

Posted by Administrator

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Wi-Fi faces a lot of challenges, but will also be a source many opportunities as the mobile and Internet worlds collide head on, according to a recent keynote speech by Bob Friday, chief technology officer of Cisco Systems' wireless networking business. One example of this collision cited by Mr. Friday was the convergence of DAS and Wi-Fi systems in large venues.

"When you look what's happening in this new world, we're actually trying to mobilize the entire Internet," Friday said. "And when you look at the scope of the effort that's necessary to take all the traffic off the Internet and put in on some sort of wireless network, you start to appreciate the size and the scope of the problem we have in this innovation cycle." The transition is going to be difficult, he said, noting that it took 20 years to build out cellular voice networks to get enough capacity to disconnect from wired networks. "When you look who's suffering the most pain in this new world, it is the mobile operators. They're at the point of the spear when it comes to mobilizing the Internet," Friday said. "These are the mobile operators who had nice, mild, short messaging data customers. What happened is they stuck the iPhone and Tablets into the hands of these nice, short messaging data customers, and now they're mobile Internet carnivores overnight."

The answer to the dilemma, Friday said, is building more LTE networks, outside and inside of buildings, and further combining the mobile and Internet worlds. "We need to converge the mobile Internet experience with the mobile cellular experience we've become dependent upon in our voice world," he said. "We're going to be seeing both Wi-Fi and cellular become a key part of this mobile Internet experience in the future." Friday addressed whether a business model can be made for a free service like Wi-Fi, saying that the expectation of Internet connectivity makes Wi-Fi build out a necessity. "In this new world, what people value is connectivity to the Internet," Friday said. "They are no longer concerned whether it's LTE or Wi-Fi. What they value is access to their video and their social networking content. So the point is infrastructure cost money whether it's Wi-Fi or cellular." Friday pointed out that enterprises that have thousands of laptops and wireless users in the field are beginning to look like service providers. "With the introduction of the mobile device into the enterprise base, the enterprise IT departments are going through an identity crisis," he said. "With this new innovation cycle around mobile devices, they're in a mode of trying to decide what to outsource and what to build. They're looking to many of you in this room right now to help them."

Also looking more like service providers are enterprises that deal with consumers inside of their venues, such as hospitalities, hospitals and stadiums. "These are customers that typically have built DAS systems and they're also trying to build Wi-Fi systems in parallel with them," Friday said. "And to some extent, I don't think they really care. What they really care about is they need to provide some sort of mobile Internet connectivity in a neutral-host way to the

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customers coming inside of these venues.” Venues that offer a connect-to-consumer experience are interested in knowing who’s on their network and they need the analytics to understand if the users have opted in to a loyalty program. “They want to be able to help that customer before he actually gets toward the venue,” Friday said. “They want to help them with geo-location on the cellular side, let them know they’re about to enter the store, and they want to help them with Wi-Fi when they start to enter the store.” Venues, such as airports, are interested in using DAS and Wi-Fi to learn how people are moving inside of their venues for operational reasons. Seamless connectivity is also important to venue owners, getting customers on and off their networks easily and quickly. Venues have an opportunity to enhance their customers’ experience by tailoring the information that is pushed out to smart phones in their hands, Friday said. “In this mobile Internet, people are starting to demand data in a much more efficient and quicker way. And they’re expecting the network to help them do that,” Friday said. “The information I need should be rolled into my hands and to my preferences. And the network should be able to deliver that information to me, or at least making certain the pile information I need to find is a lot smaller.”