TNS Wi-Fi Solution Prepares To Relieve Data Traffic Pressure

Mobile operators have been given a preview of a new automatic Wi-Fi roaming solution from Transaction Network Services which is based on wireless technology from Cisco and will help enable subscribers to obtain data services with a high level of security using over 600,000 commercial hotspots around the world.

The solution, called Next Generation HotSpot, makes Wi-Fi a trusted network in a cellular operator's Radio Access Network (RAN), and is based on the Next Generation HotSpot industry program at the Wireless Broadband Alliance (WBA). It was demonstrated at the WBA conference in Paris last month. Next Generation HotSpot will help mobile operators serve the exponential increase in subscribers' use of Internet services by using Wi-Fi as an efficient extension of proprietary cellular networks.

Dan Dooley, President of TNS' Telecommunication Services Division, said: "Our new end-to-end solution, working in co-operation with Cisco and the WBA, will enable mobile operators to take advantage of the global Wi-Fi footprint without having to change any critical interfaces or authentication, billing and roaming processes. Until now, the use of Wi-Fi has been severely limited with subscribers forced to manually discover, select and access each hotspot, while operators lacked visibility into which users were roaming onto Wi-Fi."

Next Generation HotSpot uses HotSpot 2.0 specifications from the Wi-Fi Alliance for automatic and interoperable authentication with security features and roaming across service provider networks. This specification allows mobile subscribers to automatically connect to hotspots using their service provider credentials while maintaining roaming visibility for the operator.

Dooley said: "With Next Generation HotSpot, Wi-Fi can effectively become an extension of mobile operators' own radio network capacity and coverage, which will be especially valuable in high-usage locations, such as hotels, coffee shops and travel hubs. Operators can continuously monitor and manage cellular-like service over Wi-Fi, both domestically and internationally, enhancing performance and meeting the ever-increasing demand for mobile data services."

Next Generation HotSpot includes handsets and Unified WLAN products from Cisco, which are adapted and connected to operators' existing networks by TNS. TNS provides roaming solutions for hundreds of mobile operators today through a suite of services that includes inter-carrier billing, signalling, authentication and interworking.

The HotSpot 2.0 specification has been devised by the Wi-Fi Alliance to address

specific concerns about Wi-Fi use. It ensures the process is easy to use by automatically discovering and selecting the Wi-Fi network preferred by the home mobile service provider and reuses subscribers' existing credentials to provide simple access. Privacy and security is enhanced as HotSpot 2.0 specifies that all connections must use the highest available encryption method, while fraud protection is governed by mutual authentication requirements.

A new white paper entitled NGH: Maintaining Profitability of Mobile Data Services provides a more in-depth overview of Next Generation HotSpot and considers how it will help the telecommunications industry to maintain the profitability of mobile data services. Copies of the white paper, written by TNS and Cisco, are available to download from the TNS website: NGH White Paper.

TNS operates the largest, independent SS7 network in North America, providing network, database and next generation services to over 700 telecommunications companies around the world. TNS provides services to customers in 60 countries worldwide and can access virtually any SS7 legacy or IP network around the globe. TNS is a member of the Cisco Managed Services Channel Program.

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