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## Is Building Wireless Keeping Pace with the Mobile Revolution?

Cellular coverage has always been an interesting subject within the Commercial Real Estate Market. Thirteen years ago the relationship between the Real Estate industry and the Wireless Service Providers (WSPs) could best be described as the Clash of the Titans. Each group thought that the other should cover the costs of deploying a Distributed Antenna System (DAS) inside buildings to allow for cellular coverage and there was no negotiation considered by either party.

As cell phone usage began to grow and business professionals began to demand voice and high-speed wireless connectivity “anytime, anywhere,” the two sides began to cooperate. The WSPs were looking for new opportunities to enhance coverage and the real estate industry needed a competitive edge to retain and acquire clients.

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Flash forward to today: over 75% of phone calls are originated indoors and cell phone usage is expected by today’s consumer everywhere, all the time. The ability to make 911 calls is critical for

safety, liability, and public relations. Clients are demanding coverage in their space, and the proliferation of the iPhone means that coverage must be expanded. Meanwhile, the WSPs are looking for opportunities to alleviate capacity off of their macro-networks. These innovations have forced collaboration between the Commercial Real Estate industry and the WSPs, causing them to move away from their uneasy alliance and find creative ways to finance the deployment of DAS solutions.

In the past, the primary reason for deploying a DAS was to provide coverage. Today, the primary reason for deploying a DAS from the WSP perspective is capacity. In many cases, the user is not looking to make a call, but to download information, watch videos, navigate/find directions, send an e-mail or text, snap a photo, or social network with their friends and colleagues. The

cell phone is no longer a cell phone, it is a mobile device that supports many applications for business, social, and personal functions. All these applications require more bandwidth, which is very valuable to the WSPs.

The Commercial Real Estate Community is one of the most technologically advanced market segments in the world. Its members are constantly looking for new ways to achieve cost savings, efficiency, revenue, and to attract and retain premier clients. Wireless has played a key role for the industry in the past, but is becoming more and more prevalent, not only for in-house use, but also as a service for clients. Before a cli-



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ent initiates a new contract or extends an existing agreement, they are demanding that wireless coverage be available in their space for the WSPs, WiFi, and Public Safety. What used to be additional service is now expected as a matter of course.

Public Safety is also driving the need for DAS deployments. New ordinances have been introduced into the NFPA and IFC that require Public Safety Cover in a building with back up redundancy. In most cities and counties a fire inspection will not pass unless there is coverage for the local first responders and this trend will continue to grow. From a funding perspective, it has been proven that a facility with coverage for all of the WSPs and Public Safety will receive discounts on insurance premiums.

For some of the public venues and premier properties where there is a lot of foot traffic, the WSPs have provided funding for a multi-technology DAS solution that supports all of the WSPs, WiFi, and Public Safety. With these projects you need to be prepared to give up some, if not all, of the control of the system. Alternatively, for other properties, owners have committed the funding to deploy the solution and have been able to recoup their costs by charging the WSPs to participate on the DAS. This allows the venue to maintain control of the system and look for other methods to drive revenue.

As organizations look to deploy these solutions within their facility, it is critical that you are working with a company that has relationships with the WSPs on both a local and national level. A company that is approved to provide turnkey solutions by the WSPs, and has experience within your city, is one of the key ways to ensure an expeditious and cost-effective solution. They must also have WLAN certifications and be familiar with your local first responder ordinances if you are considering WiFi and Public Safety. Any company may claim to have experience at installing these systems. Verifying that your partnering firm goes through the local WSP process will avoid problems and assure a smooth transition. The 4G technologies the carriers are now bringing to market require an extensive set of requirements from a design perspective to ensure maximum user experience and avoid network issues that could arise for the WSP.

It is becoming ever more important for your customers, tenants and employees to be able to access wireless voice and data seamlessly wherever they may be. Wireless voice and high-speed data on-demand is expected and necessary in today's business world. Now is the time for the Commercial Real Estate Market to be proactive in reaching out to organizations that can support them in working with the WSPs to upgrade their buildings to include multi-technology DAS solutions. There are funding vehicles that have been proven to work to drive new opportunities for the building management and ownership groups through technology initiatives and in many cases, wireless = technology. •



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