

Pipeline

Knowledge Is Power

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NPRG and Pipeline Present: The 2008 *Communications Innovators Awards*

by Tim Young

For the last few years, New Paradigm Resources Group (NPRG) has been honoring companies that have led the way in innovation in the telecommunications space. This year, Pipeline was honored to be a part of the process of winnowing the many deserving nominations down to just three winners. Those winners, announced during NXTcomm 2008, typify the very highest in innovation, courage, and willingness to take a new approach to telecom in a way that not every provider is willing to do. The award recipients are Business Only Broadband, Greenfield Communications, Inc., and Optimum Lightpath.

"We're always proud to honor the companies that drive the communications industry forward," said NPRG's Executive Vice President Craig Clausen. "These companies were chosen based on their demonstrated leadership in not only embracing cutting-edge solutions but also in successfully extending them to customers. Each of today's recipients will continue being leaders in the future."

Let's take a look at each one in a little more detail:

Most Innovative - Emerging Wireless: Business Only Broadband

Business Only Broadband owns a fixed wireless infrastructure that is deployed with some pretty cutting-edge architecture (self-healing ring with VLAN and MPLS capabilities), and focuses on services for interconnecting corporate offices, data centers, trading floors, financial exchanges, and Tier 1 transit providers. According to the nomination form, "The company's wireless coverage area extends 100 miles from the financial districts in Manhattan and Chicago. The company then links the two largest financial markets together with end to end Gigabit Ethernet connectivity from these diverse data centers over fiber. " The company boasts a 400% revenue growth since its founding in 2006. Furthermore, while a relatively young company, BOB offers case studies from companies like Walgreen's.

"The innovative thing we're doing with wireless is just using it in a co-primary role with fiber networks," says Shane Hampton, VP of Marketing for Business Only Broadband. "It's not just for places that fiber can't get to. It's not just for backup. It's not just a less expensive alternative."

Most Innovative - Competitive Carrier: Optimum Lightpath

A subsidiary of Cablevision, Optimum Lightpath is doing something many cable companies can only dream of. They're chipping away at tightly-held business market share in a heavily competitive area. The nomination for Optimum Lightpath called it "It is the only 100 percent fiber optic business network in the New York tri-state area built for high capacity secure data delivery and management."

Furthermore, it presented a reference case study from the Director of Trauma and Emergency Services at Westchester Medical Center. Talk about mission-critical.

"We love innovation awards," said Dave Pistacchio, Executive VP and General Manager of Optimum Lightpath. "They really highlight what we're doing as a company. Some of the things we're doing don't feel very innovative. We're just doing what the customers are asking. It's funny that it's called innovation, because consumers have been asking for simple, flat-rate pricing for years. They haven't gotten it. We do it." While that's innovative relative to other companies in the industry, it's really about listening to customers.



Most Innovative - Access Solutions: Greenfield Communications

Greenfield is innovative on a number of levels. First of all, the California-based company focuses on, as the company name suggests, new construction projects. They ensure that these new homes are equipped with a generous bitpipe, using FTTH technology.

It's not just the fiber, though. According to its nomination, "Aside from its award winning design and cost-effective FTTH strategy, Greenfield Communications places it's top priority on customer support and satisfaction." How? Well, for one thing, Greenfield assigns a field rep to each community in which Greenfield extends its network. This representative works with construction companies to coordinate installation, visits customers to troubleshoot problems, and is even present at homeowners' association meetings to answer questions asked by subscribers. In an era in which customer service is often a key differentiator, Greenfield shows innovation in technology and business model.

Summing it up

We had a great time sorting through these awards, and would like to fully congratulate all who were nominated. We'd especially like to congratulate the award winners, and encourage all service providers to try to seek their own innovations every day.

Pistacchio sums up what we look for in communications innovators pretty well when he says of his company's mission: "It's about trying to look at the way telecom companies have been operating, and the way they price and bill their products, and throwing that out the window and coming up with a new way that makes sense for the customer and makes sense for us."

Sounds innovative to me.

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