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News@2 - July 11, 2007

News Briefs for July 11, 2007

Companies in today's briefs include: Laird Technologies, Bridgewater, Alvarion, Synchronica, Critical Path, **Sena Cases**, Tango Networks, Reliance Communications, Alcatel-Lucent, LetsTalk, Rok TV, Nokia, Verizon Communications

â€¢ **Sena Cases** has launched a line of luxury, protective leather cases for the new iPhone. There are five styles: MagnetFlipper, LeatherSkin, Elegia Pouch, UltraSlim Pouch and the Dockable.

Megasoft to Acquire Boston Communications

By Teresa von Fuchs

Boston Communications has agreed to be acquired by Megasoft, an Indian computer-programming firm. Boston Communications makes billing software used by wireless carriers. Megasoft will pay \$3.60 per share of Boston Communications stock or approximately \$65 million in cash.

The offer of \$3.60 per share is an 81% increase over Boston's closing price of \$1.99 yesterday, and 120% increase over the software company's average closing price of \$1.20 per share.

Both companies' boards have approved the deal, and it is expected to close in the third quarter, following regulatory approval.

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Checking Out with PayPal Mobile

By Teresa von Fuchs

PayPal today announced the launch of Mobile Checkout, a service allowing consumers in the United States, the U.K. and Canada to buy items securely using the mobile Web.

PayPal says the mobile solution offers a quick and easy buyer experience, industry leading security and a straightforward interface. To use PayPal Mobile Checkout, consumers just click on the PayPal button on a merchant's mobile formatted Web site.

"Millions of consumers have chosen PayPal because it offers a safer, easier way to pay online," Kevin Dulsky, senior director of PayPal Mobile, said in a company statement. "As the mobile commerce market grows as an extension of ecommerce, it will be critical for online merchants to adopt a secure mobile payment platform to reach new consumers and to remain competitive in the market."

PayPal has partnered with CardinalCommerce, GPShopper and mPoria to offer its Mobile Checkout solution.

In April 2006, PayPal introduced its first mobile payment service, allowing consumers to buy, donate or send money using a text message-based service from their mobile devices.

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Motorola, Microsoft Extend Partner Relationship

By Wireless Week Staff

Motorola and Microsoft announced an extension of their relationship, enabling joint partners to develop Microsoft Dynamics-based applications for select Motorola mobile computers. Announced in conjunction with Microsoft's launch of its new Dynamics AX Mobile Sales solution and Dynamics Mobile Development Tools, this extended partnership allows Motorola Partner Select members to port their enterprise mobility solutions to Microsoft's Dynamics platform.

Both companies hope this relationship will present new opportunities for both vendors' channel partners. As a result of the agreement, Motorola and Microsoft partners will now be able to join the other vendor's partner community following a qualification process.

"We have been working very closely with Motorola Enterprise Mobility Solutions in the development of our tools and applications for well over a year," said Bjarne Schon, product unit manager of Microsoft Dynamics Mobile, in a statement. "We are very excited about teaming with Motorola and its mobility solutions partners on a global basis. As a leader in enterprise mobility, Motorola has a strong partner program and the broad coverage needed to support Microsoft Dynamics' efforts to provide mobility solutions to our customers."

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Coalition Advocates Open Networks, Unlocked Devices

By Joni Morse

At a press conference, The Open Internet Coalition highlighted hot buttons before its scheduled testimony before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet today. Pushing for regulations that favor consumers by forcing wireless carriers to open their networks and unlock devices, the consumer advocacy group said doing so would allow for more consumer choice among mobile devices and applications.

Chris Murray, legislative counsel for the Consumers Union, called early-termination fees and blocking third-party applications anti-competitive practices. He also said carriers stifle device and application portability by not allowing for open access to their networks.

"What gives them (wireless carriers) this market power, to stop applications from reaching consumers?" asked Murray. "They have coupled access to devices and applications with networks."

As for early termination fees, Murray said the only justifications offered by carriers don't make sense. He said carriers claim that early termination fees help to provide subsidies and lower prices for consumers, but he argued that the non-subsidized iPhone party disproves this explanation.

"Consumers don't get a single dime of subsidy on the new iPhone, yet it's still going to get them locked into a 2-year deal with a \$175 penalty if they want to leave for another carrier," said Murray.

As for charging consumers early termination fees to as a means of keeping prices low, Murray said that he seriously doubts that carriers base their policies on practices that maintain lowered prices.

Ben Scott, Washington policy director for Free Press, said Apple's iPhone introduction has shed light on three important mobile Internet issues: consumer choice, open networks and the FCC's policies regarding the upcoming 700 MHz spectrum auction.

Scott called the iPhone a "bellweather" for determining the future of mobile broadband devices as well as for the mobile Internet itself.

"This hearing might as well be called the iPhone hearing," said Scott.

Tim Wu, professor at Columbia School of Law, is also scheduled to testify before Congress today and said he plans to focus on "locking and blocking." He said device portability rules need to be updated because consumers are asking why they can't use their existing cell phone if and when they change carriers.

Wu questioned whether consumers would tolerate having to buy a new TV every time they switched to a new cable or satellite provider.

"A ban on blocking is long overdue," said Wu. "The time has come for this industry to become a normal industry."

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The Orchard Merges with Digital Music

By Wireless Week Staff

Digital music distributors, The Orchard Enterprises and Digital Music Group, have announced the two will merge. The combined business will retain DMG's NASDAQ listing and change its name to The Orchard. Orchard's current president and CEO Greg Scholl will lead the combined company.

The combined company will control a substantial catalog of entertainment assets, with more than 1 million music recordings and thousands of hours of television, film and video. The company says it will continue to serve artists, labels, music publishers, TV, film and video library owners and other rights holders by developing new and inventive ways to market and sell digital content.

"DMGI and The Orchard create a powerful combination in the rapidly growing digital media industry," said Greg Scholl, president of the new combined company, in a company statement. "There are substantial opportunities for combined revenue synergies and cost reductions."

Both parties expect to close the merger in the fourth quarter of 2007, subject to a shareholder vote in favor of the merger.

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Brightstar Receives More Funding

By Teresa von Fuchs

Brightstar announced today it has received \$283 million in equity financing from Lindsay Goldberg, a New York-based investment partnership.

Through the transaction, Lindsay Goldberg acquired a significant stake in Brightstar and has become the largest shareholder after its founder and CEO, Marcelo Claire.

With the capital investment, Brightstar hopes to fund its global infrastructure expansion, including the recently announced joint venture with Tech Data in Europe, as well as its planned expansion in Asia and North America.

With headquarters in Miami, Brightstar has facilities in 49 countries on six continents.

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FoneMine Launches Interactive Platform

By Monica Allevan

FoneMine is stepping out with the wide availability of its platform that allows corporations and service providers to launch mobile interactive application services on any phone, with any carrier.

The Sunnyvale, Calif.-based company says its platform treats mobile as a "first-class citizen," not just an afterthought or for fun. Current customers include major advertisers, international service providers and financial institutions. GETIT Infomediary in New Delhi, India, is one of the service providers using the FoneMine platform to take its Yellow Page solution mobile and launch a WAP-based mobile Yellow Pages.

FoneMine says other solutions are too complex and expensive, but its platform was developed with the idea that businesses and services providers need to easily and quickly build mobile-centric applications that work on any phone. "It's so simple, it's almost like do-it-yourself mobile marketing," says Jagadish Bandhole, FoneMine CEO and founder.

No downloads are necessary on the end-users' part, he says. The platform works across voice, SMS and the mobile Internet.

In one example of how the platform can be used, Bandhole describes how Realtors want to provide as much customized information as possible to their clients. That can't be done on the Web because it's a broadcast medium, but on mobile, the platform allows for sending more details on a house, with security and personalization built in. "It's all opt-in based," with only interested parties interacting with the system. A couple of Jack In the Box restaurants in California also are using the platform to distribute coupons.

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â€¢ **Laird Technologies** has established a Corporate Research Laboratory in Bangalore, India. The laboratory will develop novel materials for use in electronic components and systems. A broad range of technical specialists, including physicists, chemists and material scientists, will be recruited in the coming months to staff the laboratory. Dr. B. K. Chandrasekhar has been appointed director of the Bangalore Laboratory, coming to Laird Technologies from General Electric where he held a similar position.

â€¢ **Bridgewater** has joined **Alvarion's** OPEN WiMAX ecosystem to provide subscriber-centric policy management solutions for WiMAX deployments. With the signing of a worldwide reseller agreement, Alvarion will offer Bridgewater's proven AAA Service Controller as part of its all-IP 4Motion WiMAX solution.

â€¢ **Synchronica's** Mobile Gateway 3.0 now supports over-the-air synchronization between Microsoft Exchange and the Apple iPhone. This will allow operators and service providers to offer mobile synchronization to business users, enabling them to receive corporate e-mail on their iPhones without having to ask their IT managers to open the firewall or install additional software. Mobile Gateway uses Microsoft's Outlook Web Access (OWA) to retrieve e-mail from the corporate Exchange server, a service enabled by many enterprises to provide users with access to corporate e-mail from home or while traveling. Commenting on the decision to support Microsoft Exchange synchronization with the Apple iPhone, Carsten Brinkschulte, Synchronica CEO, said, "The iPhone is a very attractive smartphone, appealing to both the consumer and prosumer market. However, IT managers are not going to permit their executives to synchronize a device that requires them to punch holes in the corporate firewall. Mobile Gateway already supports synchronization with Microsoft Exchange, but does not require firewall modification or any software to be installed in the corporate network, so this won't be an issue. From a carrier's perspective, we are significantly expanding the reach of the iPhone into the business user and prosumer segments."

â€¢ **Critical Path**, provider of messaging software and services, has promoted Mark Palomba from executive vice president, worldwide sales and field operations, to CEO. Mark Ferrer will continue to serve as chairman of the board.

â€¢ **Tango Networks** has enhanced its Abrazo fixed-mobile convergence solution, with the addition of IMS functionality, enabling service providers to extend the power of IMS-based systems to the enterprise network. Abrazo is based on IMS, but is compatible with existing carrier network architectures, including IS-41, WIN, GSM/UMTS, and CAMEL. In addition, the Tango Abrazo supports enterprise movement to IP by including support for legacy, hybrid, and IP-PBXs.

â€¢ **India's Reliance Communications** has awarded **Alcatel-Lucent** an IP-based, next-generation, wireless network expansion project valued at more than \$400 million. With this deployment, Reliance Communications, India's largest integrated telecom service provider, will be able to expand its wireless network to more than 20,000 towns and 600,000 villages. The deployment incorporates both CDMA and GSM standards. Reliance was traditionally a Lucent CDMA customer, but following the merger the operator expanded its relationship to include GSM technology. Alcatel-Lucent also will provide a comprehensive suite of network integration services, including network optimization, system support and general project management.

â€¢ **LetsTalk**, an online retailer of cell phones, wireless devices and service plans, announced it has appointed Ruth Yankoupe as COO. Yankoupe will oversee the company's call center, activation, fulfillment and human resource functions, and will spend half of her time in the company's new, 45,000-square-foot customer contact and fulfillment center in the Dallas/Fort Worth metro area. Yankoupe most recently managed Sprint Nextel's telesales channel, 3,000 inbound and outbound telesales representatives in seven countries and 13 locations.

â€¢ U.K.-based **ROK TV** has secured a deal to provide business news TV channels to **Nokia E-Series** handsets. ROK TV will be available via the Downloads! Service on Nokia E series devices. Two channel packages will be offered: a 5-channel "Strictly Business" package, to be charged in the U.K. at Â£5 a month, with a heavy emphasis on business news and information channels such as Bloomberg, CNBC Europe, EuroNews in nine languages and regional news channels, and a 10-channel ROK All TV package, to be charged at Â£10 a month containing all the live business news channels as well as additional sports news, business videos and comedy channels. Currently ROK TV is available only in the U.K., it expects to deploy into mainland Europe beginning in August.

â€¢ **Verizon Communications** announced that it has extended its FIOS TV service to more than 15,000 additional households in Newport News and Virginia Beach. In addition to Newport News and Virginia Beach, Verizon currently offers FIOS Internet and TV services in much of Northern Virginia and the Richmond area. The company offers FIOS Internet and TV service to over 3.1 million households in 11 states.

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