



Smaller Wireless Players Tout New Services At Industry Show

March 29, 2007

ORLANDO, Fla. -(Dow Jones)- While the spotlight of the CTIA Wireless trade show typically centers around the industry's heavy hitters, it also gives smaller companies the chance to hawk unique services on a big stage.

Keynote speakers from such companies as AT&T and Viacom espouse the broader themes of bringing together the computer, television and wireless experience and creating more mobile content. Smaller companies and start-ups, meanwhile, look to push more specific services designed to serve those broader themes.

One of those key themes was the aggressive push for music, as evidenced by Sprint Nextel's cutting the price of a song download and AT&T's partnership with Napster. Privately held mSpot looks to take advantage of that movement by unveiling an MP3 player for the handset that can synch up wirelessly to a person's computer.

The Remix system operates much like the vaunted Slingbox, but for music. Songs stored on the computer can be streamed to the cell phone without any cable connection or having to be in close proximity. The player downloads a database of available songs onto the phone, and later accesses the songs through over-the-air downloads. A unique compression technique reduces the transfer time. Once downloaded, the song can be stored in the handset's memory card.

"If you want to make the mobile phone the default device for listening to music, you're going to have to make it easy for them to move their music," said Daren Tsui, co-founder and chief executive of mSpot.

The company is hoping to sign an agreement with at least one North American carrier - the most likely candidates being Verizon and Sprint because of their high-speed networks - by the middle of this year. Tsui said he believes the feature will encourage consumers' use of more expensive data plans, which would be attractive to the carriers.

A quirkier music-based service comes from InterOP Technologies. The company offers Karaoke Tones, a feature that allows consumers to create their own ringtones or ringback tones by recording their own voice through the handset. People can sing with a pre-

recorded musical track or go a cappella. Those shy about singing can simply record a rant or personal message.

Location-Based Services

Wireless carriers are increasingly looking at the technology of global positioning systems, which is already placed in many handsets, as one way to generate revenue. Companies hope that consumers will embrace services based on where you are.

Automotive club AAA and privately held Networks in Motion unveiled a service that combines GPS technology with AAA's database of auto-repair facilities, hotel and restaurant ratings and reviews, and information on sightseeing points of interests.

"We're looking to use this channel to deliver our travel information," said Marshall Doney, who runs AAA's automotive services.

If a customer's car breaks down, the service can deliver emergency roadside assistance more efficiently. AAA can use the GPS chip in the phone to determine the person's location and dispatch the closest tow truck or other assistance.

The service also makes planning a trip a snap, said Steve Andler, who heads up marketing at Networks in Motion, which also powers Verizon Wireless' EZ Navigator feature. Someone using the AAA service can bookmark locations, look up nearby points of interest and get driving instructions from point to point.

AAA is in active discussions with the leading U.S. carriers, according to Doney. The most likely candidates are Sprint Nextel and Verizon Wireless - which both offer GPS services. The service will be available to everyone, although features like the enhanced roadside assistance can be accessed only by AAA members.

Written Voicemails

Companies such as SimulScribe and SpinVox were at the show promoting similar services that transcribe voice messages and send them as emails or text messages.

"Every carrier we've talked to all believe it's the next large major-revenue application out there," said Simulscribe Chief Executive James Siminoff.

SpinVox, meanwhile, unveiled a service that allows a user to update any online blog by speaking into her phone.

Security A Focus

While much of the attention has surrounded whiz-bang gadgets and new services, security remains a concern in the industry. As such, one larger company, Symantec,

unveiled its Mobile Security Suite 5.0, a bundle of security features designed for smart phones and personal digital assistants that run the Windows Mobile operating system.

Despite its numeral designation, the latest offering is "leaps and bounds" ahead of its prior security products, said Paul Miller, managing director of mobile security for Symantec. The product includes anti-virus software, firewall protection and a feature that blocks spam text messages. Other features include a network security check that ensures the security software is running as intended and an audit log, which records all actions taken by a smart phone. The log proves useful if the device is lost and companies want to see if their files have been illegally viewed or stolen.

Unlike the personal computer, where most hacker attacks involve clogging traffic in order to shut down a Web site, mobile attacks will center on the invasion of privacy, Miller said. One such attack involves sending a program that can remotely turn on the microphone of the device, allowing hackers to listen in on private meetings.

"These are attacks for fortune," he said. "They're going to try to stay as quiet as they can and exploit as much information in order to capitalize on it."

Consumer and business-class versions will hit the market in May. Pricing information couldn't immediately be obtained.

-By Roger Cheng, Dow Jones Newswires; 201-938-2020; roger.cheng@dowjones.com

Dow Jones Newswires