

Pipeline

Knowledge Is Power

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OSS NewsWatch

by Alana Grelyak

Ah, May. The flowers are blooming, the birds are chirping, Verizon is hiring people to work 72 hour weeks to keep up with customers, and Blockbuster is attempting to stream. This year, we've already noticed customers demanding new and better service; this month we'll take a look at just a few things companies are doing to keep up with those demands. We also have the usual mergers, acquisitions, and other tidbits that keep bringing you back to read NewsWatch month after month. We appreciate your readership and offer this month's NewsWatch with a sincere thanks.

Verizon is currently doing a test run of what they call PAMs or "Personal Account Managers" in Tampa, Florida. The idea is that each customer will have a PAM, who will be available via Blackberry six days a week, twelve hours a day, to personally resolve the customer's issues. Each PAM will service, in theory, 800 customers. Twelve hours a day. Six days a week. While this seems like a somewhat innovative approach to customer service, what happens if the PAM quits, which seems a likely possibility given the probable strain of dealing with complaints for a majority of one's week? for one, am looking forward to Verizon's official report on this experiment.



Verizon Communications, in another pair of strange maneuvers, is suing Time Warner for false advertising, claiming that Time Warner's cable TV ads imply that Verizon's TV service is inferior to Time Warner's and requires a satellite dish, among other things. The lawsuit now seems odd in light of Verizon awarding AOL (Time Warner is AOL's parent company) a rather large online advertising contract just days later.

In the world of mergers, Amdocs is continuing on its quest to become the leader in

customer experience systems for broadband and in the OSS market by acquiring Jacobs Rimell, Ltd. for approximately \$45 million in cash. This now puts Amdocs in charge of Comcast's provisioning infrastructure. "Comcast looks forward to working with Amdocs as it enhances Jacobs Rimell's capabilities and integrates Jacobs Rimell into its broader service offerings," said Comcast's chief information officer Andy Baer. And how does Jacobs Rimell feel about the acquisition? "Amdocs and Jacobs Rimell have a shared vision of where the industry is going, what the broadband cable industry needs to continue to transform, and what it takes to be both a leading technology provider and a trusted advisor," said David Jacobs, chief technology officer and co-founder of Jacobs Rimell. "The integration of Jacobs Rimell's service fulfillment solutions with Amdocs' OSS portfolio brings together the deep industry knowledge and an expanded product suite needed for customers to simplify new product introduction and quickly broaden their services portfolios." Amdocs doesn't expect its non-GAAP earnings per share to be affected in fiscal 2008.

The image is a promotional banner for the BIMS 2008 conference. It features a blue border and a white background. On the left, there is a small photograph of a canal with a bridge and buildings. The main logo consists of the letters 'BIMS' in a large, bold, blue font, with a stylized blue and red swoosh passing through them. Below 'BIMS' is a red rectangular box containing the text 'Billing & Information Management Systems' in white, and '2008' in a larger white font to the right. In the top right corner, there is a small red circular logo and the text 'IIR TELECOMS & TECHNOLOGY' and 'www.iir-telecoms.com'. At the bottom, there is a dark blue bar with white text providing contact information: 'Beurs Van Berlage, Amsterdam, The Netherlands', '10th-12th June 2008', 'BOOK NOW! Call: +44(0)20 7017 7483 Fax: +44(0)20 7017 7825', and 'Email: registrations@iir-telecoms.com Web: www.iir-billingsystems.com/pipeline'.

Also on the merger front, Axiom Systems was acquired by Comptel (the fulfillment company, not the trade association). The UK-based Axiom, whose Active Catalog has drawn special notice in recent years, was purchased for GBP 7 million (which, at current exchange rates works out to around EUR 8.7 million and a USD amount that I refuse to calculate because the current exchange rates make me weep). There are additional considerations built in that allow for an additional purchase price between GBP 4 and 16 million if Axiom's 2008 sales exceed EUR 13.5 million. With the ink still wet on the Jacobs Rimell and Axiom deals, it's an interesting time to be a smaller-to-midsized OSS play. Who'll be next? Sigma Systems? Nakina?

Rumors are stirring about Blockbuster making its way into homes by using set-top devices to stream films directly to consumer televisions. The once-dominant movie company has lost some steam with the advent of movies available through the Internet, making its leave-the-house-to-rent-a-video approach less desirable than it used to be and leaving the company in search of other ways to continue its reign. As of our publishing date, Blockbuster hasn't made a formal statement on the issue but they have announced publicly their offer to acquire Circuit City. It makes one wonder if Blockbuster does have a grander scheme in mind. Perhaps its own giant

division of set-top boxes available thru its new chain of stores and serviced by the company itself? Stay tuned to find out....

Consumers want, and are starting to expect, flat-rate pricing from their wireless providers (consider Verizon Wireless's decision to offer a \$99.99 per month flat-rate for unlimited usage of the wireless network) and the pressure seems to be building for them to deliver. Sonus Networks has plans to make said pricing profitable for the wireless operators. "The key to addressing flat rate pricing for carriers lies in the optimization of their current networks. From bandwidth, to routing, to session and border management, carriers need to drive efficiency in both operational and capital expenditures," said Vikram Saxena, chief technology officer, Sonus Networks. "Using the distributed, scalable technology in the Sonus IP infrastructure, carriers can squeeze substantial cost from their networks and provide a flexible foundation to build the services needed to attract new customers and offer new revenue opportunities." Anyone skeptical of the plan can see the solution in action at CTIA 2008, where it will be on display at the Sonus booth.

The government of Brazil is pushing for a merger between its two rival telecom companies, Telemar Participacoes and Brazil Telecom, in an effort to combine forces in order to compete with telecom companies from Spain and Mexico. Shareholders of Brazil Telecom are holding up the deal due to disputes. Also holding up the deal are laws which ban landline companies that are dominant in different regions from merging. President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva may push to have that law changed in order to get this merger to happen. While the maneuver may end up being at least somewhat good for Brazil's telecom economy, it also smacks a bit of nationalistic pride.

Comarch's (a Central European IT solutions provider) product Virtual Consulting Services has won the Award for Innovation at "Innovationspreis 2008." The product enables web-based end user collaboration, where users will see "the same content, mouse movements, and keyboard entries in their respective browsers as their follow users. In this way, they virtually navigate together, simultaneously on one website," says Comarch's press release. It sounds like an innovative application that may be interesting to those that view web browsing as a team sport.

Anyone out there familiar with the on-demand software solutions company Digital Fairway may be interested to hear that the company has changed its name to Commsolv Corporation in an effort to better reflect what the company feels it has to offer its customers. "Our new company name and identity reflects the future of our business. Enterprises especially are more concerned than ever about telecom cost containment and our tried and tested solution delivers unprecedented cost savings to our client's businesses," said Dennis dos Santos, CEO of the newly-named Commsolv Corporation. The name change is already in effect.

Motorola Inc. has named David Dorman to serve as non-executive Chairman of the Board in place of Ed Zander who will be officially retiring in early May. Dorman is the managing director and senior advisor at Warburg Pincus and Co.

The FCC has approved a text message emergency service where providers can alert mobile customers of emergencies such as nationwide alerts, disasters, severe

weather, and even child abductions. The four major nationwide carriers are expected to participate, though participation is not mandatory. Such a service may prove particularly useful for those that are often away from computers and televisions.

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