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A look at Asia Pacific Billing and Revenue Management Week

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In our last issue, we profiled CTIA Wireless 2006 and touched on the interaction between large-scale trade shows and smaller boutique shows. To balance the coverage for one of the big boys, we thought we'd take a look at a small, specific, and targeted show that will be taking place in Bangkok May 8-12. Beacon Event's Asia Pacific Billing and Revenue Management Week is the 6th annual and is taking place at the Intercontinental Bangkok Hotel. The first thing that participants should know is that this is by no means a massive trade show... and that's sort of the point. Geoffrey Ip, of Beacon, relates that the event has eleven sponsors, and while each sponsor will display their wares to an extent, visitors to the event should expect table-top displays rather than indepth exhibits. Ip states that the event "is more for networking than product display."

And what sort of networking is there to be found at this event? Not a bad slate, pound-for-pound, especially for anyone with dealings in, or aspirations for access to, the AsiaPac market. The endorsing organizations include the Global Billing Association (GBA), Indian Cellular Association (ICA), and the Telecommunications UK Fraud Forum. It bears mentioning, of course, that two of the three are UK-based, which should naturally be of interest to North American firms concerned with the historically-sensible and time-tested relationship between British firms and the Asian marketplace. Could a meeting at a small convention in Thailand shift the balance? Stranger things have happened.

Among the listed speakers are representatives from SBC Global, Comptel, Telenor, Vodafone, BT Security, and Virgin Mobile Australia. Programming is broken into a number of separate streams, which enables a small show to seem even smaller. Each stream contains a series of workshops lasting an entire day with two streams operating concurrently on each day, enabling participants to experience a maximum of three of the six streams in their entirety. The streams contain sessions that deal with topics like billing development, VoIP/OSS/Mediation, and prepaid wireless. There is also a two-stream series on revenue assurance and fraud management.

The preponderance of speakers within any stream will be representatives from SPs, so there's no doubt, in terms of the average OSS vendor, that there will be a modicum of access to potential buyers. However, a concern is that the specific speakers at the event are representatives of SBC Global, Vodafone, et. al., but not *the* representatives of their respective firms. Many of the speakers are on the VP-level, and some are listed with no specific job title or function at all. Ip, however, states that the event has an attendance goal of 200 people. Last year's event had 220 attendants. Based on listed speakers for the six streams alone, about 35 people are actually speaking, moderating, or otherwise presenting in the event. That's one in six. That lends the event a real festival feel, with speakers alongside participants, with relatively little delineation between the two. Depending upon your particular expectations for an event, this could be a fantastic setting for your firm or, conversely, may fly under your radar.

The firms listed as sponsors for the event, who are also taking part in the ersatz expo, are representatives from a nice cross-sampling of firms, from HP to cVidya to Talgentra. It bears mentioning that in spite of the location of the event, only one of the eight listed sponsor companies is headquartered

in the AsiaPac region (Subex, out of Bangalore). The balance of the companies hail from the UK, US, Israel, Portugal, and other spots, though many have regional offices in AsiaPac, as any well dressed tech firm should.

Since the show is a small one, it would be a lot to expect for any firm to use the event as a stage for a product launch or any other sort of grandiose announcement, but you can expect each exhibiting firm to put its best foot forward at the event. Subex, which asserts itself as the "largest revenue assurance software vendor in the world", will be focusing on its INcharge solution, which is the firm's revenue assurance platform. Comptel, meanwhile, will be giving a presentation entitled 'Developing flexible customer payment strategy for data, multi-media and voice services (OMA)'. CVideo will have a strong presence at the event, as the firm's President and CEO is scheduled to give a talk on IPTV and the challenges associated with the technology from a revenue assurance standpoint. CAPE will be exhibiting and presenting a paper entitled "After successfully implementing a revenue assurance solution, where next?"



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In addition to the usual trade-show presentations, this event has a particularly interesting throughline of taking services to underserved markets. Within several streams you can find topics like 'Increasing Prepaid ARPU in Price Sensitive Markets' and sessions on micro payment plans for low income markets. The speakers include individuals from Mobilink GSM in Pakistan and Telemig Celular in Brazil. The conference recognizes the growth capacity of the developing market and, considering the size of the program, has a relatively well-developed program to deal with the topic.

In the end, even Beacon and IIR, who are the event coordinators, harbor no illusions that Asia Pacific Billing and Revenue Management Week will soon rival GlobalComm or Telemangement World. However, within the intimate setting, new perspectives can be sought, lessons can be learned, and perhaps, as is the case in any setting where industry heavies interact, the groundwork for deals can be laid.