

W-CDMA may be delayed by IPR uncertainty

W-CDMA product development could be further set back by uncertainty over intellectual property rights, reported the Financial Times. The report quoted Qualcomm and the 3G Patent Platform Partnership as stating that there is still a lack of resolution over who holds essential intellectual property rights to W-CDMA. Qualcomm CEO Irwin Jacobs said that the confusion could further delay 3G rollout, while Brian Kearsley, director general of the 3GPP, said that too many companies are attempting to cash in on W-CDMA. Some 100 companies claim to hold IPR on the standard, compared to about 20 for GSM.

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Voice over wireless LAN

It had to happen sooner or later. Someone was going to come up with a solution to offer voice services over increasingly popular wireless LAN networks.

That is exactly what San Francisco-based **TABLETmedia** has done with a solution on Microsoft's Pocket PC platform.

Company officials demonstrated that with a little software, a PDA can be turned into a voice-capable device. The company is currently delivering its solution to NEC to be incorporated into a Pocket PC device targeted at corporations.

The solution turns the PDA into a portable IP phone on a wireless LAN corporate network. With the broadband capabilities of WLANs, the H.323-based solution even supports video calls. The system also takes full advantage of the advanced services that can be delivered over an IP network – for example, directory services.

So far, the solution is targeted exclusively at corporations, according to TABLETmedia president and CEO Alessandro Gatti. The reason is that it works only when paired with an IP PBX system.

But the voice, and video, capability is there. How long will it be before someone starts offering the same kind of service to the consumer market? In fact, operators in both Korea and Japan are working on just that. Several competitive Japanese operators, ie Yozan, are already trialing VoWLAN services.

There isn't that much difference between the network of a fixed-line carrier and that of an enterprise. Fixed-line carriers can conceivably roll out a wireless voice infrastructure using WLAN starting today. The only obstacle I see is the high-cost of IP PBXs and the business model.

I've said on many occasions that voice will be the stronghold of cellular operators and that is still true today, particularly with true mobility. But isn't that just a technical barrier? How long before the technology also makes that history? Tony Chan

A proposal from some companies to cap W-CDMA IPR payments at 5% of equipment value has fallen by the wayside and the report forecasts that, left unchecked, IPR claims could account for as much as 20% of W-CDMA equipment value.

Samsung scores \$US400 million China CDMA handset deal

China Unicom said last week that it will purchase through its distributors 700,000 high-end CDMA handsets from Korea's Samsung Electronics. The deal is worth \$US400 million and represents Samsung's largest ever handset deal in China, or about \$US570 per unit.

The handsets will feature colour displays and come with built-in digital cameras, Samsung said.

Samsung will deliver the handsets to Unicom distributors between October and December, according to Samsung spokesman James Chung, quoted by Reuters.

China Unicom's CDMA network has struggled since its launch in January, but take-up is reportedly gaining momentum. The operator had 1.69 million CDMA users at the end of August and is said to be putting on as many as 15,000 new subscribers a day. Unicom is hoping to gain 4.7 million CDMA subscribers by the end of the year.

However, the subscriber gains were largely due to heavy discounting on the part of Unicom, analysts pointed out.

Last week, Unicom inked a deal with Chinese handset maker Eastern Communications, whereby the operator