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### S-A Fires Up Wireless

Jim Barthold

The idea's been passed around more than a hockey puck on a power play. How about mixing fixed wireless into cable's wired networks, then targeting commercial customers?

One vendor, Scientific-Atlanta, is ready to take a shot at it. S-A invested in BridgeWave Communications, a Sunnyvale, Calif.-based wireless broadband technology developer, as part of that company's recent \$40 million round of financing. Additionally, S-A will install a customer showcase at its headquarters to demonstrate BridgeWave's technology internetworking with S-A's hybrid fiber/coax (HFC) broadband access systems.

"We have a development agreement where we're both building the technology (that will be) integrated within our product line," says Paul Connolly, S-A's VP-marketing/network architectures. "A lot of it will depend on how the technology shakes out; they're fairly early in the process."

Connolly says the relationship - and the ultimate wireless integration into S-A networks - is "totally consistent with our current strategy of more value in the HFC networks. What we like about the potential of this technology is it's a better fit for the kind of networks we're currently building. From an operator's point of view, it allows them to pull more revenue onto the network, go after a customer base that's largely been unavailable to them and get better value for their existing infrastructure."

Connolly sees operators using the wireless system to extend the reach of HFC networks "into small-to-medium businesses or high-end homes," he says.

BridgeWave's millimeter-wave technology is not your father's fixed broadband wireless. It's more like local multipoint distribution service (LMDS) than the multichannel multipoint distribution service (MMDS) rolled out by high-profile network providers such as Sprint and MCI/WorldCom. However, it's not really LMDS either.

"We feel we could build systems that were much more cost-effective, that could allow a much broader range of applications to be deployed within the millimeter-wave," says BridgeWave's SVP-marketing and business development, Gregg Levin.

That millimeter-wave, which focuses on the 20 GHz, 42 GHz and eventually higher bands, offers tons of bandwidth, Levin says.

"You might have 5 to 10 GHz of allocated frequencies, and there's continuing auctions bringing more and more of it to the operators," he says. "MMDS is scraping the bottom of what I call broadband."

Millimeter-wave, he says, is limited in transmission and slowed by the weather-related problems that plague all wireless technologies. Its potential lies in reaching targeted audiences like small businesses and business parks. This could include areas where the plant, for traditional reasons, ignores businesses.

"It's very compatible with HFC networks," Connolly says. "They can remote a QAM channel bi-directionally so that we can take, with DOCSIS 1.1, voice and data and drop that into a small business."

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