



WEEK

Private GSM networks to cut mobile costs

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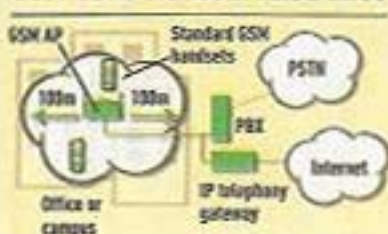
UK service providers will be able to build private, internal GSM networks for firms, after Ofcom issues licences for the Guard Band wireless frequency later this week. The announcement could result in lower telecoms bills for corporates.

BT, Cable & Wireless and O2 will be among the firms awarded licences to offer in-building mobile phone networks. Routing GSM calls onto the public network or the net via firms' private branch exchanges (PBXs) or IP telephony gateways could reduce costs by avoiding high mobile phone tariffs.

However, savings will depend on how often staff use GSM mobiles to make calls in the office, rather than fixed-line or Dect/Wi-Fi phones, and on monthly service and rental charges.

Licensee Private Mobile Networks (PMN), a division of TeleWare, will

GSM calls via local fixed lines



charge firms £30,000 for a three-year subscription to its Private Mobile Exchange (PMX) service. This will cover 50 users and infrastructure equipment rental, handset software and call costs.

Customers will need to swap SIM cards between internal and external networks; use dual-SIM-card handsets able to switch from one to the other after a reboot; or use PMN's mobile virtual network operator service that combines billing for both call types.

"This has the support of mobile

operators because it uses technology they have now and helps build indoor GSM coverage," said PMN managing director Dean Parsons. He estimated that up to 25 percent of mobile charges are for calls made within the office.

Jeremy Green of analyst Ovum said savings and flexibility are the key advantages. "This is much cheaper than fixed-mobile convergence using dual-mode GSM/Wi-Fi handsets because just about any GSM phone will work and you don't have to worry about complex, unproven technology," he said. However, Green warned that seamless call handover between private and public networks may not prove workable.

A spokeswoman for Cable & Wireless said it would offer GSM systems to firms looking for "one handset and one supplier". Meanwhile, BT said it would wait until its licence is awarded this week before revealing its plans.

← *Microsoft preview summer page, p8*

Crime expert is government CIO

John Suffolk, the current director general of Criminal Justice IT (CJIT), is to be the new government CIO.

An IT veteran of 25 years, including a stint as IT director at the Britannia Building Society, Suffolk will be responsible for the technology end of public services reform. He will report to former CIO Ian Watmore, now head of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit.

Suffolk's appointment was welcomed by experts such as trade group Intellect and Infoshare, which supplies data-quality systems to CJIT. "Much of shared-service savings is about getting data right and John Suffolk knows this," said Adrian McKeon, Infoshare's managing director.

Meanwhile, Suffolk's CJIT background may reduce discontent over the absorption of the National Hi-Tech Crime Unit into the new Soca agency.

Microsoft previews Office 2007

DANIEL ROBINSON

Microsoft has detailed more of the collaboration capabilities coming in its Office 2007 system, including greater access to data from Windows Mobile handsets, integrated search capabilities and updated SharePoint portal services.

Many new features target mobile staff, such as the ability to call a company Exchange mail server from a mobile phone and have it read out emails or calendar entries. This would allow executives stuck in traffic to keep up to date when they would not be able to look up information on a laptop or PDA, Microsoft said.

Users will also be able to access their firm's SharePoint portal from Windows Mobile devices, and have better access to business applications. "We

from having push email to full access to enterprise applications on these mobile devices," said Microsoft's director for collaboration and SharePoint services, John Richards.

Microsoft is also integrating the Windows Desktop Search tool across all apps to index data, including workgroup data in SharePoint servers.

Meanwhile, Outlook will gain the capability to store documents offline in the same way that laptop users already have offline access to their calendar and contacts, according to Richards.

Microsoft's SharePoint Portal is also gaining a wiki capability, which can be used to hold ad-hoc information for team brainstorming sessions.

Office 2007 should be available for enterprise customers in October or November, according to Microsoft.



Windows Mobile handsets will have more data access