Enterprise-funded DAS Program Gains Partners

By J. Sharpe Smith

The wireless industry continues to work to penetrate the in-building enterprise wireless market, which has not taken off the way many thought it would because of the expense and hassle of deploying distributed antennas system (DAS) networks.

Building owners need help adding signal sources from all the carriers, as well as their base station equipment, when it comes to making their DAS networks operational. That was the idea when Cheytec Telecommunications began a program, called Accelerate, in January of last year.

Cheytec, which installs and operates wireless equipment and communications systems, spent the last year developing a dozen partnerships with systems integrators, such as Squan, Symphony Technology Solutions and CTS, and with original equipment manufacturers, such as Advanced RF Technologies, Solid and Zinwave.

Most recently, Cheytec teamed up with CommScope to provide RF signal sources for its DAS and C-RAN antenna system deployments.

"CommScope's advanced C-RAN and DAS, combined with Cheytec's operator relationships and prearranged service-provider signal sources, enable a faster and smoother turn-up for our customers and a simpler path for future upgrades," said Mike Shumate, CommScope's vice president of business operations for distributed coverage and capacity solutions.

Keith Pennachio, executive vice president of Squan, said that fewer carrier operators are willing to wholly support the design and construction of distributed antenna systems unless the economics make sense. He said this typically means that large venues such as stadiums, airports, shopping malls and other large-scale, publicly accessible environments receive the attention in the form of budgeted dollars from the carriers. The network operators in these cases may look to companies such as Crown Castle or American Tower to build, own and operate the systems.

"With those design and construction dollars directed to these larger venues, it leaves a huge area of unsupported facilities, including office buildings; condominium, apartment and high-rise buildings; mixed-use developments; and other environments whose occupants are becoming more and more demanding when it comes to wireless telecommunications as an amenity," Pennachio said. "In turn, this has given rise to a mix of parties who are tired of waiting for the carriers to fund these types of projects."

Cheytec has the ability to meet that pent-up demand by procuring and licensing the wireless carrier-certified RF signal sources and the base station equipment required to power in-building systems — equipment that was previously only available directly to the wireless carriers. Through strategic partnerships, Cheytec is bringing that ability to DAS providers, facilitating sales to building owners and thus opening up the enterprise market.

"Accelerate is a program that matches where we are as an industry at this point, which is starting to pull the onus of capital contribution for in-building wireless systems out of the hands of the carriers to the control of the enterprise or building owner," said Ed Myers, Cheytec's regional vice president of sales and marketing.

Adding 12 partners rapidly brought hundreds of new salespeople into Cheytec's channel, all of whom need to be educated on the program and who also need to be coached in selling solutions. Cheytec has an extensive training program, including a sales track and a technical track. Salespeople need to be prepped to hold a financial conversation with their customer instead of a technological one, according to Myers.

Cheytec will add more companies eventually if they fit into its distribution strategy. "In choosing our partners, we are trying to be strategic in terms of looking at their market share and overall pipeline in development," Myers said. "We look at regional players that are active and national players on the OEM side, trying to extend the footprint of our program."

Along with Cheytec's carrier signal agreements, the foundation for Accelerate is its RF-equipment ownership agreements, purchase and distribution, with Ericsson and Nokia, baseband units, radios and ancillary equipment to drive the indoor wireless equipment.

"Our relationships with the RF equipment OEMs were borne out of our work directly with Ericsson directly supporting one of its carrier customers," Myers said. "We were able to get a similar agreement with Nokia." ■