

Ovum's Innovative Service of the Month: AT&T's first responder network

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Ovum view

Summary

As part of Ovum's ongoing Telco Services Innovation Radar project, we reviewed 53 announcements of innovative services launched by service providers around the world in April 2018. Our selection for innovation of the month is AT&T's nationwide public safety communications platform dedicated to first responders in the US. The network, called FirstNet, is the first of its kind in the US and was built as a private–public partnership with the First Responder Network Authority over the last 12 months.

FirstNet leverages AT&T's core competencies

Network operators are looking in myriad areas for new opportunities to grow revenues and increase their relevance beyond core connectivity services, yet offering connectivity with tangible added value remains a relatively low-risk opportunity for them to improve their position in the value chain. FirstNet is exactly this type of service as it is a pure connectivity play that adds tangible value.

The FirstNet evolved packet core is built on physically separate hardware, giving first responders their own separate nationwide broadband network. Only FirstNet traffic will move through the core with a dedicated FirstNet SIM. The Samsung Galaxy S9/S9+ and rugged devices such as the Sonim XP8 and XP5s will be coming soon. The FirstNet SIM will also work with other devices, but firmware updates may be required. The Netgear Nighthawk M1 hotspot router will also accept the FirstNet SIM.

Next steps: Evolve network capabilities and apply best practices across the business

For AT&T, a leading provider of a wide range of services to all market segments, the FirstNet network core will be a springboard for ongoing innovation and advanced functionality across the business. To increase its relevance to users, AT&T will look to expand the range of value-added capabilities it offers over the network. These will be focused on the demanding connectivity and service requirements of first responders, and may include high-bandwidth applications such as HD video and audio streaming, as well as less bandwidth-hungry but equally crucial services such as push to talk and high-precision location awareness.

Augmented reality (AR) in conjunction with FirstNet is one promising opportunity for AT&T. Overlaying digital information across different sensory inputs to experts not at the scene could save lives if AR can give them an "at-the-incident" experience. Similarly, if FirstNet can support low-latency services, then there are clear opportunities to launch services such as telemedicine.

AT&T is in a great position to leverage FirstNet in new areas if it can use it as a springboard to develop in-house expertise in network optimization and new service development. Other large telcos with mobile networks can assess similar opportunities in their own markets, especially if AT&T gains competitive advantage in other areas as a result of the expertise and capability developed through it.

Appendix

Further reading

"Ovum's Innovative Service of the Month: Telenor's Smart Retail service," GLB007-000066 (May 2018)

"Ovum's Innovative Service of the Month: AT&T's connected car IoT partnership with CarForce," GLB007-000067 (May 2018)

"Ovum's Innovative Service of the Month: Optus Assistant service," GLB007-000037 (March 2018)

"Ovum's Innovative Service of the Month: Du's Smart Identity blockchain solution," GLB007-000025 (January 2018)

"Ovum's Innovative Service of the Month: Telstra's One Number eSIM service," GLB007-000015 (December 2017)

"Ovum's Innovative Service of the Month: SK Telecom's disaster relief drones," TE0009-001690 (September 2017)

"Ovum's Innovative Service of the Month: Vodafone Germany's insurance telematics service," TE0009-001688 (September 2017)

"Ovum's Innovative Service of the Month: Vodafone's 'E3raflil' app," TE0009-001665 (July 2017)

"Ovum's Innovative Service of the Month: A1's Video Ident," TE0009-001649 (May 2017)

"Ovum's Innovative Service of the Month: MTN's mobile solar electricity system," TE0009-001634 (May 2017)

Telco Services Innovation Radar: 1Q17, TE0009-001641 (March 2017)

Telco Services Innovation Radar 2016: Analysis and Case Studies, TE0009-001621 (April 2017)

Telco Services Innovation Radar: 4Q16, TE0009-001607 (March 2017)

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