

## Hammerman: Don't Let Marketing Overtake Your Network

Wireless telcos are working to deploy 3G services, but the job may be too big for some to go it alone.

*By Ted Hammerman  
for Office.com*

Feb. 14, 2001— With rapidly increasing competition in the wireless industry, telecommunications carriers are being challenged to focus more on marketing their products and retaining customers and less on engineering and maintaining their networks.

For many carriers, the transition has been detrimental to network quality. Internal management problems and improper outsourcing has resulted in poor network performance, higher churn rates and lower subscriber counts.

In the wireless business, network performance is paramount: It can determine your successfulness as a carrier.

Here are some helpful options to consider when choosing the right outsourcing alternatives for the deployment of third generation, or 3G, technology and services.

As the Federal Communications Commission continues to release and auction additional spectrum, wireless carriers are working feverishly to develop products and services to transmit wireless data, video and voice to many devices. At the same time, the race is on to upgrade existing wireless communications to 3G standards.

Entrepreneurial companies are developing networks that offer high-speed wireless Internet and video to office complexes, college campuses and large housing developments. The amount of progress and expansion in wireless technology is at an all time high, and this is just the beginning.

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Mericom Corp.

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Wireless service providers planning to roll out the latest 3G technologies have some serious challenges ahead. Many existing mobile carriers will be replacing or installing additional base stations at every transmission site in their networks. Larger carriers have thousands of sites to upgrade without disrupting service to existing customers.

For such ambitious projects, it may be more effective to let the experts

handle it.

"When considering the cost and effort associated with deploying and managing your network, it comes down to a buy versus build analysis," suggests Seth Buechley, VP of business development for Mericom Corp., a leader in 3G network deployment. "By opting to outsource work, businesses can reduce their costs, their distractions and their liability.

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"Some of the more progressive outsourcing companies provide 3G entrants speed-to-market by overseeing all aspects of staffing, radio-frequency engineering, site selection, permitting, construction, equipment installation, and operations," Buechley adds.

The demand for outsourcing services is significant and will continue to grow. In 2000, 30,000 new transmission sites were developed for personal communications services, or PCS, in the United States. Mericom's management anticipates that with the implementation of 3G technologies, new demand for service will result in an additional 40,000 to 60,000 new sites.

"It's critical to choose a company that can solve the problems associated with converging technologies while deploying a network that also minimizes the visual impact of new towers in a community," says Buechley.

When selecting a 3G network-deployment company, strive to secure a comprehensive agreement custom-tailored to your company's needs. Seek assistance from companies displaying a broad range of technical and real estate knowledge.

Ask for references and check them. Also, consider a company's history of the following:

- **Best practices:** a focus on customer service and the ability to deliver custom-tailored solutions.
- **Quality clients:** the ability to meet the network deployment needs of high-caliber, reputable clients (from a construction and a communications perspective).
- **Strategy, staffing, site selection, engineering and operations:** an ability to deliver these features to ensure a comprehensive solution.

By outsourcing your deployment needs, you will be better positioned to capitalize on market opportunities and to expand your company's business offerings. Outsourcing can also help enhance your service reliability and performance, reduce related operating expenses and allow you to remain focused on your core business.

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