The first stage of the system, which was rolled out in April 2005, includes licences for two million users and follows a successful pilot deployment of 2000 SIM cards during the summer of 2004. Since its launch, more than seven million data transactions are said to have taken place.

Guy Weiss, Celltick's vp for European sales says: "Content discovery is one of the biggest problems mobile operators face following the build-up of their huge content catalogues. The fact that so much is on offer, but users simply don't know how to find it, is the major reason why data services are not proving to be as popular as mobile operators had hoped. Our content promotion system is increasingly popular with operators looking to drive data services."

"This is a classic example of the SIM creating value for the operator," adds Philippe Vallée, executive vp of Gemplus' Telecom Business Unit. "VimpelCom has understood the

role that the SIM can play in enhancing the mobile experience of each subscriber. This is also proof of the value of Gemplus' *SIMXplore* programme and how we, by teaming up with leading service providers such as Celltick, can offer a better service to our clients."

According to VimpelCom's product director, Victor Markelov, the service is proving popular with its subscribers. "Our customers like *Chameleon*. We've found a new way of providing them with an opportunity to use our data services actively. The easier the access to necessary information and data services, the more often our customers use them."

Plans for the *Chameleon* service include the introduction of a rich-media client for *Symbian* phones that will allow subscribers to receive animated messages in full colour and Celltick is said to be expanding its sales and marketing efforts to countries in CIS and central Europe in response to 'a rising level of interest' in its products. ■

Operator adds 1m in six months

Orange says that it has become the first mobile operator in Romania to reach the six million subscriber mark.

The company added one million subscribers to its network between January and June 2005, demonstrating what is described as a 'clear consolidation' of its position as the leader in the Romanian mobile telecoms market. Mobile phone penetration in the country surpassed 50% in June 2005 and estimates for the end of the year are already talking of a rise in that figure to as much as 60%. Orange highlights these figures as clear indicators of a positive economic climate.

"Reaching six million subscribers is another milestone for Orange, which is strength-ening its position as market leader in Romania," states Richard Moat, ceo, Orange Romania. "We are committed to focusing further on offering the best possible customer experience and providing innovative products and services that enhance people's lives." ■

Credit co. consolidates connections

Broadband satellite links have been deployed to connect a personal credit organisation's branch offices throughout the CEE region with its headquarters in the UK.

Previously reliant upon a fragmented terrestrial infrastructure which was not deemed as cost effective, Provident International, which services 150m customers globally, required broadband connectivity from its offices situated in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia in order to send back-office information to its central data centre.

Aiming to consolidate its connectivity requirements and deal with a single supplier for its links, Provident decided on a broadband solution from satellite provider Hughes Network Systems Europe (HNSE). The latter is to provide 150 of its *DW6000* broadband satellite terminals to enable data connectivity for back-office information across the four European countries. The

DIRECWAY branded terminals are based on the IPoS (IP over Satellite) global standard which is approved by TIA, ETSI and ITU standards organisations.

"After several months investigating communications options for our central European branch network, we are convinced that the decision to use the Hughes *DIRECWAY* broadband satellite service was our best option. HNSE not only offers cost-effective communications, but is also an effective 'one-stop shop' for our communications needs. The introduction of the HNSE satellite broadband service will reduce our total cost of ownership for communications by up to 30% compared to our existing terrestrial solutions," comments Barrie Grimshaw, manager of business technology, Provident International.

Satellite broadband will allow Provident to multicast – meaning it will be able to send transactional information during the daytime and then use

available bandwidth to update software applications from headquarters outside of trading periods. The satellite system will also allow the company to add applications throughout

its companies and evolve its business.

After a competitive bid process, HNSE is said to have been chosen because of its experience in the required countries and the user password level security features of its offering. ■

Czech hotspots go global

WideNet, the Czech Republic Wi-Fi hot spot operator, is to add its 36 Wi-Fi hot spots to Boingo's world-wide roaming system.

Boingo's first agreement with a Czech Wi-Fi operator includes hot spots in the usual business travel locations, such as restaurants, hotels and shopping centres throughout the city.

"Prague is a major international destination and a key link in our strategy to build a European network that provides business travellers with convenient locations in all countries," says Colby Goff, senior vp, network strategy for Boingo. "With WideNet as a partner, we know that we will be able to grow our network

throughout the Czech Republic to keep up with user demand."

"WideNet's business is setting up hotspots at the outdoor and indoor points where the Prague visitor or resident can count on convenient Wi-Fi access. International roaming and clear marking of hot spot locations makes the difference between our network and countless WLAN networks throughout the country," adds Martin Stanek, ceo at WideNet, which is based in the city of Ostrava.

Boingo's network extends to Wi-Fi hot spots in 50 countries by combining the locations of over 100 Wi-Fi operators into one network of more than 18,000 Wi-Fi hot spots world-wide. ■