

This Week's Stories

AT&T Mobility Suffers Huge Network Outage in Los Angeles

September 26, 2011

AT&T Mobility subscribers in Los Angeles can now text and make calls again on their mobile devices after technicians repaired a widespread network outage that affected millions of people.

AT&T spokesperson Meredith Red said late yesterday that a hardware failure led to network issues with about 900 cellular towers across LA.

The service problems began at about 3.00 P.M. Saturday and contributed to an evening of missed, dropped and failed calls. Service was fully restored early Sunday morning, local time.

Red says it's unclear how many wireless subscribers were affected, but conservative estimates are in the millions. Mobile users complaining about their lack of service made AT&T one of Twitter's top trending topics for the keywords 'Los Angeles'.

Red added that AT&T technicians are still working to pinpoint exactly what caused the equipment failure, in order to prevent such another failure from happening in the future.

www.wirelessindustrynews.org

Intel Says 'Goodbye MeeGo, Hello Tizen'

September 29, 2011

Some days, it seems that mobile platforms are dropping like flies, yet growing like mushrooms. On Wednesday, Intel announced that it was dropping the MeeGo mobile operating system it had launched last year with Nokia, and, at the same time, will be developing an open-source Linux mobile platform called Tizen.

Intel will work with the Linux Foundation and the LiMo Foundation in the creation and launch of Tizen, with first release of the OS by first quarter of next year, and Tizen-based devices by the middle of 2012. Tizen will be built on standards-based web technologies. MeeGo had been an attempt by Intel and Nokia to merge their two previous Linux-based platforms, Intel's Moblin and Nokia's Maemo.

On the MeeGo official blog, Intel Open Source Technology Center Director Imad Sousou asked a

key rhetorical question: "Why not just evolve MeeGo?" The answer, he said, is that "the future belongs to HTML5-based applications, outside of a relatively small percentage of apps," and Intel believes its investment should shift in that direction.

But, he added, "shifting to HTML5 doesn't just mean slapping a web runtime on an existing Linux, even one aimed at mobile, as MeeGo has been."

Sousou said that emphasizing HTML5 means APIs need to evolve with platform technology and by market segment, which a new platform could more easily provide.

Tizen will reside within the Linux Foundation, be governed by a Technical Steering Group, will be developed openly, and will support tablets, notebooks, handsets, smart TVs, and in-vehicle infotainment systems.

On the new Tizen.org website, a welcoming statement said that Tizen APIs will cover various platform capabilities, including messaging, multimedia, camera, network, and social media, and there will be a development kit for creating native code. It's not yet clear if Tizen will use any of the development that already has been done for MeeGo.

On Tuesday, Nokia announced its first MeeGo smartphone, the N9, which could well be its last. In addition to Intel abandoning MeeGo, Nokia has committed to transitioning its smartphone line to Microsoft's new Windows Phone 7 platform, for which a feature-rich Mango update became available Tuesday.

Intel's long-term commitment to MeeGo had been unclear, especially in the wake of the Nokia-Microsoft alliance. Last month, for instance, Intel and Google announced they would work together to optimize new generations of Google's open-source Android platform for the chipmaker's low-power Atom processors.

Intel is especially interested in placing its 32-nanometer Medfield chip into mobile devices, as well as coming 22-nanometer processors. The dominant processor for smartphones and tablets are those based on designs from the U.K.-based ARM Holdings. ARM chips are used in smartphones from Apple, Samsung, HTC, Research In Motion, and in tablets.

At the time last month, Intel said it was still committed to MeeGo, but that it was interested in positioning it more for embedded applications.

www.mobile-tech-today.com

Products & Services

Sprint's Unlimited Data Plans Aren't Going Anywhere, CTO Confirms

September 27, 2011

Sprint may have plenty of changes in store for its upcoming "strategy update," but it looks like one crucial policy will remain in place -- unlimited data plans. Speaking to reporters at Mobilize in San Francisco yesterday, company CTO Stephen Bye confirmed that even though competitors like Verizon and AT&T are phasing out their unlimited plans, Sprint remains committed to providing its customers with infinite data. Doing so won't come without costs, since, as Bye explained, not all unlimited subscribers eat up the same amount of data. But the exec pointed out that these efforts are counterbalanced by the relative simplicity of managing unlimited schemes, and don't seem quite as prohibitive when compared with the hidden customer support costs involved with more complex, tiered plans.

Yet despite all this optimism, Sprint seems fully aware that some major expenses are on the horizon, especially with a revamped 4G LTE network in the pipeline and, perhaps, with the iPhone 5 on the way. "Is there pressure? Yeah," Bye acknowledged. "There's a challenge for all engineers to work on how we get the cost structure down." Bye went on to reiterate, however, that although a new data network may attract new investors, it's ultimately Sprint's unique data plans that will keep its customer base intact.

www.engadget.com

Emerging Technology

New NFC Spec Makes it Easier to Swap Contacts, Save Data to Phones

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Mobile users with NFC-enabled devices will no longer need a special application in order to exchange contact details or other types of data between their phones thanks to a new NFC specification which has just been released.

The non-profit industry association The NFC Forum has published its 16th specification today, this latest being a standardization of the Simple NDEF Exchange Protocol (SNEP) to use peer-to-peer mode for data exchanges. For users, this means

less compatibility problems between devices, and for mobile app builders, it means simplified development.

Without getting overly technical (the full spec is available here, if interested), the new specification extends the NFC data exchange format (NDEF), which previously described how data, like a website URL for instance, would be moved from an NFC tag to a NFC-enabled phone by tapping or waving a mobile device within close proximity to the tag.

NFC, or "near field communication," refers to the wireless technology that allows data exchange over short distances. It's the backbone to the many upcoming mobile wallet systems, like Google Wallet, Visa's wallet or the carrier-led initiative Isis, which just announced partnerships with all major Android device manufacturers.

With the new specification, devices from different manufacturers would be interoperable when it came to exchanging data. That means, for example, assuming the iPhone 5 includes NFC, you could tap your iPhone to an Android user's phone to exchange contact info, pictures, URLs, or any sort of supported data. And you wouldn't necessarily need a special app to do so, although apps like Bump at least provide an attractive front-end to the data exchanging experience. (Bump does not use NFC currently, but it could support it in the future, if the developers chose). Instead, the data-exchange via NFC option could be built into the OS, similar to how Bluetooth is made available today.

The NFC Forum suggests contact exchanges as one possibility for the new spec's use, in addition to "collecting movie posters for later use." That is, a mobile user could tap posters with NFC tags while walking by and later tap their NFC-enabled TV to watch the trailers they saved. (Yes, please!)

That said, support for NFC is still years out, according to most forecasts, and until Apple's announcement next month, we don't know if the iPhone 5 will include the technology. Still, there's a lot of momentum in the space, and the reactionary nature of the Isis announcement seems to imply Apple's forthcoming participation. Good news, then, that the new (fingers crossed!) NFC-enabled iPhones will now be able to work with my Nexus S.

techcrunch.com

Mergers & Acquisitions

Telecity Buys UK Grid for Manchester Expansion

September 26, 2011

European colocation provider Telecity Group (LON:TCY, news, filings) hit the acquisition trail this morning, announcing the purchase of UK Grid for £11.7M. UK Grid operates over 50,000 square feet of carrier neutral colo space spread across three data centers in Manchester, which lies few hundred kilometers to the northwest of London.

They already have three locations in Manchester, totalling about 36,000 square feet with a fourth under construction and due to open soon. So this deal will more than double their current presence, with the potential for additional expansion. Both Telecity and UK Grid operate space at Synergy house, increasing the combined company's depth there. The limiting factor these days is often power though, so rather than square feet (or meters), the announcement lists instead the 1.5 megawatts that will be added to Telecity's current capacity. They have another 3.5 megawatts of capacity coming online with that soon to be completed facility.

Telecity's Manchester presence has been constrained for some time, according to material on their website. Apparently organic expansion alone wasn't sufficient to meet that demand.

www.telecomramblings.com

Industry Reports

Android Continues its Rise to the Top, Getting Even More Popular

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Today, Nielsen is providing us with some more information on Android's accelerated rise to the top of the list.

The market research company reports that about 56 percent of wireless users who bought a new smartphone since mid-June chose a Google Android unit.

"The preferences of these people are important as they are often a leading indicator of where the market is going," said Don Kellogg, Nielsen's director of telecom research.

A recent survey performed in August reveals that 43 percent of all smartphone owners have an Android device, with the iPhone in second place at 28 percent.

But Kellogg warned that Android smartphone makers should not rest on their laurels – consumer sentiment could change quickly if Apple comes out with a new iPhone, say the iPhone 6 in early 2012.

The rumor mill has been churning out steady reports that Sprint will get the iPhone in October. Sprint CEO Dan Hesse has talked a bit about the rumors, neither confirming nor denying the reports.

Hesse recently added that the iPhone was the number one reason customers drop their current handset for an iPhone device.

www.wirelessindustrynews.org

T-Mobile Joins Verizon, Takes Samsung's Side in Apple Patent Suit

September 29, 2011

It looks as though the carriers are ready to weigh in on the Apple vs. Samsung case, with Verizon and T-Mobile both voicing their opinions over the past week. Since the original showdown in April — when Apple sued Samsung over Galaxy tablets and smartphones — Apple has had the upper-hand, winning an injunction against the Galaxy Tab 10.1 in Germany, delaying the same GalTab multiple times in Australia, and winning a preliminary injunction on three Galaxy smartphones in the Netherlands.

After watching the events play out, Verizon and now T-Mobile have said that they play for Samsung's team, and would like to keep Samsung's products on their shelves.

On Monday, Verizon filed paperwork with the Northern District Court of California saying that a ban on Samsung products, or Apple's efforts to do so, would hurt the carrier's ability to roll out its 4G LTE network.

"That investment depends on consumers having access to devices that can make use of that network," Verizon said in the filing. "The accused Samsung devices are among the few products that can access Verizon Wireless's next-generation high-speed network."

On Wednesday T-Mobile followed suit, filing its own paperwork with the court asking that Samsung products be left alone, reports Reuters. T-Mobile's

main concern, according to the filing, is holiday sales this year.

The pink carrier “prominently features” the Galaxy Tab 10.1 and Galaxy S II in its marketing campaigns, says the filing, and an order in Apple’s favor would “unnecessarily harm” T-Mobile and T-Mo customers. “At this late date, T-Mobile could not find comparable replacement products for the 2011 holiday season,” said T-Mobile in the filing. “These investments cannot be recouped easily.”

After six months of world-wide bickering between Apple and Samsung, and countless other patent wars spring up all over the place, the carriers are surely getting worried about how these cases may affect their businesses. The court is expected to make a ruling on October 13.

techcrunch.com

Spotify Linked to Major Decline in Music Piracy

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More than a decade ago, Napster came along and decimated the music industry’s old way of doing business. The file-sharing service let the proverbial cat out of the bag, and since then, people have been able to get whatever music they want for free.

Disgruntled by their relatively thinly padded pockets, the music industry has responded with an endless stream of ludicrous lawsuits that seek absurd amounts in damages from dastardly file-sharers. Because of the threat of being taken to court for downloading an album or two (or 5,000), many are still willing to pay for music, one way or another. Nowadays, that’s where Spotify comes in.

The Sweden based music-streaming service, which just launched in the US in July, has reportedly been linked to a 25 percent drop in music piracy in Sweden since the service went live in 2009, reports Torrent Freak. That includes a full 9 percent drop in the past year alone. The numbers are impressive, but it’s not hard to see why this is the case.

Spotify offers users unlimited music for little (or no) money. Pay just \$10 per month – the cost of a single album – and you can literally play music non-stop on your computer or mobile device. Not only that, but you get to choose from Spotify’s catalog of 15 million songs, and connect with friends through the service’s social features in the process. Don’t want to pay? No problem – Spotify also has various options (depending on whether you’re in the US or Europe) for getting at least some music for free.

In other words, listening to music through Spotify is far better than risking the wrath of Big Music by pirating their product. Spotify, in fact, bills itself as exactly that, with a company representative telling us recently that Spotify is a “more convenient alternative to piracy.”

According to TorrentFreak, the number of users who used Spotify in Sweden surpassed the number who downloaded music illegally in a mere three months after the service went live.

Here in the US, Spotify isn’t the only option – and it may not even be the best, depending on user preference. Pandora, MOG, Rdio, Grooveshark – the list goes on. We don’t yet have numbers to show how these services are affecting music piracy in the US. But we’d put our money on them having a similar effect as Spotify is having in Sweden.

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