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April 4, 2007

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Cable Digital News

Camiant Puts Video Policy Gear Into Play

Camiant Inc. has introduced a new video-focused policy platform that will face stiff competition from larger companies such as Motorola Inc. (NYSE: MOT - message board) and C-COR Corp. (Nasdaq: CCBL - message board).

That product, the Universal Edge Resource Manager (UERM), is the latest in a new category of cable gear that aims to maximize bandwidth efficiency across advanced video-centric services, including video-on-demand (VOD) and switched digital video (SDV). As designed, the UERM will sit between session managers and universal edge QAMs, another emerging cable technology that will enable the sharing of resources across an operator's set of data, voice, and video offerings.

"Policy is becoming more important on the video side," said Camiant Chief Technology Officer Susie Kim Riley. That starts with VOD, but will eventually include applications such as switched broadcast and network-based digital video recording.

Those emerging service hotbeds have also attracted plenty of ERM competition. In addition to Camiant, C-COR and Motorola are among the early developers of edge resource management technology. Motorola entered the ERM game last fall when it acquired closely held Vertasent LLC.

ERMs, according to C-COR Senior Vice President of Advanced Global Technology Joe Matarese, will be required to handle at least four applications: VOD, SDV, the modular cable modem termination system (M-CMTS), and addressable advertising. Also on his list is the DOCSIS IPTV Bypass Architecture (DIBA), a proposal spawned by Motorola that looks to sidestep the CMTS and deliver IP video directly through edge QAM devices.

Motorola, meanwhile, is focusing its present ERM efforts on VOD and switched digital video, with support coming later for high-speed data and other services, according to Bruce Bradley, director of product management for Motorola's Connected Home Solutions division.

With the UERM, Camiant hopes to apply policy control to video services in much the same way it has for high-speed data applications. Those examples include "turbo buttons," which allow customers to ratchet up their Internet speeds on the fly, as well as "speed preview," a capability already offered by Cox Communications Inc.

Competition in the ERM sector will heat up once operators move out of the testing phase.

Riley said Camiant's entrant is presently in lab trials with undisclosed MSOs, though deployments could emerge by the end of 2007. C-COR and Motorola said their respective ERM products are in active lab and field trials.

Despite a lack of actual deployments, ERM technology is fairly high on the cable engineering agenda. CableLabs, the cable industry's Louisville, Colo.-based R&D house, has issued an Edge Resource Manager Interface specification, which is an element of a broader set of specs for the M-CMTS.

To become relevant to the widest possible range of cable network setups, those vendors will also have to complete integrations with multiple edge QAM models. Motorola has completed hookups with its own eQAM, a Harmonic Inc. (Nasdaq: HLIT - message board) eQAM, and has done some preliminary work with the Arris International Inc. (Nasdaq: ARRS - message board) Keystone D5 DMTS. Matarese said C-COR has integrated with multiple vendors, though its "primary focus" is with the Harmonic eQAM, in support of present field trials. Camiant, a company official said, has also completed multiple eQAM integrations and expects to announce those in the coming weeks.

Also expect vendors to outfit their ERM gear to comply with MSO-led standards and interfaces such as the Time Warner Cable Inc. Interactive Services Architecture (ISA) and the Comcast Corp. (Nasdaq: CMCSA, CMCSK) Next Generation on Demand platform.