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Tasmanian Government hands out TiVos to trial NBN

The Tasmanian Government has teamed up with TiVo's Australian distributor, Hybrid Television Services, to provide TiVos to existing FTTH customer on the TasCOLT network in order to research future NBN applications.

Tasmanian premier, David Bartlett, said the project, Hybrid SmartStreet, would be "the first of many involving the State Government, which will demonstrate the value of the National Broadband Network to Tasmanian families and businesses...Tasmanians who already have fibre to the premises through the State Government's previous TasCOLT trial will be invited to participate in a 12 month SmartStreet trial...Participants will be given a TiVo media device which, in addition to providing access to high definition TV, will allow access to existing broadband services via Hybrid TV's CASPA portal. These services will be delivered into people's homes on their TV screens and accessed via a remote control."

CASPA is the new service from Hybrid TV, launched in Sydney yesterday 25 November that delivers videos on demand to a TiVo via broadband service (see below).

Bartlett said the State Government had become involved with the Hybrid SmartStreet project "to gain a better understanding of people's broadband behaviour, how they like to interact with this new technology and to learn about the type of services made possible by the NBN, that Tasmanians actually want in the future and would subscribe to." Bartlett promised that the results of the project would be made public to inform future application development."

The agreement between the Government and Hybrid Television will see the development, delivery and trial of three core government services via participants' TV screens. "These services will revolve around education, emergency services such as fire readiness and what to do in an emergency, and around developing a community in the home," Bartlett said.

The Tasmanian Government has committed to covering customers' access fee plus the cost of installation and support services, up to \$100,000. The money will come from within the Department of Economic Development's existing budget. The government has not given any indication of how many customers will be able to get TiVos under the scheme.

According to report on the TasCOLT network, dated October 2008, "The TasCOLT network passes approximately 1,200 premises in New Town, South Hobart and Devonport...Approximately 600 property owners consented to have the optic fibre cable connected directly to the facade of the property...[with] in excess of 300 customers signing up for the full range of 'triple play' services available."

Stuart Corner

Internode content delivery network underpins new TiVo VoD service

Hybrid Television Services - Australian distributor of the TiVo PVR has upgraded its range of on demand video content, which is available quota free through several ISPs.

CASPA On-Demand is Hybrid TV's brand name for what it promises will be "a world of broadband entertainment including new release movies, hit TV shows for the whole family as well as free music videos, artist interviews and music concerts."

CASPA was launched in Australia yesterday, 25 November, with four ISPs: Internode, iiNet, iPrimus and Adam Internet providing access free of download quotas. It replaces the present TiVo Video on Demand service. Hybrid TV says that, initially the service has more than 1000 hours on-demand movies, TV and music content. From Q2 2010 a range of free advertising-funded content will be introduced.

The CASPA service was launched in New Zealand at the end of October in partnership with Telecom New Zealand with Telecom providing TiVo users with access to unmetered video content.

Internode has developed, and is operating, the content delivery network that enables these ISPs and other ISPs expected to join later, to offer the TiVo content download quota free. Internode managing director, Simon Hackett, told ExchangeDaily that using Akami, the dominant global content delivery network operator, ISPs were unable to discriminate between download quota free and other content without investing heavily in deep packet inspection technology.

He added that, the ABC whose iView service is available quota free from Internode and other ISPs, uses Akami as its main content delivery service but had to set up a duplicate distribution system, presently hosted by Hostworks' Adelaide data centre, in order to provide iView content to ISPs offering it outside their download quotas.

Underpinning CASPA is technology from Ericsson subsidiary Tandberg Television. The company announced on 2 November that Hybrid TV was deploying "a complete suite of Tandberg Television software solutions," to support delivery of the service in Australia and New Zealand." Tandberg claimed that "CASPA represents one of the first and largest implementations of true on-demand to the television in Australasia."

Hybrid TV is using Tandberg Television's new, WatchPoint content management system (CMS), OpenStream digital services platform on-demand back-office solution, AdPoint advertising platform and Xport producer storage encoding solution. According to Tandberg Television, it and Ericsson "played a critical role in helping Hybrid TV meet its ambitious New Zealand launch deadline, creating a working beta solution within two months and enabling commercial roll-out a month later."

Stuart Corner

• **New TiVo has twice the storage capacity**

Hybrid TV has also introduced a new TiVo device, the TiVo 320 with 320GB of onboard storage. It will sell for the same price as the current TiVo 160, \$699, and the price of the TiVo 160 will be reduced to \$599, from 1 December. Also, until 31 January 2010, the TiVo 320 will sell with the \$199 home networking package included.

This enables users to transfer FreeView content from their TiVo to a PC, or portable device such as iPhone, PSP and to display movies and photos stored on these devices on the TV screen. Hybrid TV says this package has not previously been made available in retail outlets, but has proven extremely popular with 45 percent of TiVo users purchasing it online.

Government to stay out of Future Fund investment decisions

Finance minister Lindsay Tanner has dealt the Federal Government out of all commercial investment decisions made by the \$85.6 billion Future Fund because of a \$2.4 billion sell-down of Telstra shares last August that caused protests from shareholder groups.

And he made it clear that Government would stay out of any Future Fund board decision related to its Telstra shareholding and any company vote that might occur regarding its possible structural separation. The Future Fund remains Telstra's largest shareholder with about 10 percent of its equity.

The Future Fund, chaired by former Commonwealth Bank boss David Murray, sold a huge tranche of Telstra shares just weeks before communications minister Stephen Conroy unveiled regulatory reforms that, among other things, sought the separation of Telstra's wholesale and retail businesses. Shareholders cried foul, the suggestion being that the Commonwealth Future Fund must have been given an inside run on the details of Government plans.

Tanner used a National Press Club address in Canberra to formally excise Government input into any and all commercial investment decisions related to money held by the fund. The complication was an unforeseen consequence of the Howard Government decision to transfer the 17 percent of Telstra shares still held by the Federal Government into the fund.

As allowed by the Future Fund Act, the previous Government had issued a ministerial direction that those shares be held in escrow until November 2008 (Government had been concerned that potential investors would be scared away by concern that the Commonwealth could flood the market with shares, driving down the price.

Subsequently, the Future Fund made its first big sell down in August this year, creating a moment of considerable awkwardness at a pivotal moment in Telstra's share price history – awkward for the Government, for the Future Fund, for Telstra and its shareholders.

"The Australian Government had no involvement in this (Future Fund) decision," Tanner said. "Nor did the Future Fund have any prior access to or knowledge of Government plans in relation to Telstra or the national broadband network.

"The Government's negotiations with Telstra on structural separation mean that the Future Fund's activities must be absolutely independent of the Government. The existence of a power of ministerial

direction regarding the Future Fund's Telstra shares casts doubt over this independence."

Tanner said the importance of the Future Fund's operational independence was crucial in the context of the Government negotiations with Telstra over its regulatory and broadband issues.

"I want to make it absolutely clear that the Government will not be directing the board in relation to its Telstra shareholdings as is allowed under the Future Fund Act, including the exercising of its voting rights in relation to any shareholder vote on structural separation," Tanner said.

"Nor will the Government discuss with the board its intentions in relation to the use of its voting rights. The Future Fund will make its decisions with only one issue in mind: shareholder value." *James Riley*

Hostech's former takeover target to sell Samsung IP PBX through Telstra

Plant Communications - which trades as Samsung Communications and which is the exclusive Australian distributor of Samsung's business telephone systems in Australia - has announced an agreement with Telstra for the joint marketing of Samsung's OfficeServ 7000 series of enterprise IP telephony products via the Telstra Business Systems (TBS) programme.

The announcement comes just a day after Hostech announced the scrapping of its plan to buy Plant/Samsung, citing its concerns that "the condition precedent regarding the renewal of appropriate licenses from Samsung is unlikely to be met and in addition other key contracts may not be appropriately assigned to Hostech."

Despite the timing of the two announcements, Hostech would have been well aware of the partnership between Plant/Samsung and Telstra. It announced its plan to buy Plant/Samsung on 28 October describing it as a core plank in Hostech's objective to achieve annual revenue exceeding \$60m and EBITDA approaching \$10m within the next two years.

Plant/Samsung claims that it and Telstra "officially launched their partnership to their respective channels at a series of events in Melbourne and Sydney in October." Hostech subsidiary Sholl Communications is a Samsung dealer.

The Samsung OfficeServ range spans from the 32 extension 7100 to the 480 extension 7400. The TBS scheme embraces a range of products from different vendors. Aria Technologies, which supplies both LG-Nortel and ShoreTel products under the scheme,

claims that the LG-Nortel product accounts for about 50 percent of TBS sales in the 0-100 extension market, followed by NEC at 11 percent, Alcatel-Lucent with 10 percent and Panasonic at two percent. Earlier this year Aria reached agreement with Telstra to offer ShoreTel product through TBS. Aria's general manager, Rob Pierce said at the time that he expected the ShoreTel product to be strongest in the 100 extension and above market. *Stuart Corner*

IBM named green IT leader by Frost & Sullivan

IBM Australia has been named Green IT vendor of the year at the Frost & Sullivan Australia Best Practice Awards that were announced at a dinner in Sydney tonight.

The company – which has been running one of the world's biggest green marketing campaigns through its Smarter Planet advertisements, and its blog of the same name – has also been acknowledged by Greenpeace as the greenest ICT company, scoring 43 out of 100 in Greenpeace's Cool IT Challenge.

The company tonight took out the sustainability category of Frost & Sullivan's awards, which are now in their fourth year. Other awards were presented for infrastructure security with the award for UPS vendor of the year going to APC by Schneider Electric; UPS service provider of the year was Chloride Power Protection; winning the biometrics gong was Sagem Sécurité; and the IP video surveillance winner was Axis Communications.

Websense was named secure content management vendor of the year while Verizon Business won the title for managed security services. Digital Media awards went to Adconion for ad network broker of the year; FirstClick consulting for search marketing, while Fairfax Digital Media was named online publisher of the year.

In the enterprise communications section the contact centre applications vendor category was won by Genesys Laboratories; Telstra was named hosted contact centre service provider of the year; and Tandberg took line honours in videoconferencing. The enterprise telephony award went to Cisco Systems and Alphawest won the award as unified communications systems integrator of the year.

Finally, Internode was named emerging broadband service provider of the year; Vodafone Hutchison won for mobile service provider of the year, and Telstra took out its second gong of the night for broadband service provision. *Beverly Head*

Google Apps' integration with BlackBerries tightened

Google has upgraded its Google Apps Connector for BlackBerry that provides integration between Gmail, Google Apps' Calendar and Address book and BlackBerry handhelds.

The initial version, announced in May and released in August worked only with the BlackBerry Enterprise Server and had a limit of one Google Apps domain and 250 users per server. The new version increases the number of supportable users to 500 per server and enables a single BlackBerry Enterprise Server to support multiple Google App domains -

Google suggests this will reduce the costs of providing services by its hosting partners.

It also works with BlackBerry Professional Software - an application that provides Blackberry handheld support on existing servers running Microsoft Exchange or Lotus Domino. BlackBerry Professional Software can support up to 30 BlackBerry handhelds.

An announcement of the new version suggested that further enhancements were in the pipeline, along with plans to "make it easier for you to manage mobile devices of all types with Google Apps."

Stuart Corner

COMMENT

Unified comms market in desperate need of definition

For at least 18 months Cisco has been talking about a global UC market worth \$US27 billion, and Frost & Sullivan has just estimated the Australian US services market at \$A608 million, but research firm ABI puts the global market at a mere \$US302 million in 2008 and says it will be only \$US4.2 billion by 2014.

I first came across Cisco's estimate in late 2008 when it announced a major focus on collaboration. Cisco valued this market at \$US34b globally including an estimated \$US27b market for unified communications and enterprise telephony. With a bit of digging I found where Cisco had got this figure from, a March 2008 Cisco publication Unified Communications Primer. It states that "The global market for UC solutions in 2007 was estimated at \$[US]27 billion; by 2011 it is estimated to be \$[US]33 billion." And it explained that "These figures were synthesised from a variety of sources including research by Dell'Oro, Frost & Sullivan, Gartner, IDC, Synergy, Wainhouse, GMV, and Cisco."

The primer does not specify exactly what UC components have been included to come up with this figure, but does list the "basic components" of UC as being: a ubiquitous IP network; policy; presence; multimodal communications - e-mail, instant messaging, SMS, voice, voicemail and rich-media-driven 'conferencing' capabilities (audioconferencing, web conferencing, videoconferencing, telepresence and seamless migration.)

Quite a few of these elements would seem to be in the realm of collaboration, and it was by stacking these on top of the \$US27b UC market that Cisco came up with its \$US34b collaboration market in October 2008 (a figure which it has cited in several recent collaboration-related product and service announcements).

The ABI figure comes from a new ABI report "Vertical Market Opportunities in Unified Communications" that "examines the total enterprise communications market as well as that portion that can be truly classified as unified communications." The report's author, Stan Schatt, VP and practice director at ABI Research, told me: "One conclusion I came to ... is that everyone has a different definition of unified communications and everyone counts it differently. The vendors tend to count everything sold stand-alone and then double count when the items are used together. Some analyst firms inflate the market because it makes vendors so happy.

"In my report I do size the stand-alone markets for many of the key components of unified communications - IP telephony, the older TDM telephony (with gateways to IP infrastructure), fixed mobile convergence, messaging, contact centres, collaboration including videoconferencing and telepresence, etc. After lengthy conversations with vendors, I took a realistic percentage of those numbers to represent actual products sold and used in a unified communications network. My criteria included having at least IP telephony, unified messaging, and the use of presence. Because so many voice messaging systems are proprietary, unified messaging is still difficult."

So, the point of my report is that actual unified communications is still a very small market, but it is growing, particularly in certain key verticals and will grow considerably through 2014."

In other words, unified communications - which seems to sit somewhere on the spectrum between discrete communications technologies and services and the equally vague concept of 'collaboration' - is such a woolly concept that market forecasts without very precise definitions as to what is included are pretty meaningless.

Stuart Corner