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5G and the coming 'tectonic' shift in wireless

February 24, 2015 | By Sue Marek

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I've been writing about the wireless industry for more than two decades and during that time I've seen a lot of technology transitions—from analog to digital back in the early '90s all the way to the recent move from 3G to 4G that has been occurring during the past few years. But as the industry now looks ahead to 5G, I find this transition shaping up to be very different from those of the past.



Sue Marek

5G is much harder to define because it's not just about air interface technology—in fact many assert that there won't be an air interface change because 5G will just be the further advancement of LTE and LTE-Advanced. And 5G is not just about speed either. Instead the 5G discussions today are about network coverage (especially indoor coverage), reduced latency and very different business models.

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Analyst Chetan Sharma, president of Chetan Sharma Consulting, recently did a great job of outlining what he believes are the key performance goals surrounding the 5G discussion. Sharma says 5G will likely have the following:

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- Less than 1 millisecond of latency
- (Almost) 100% network coverage
- 1,000 times reduction in power consumption
- Very high reliability in all circumstances, especially indoor
- Deep indoor coverage
- 30 times higher device density
- 10-100x connected devices
- And significantly higher security requirements

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But perhaps more important than these performance goals, Sharma said he expects 5G to drive a "tectonic" shift in the wireless industry that will result in fewer mobile operators and dramatically different business models.

What exactly will those business models be? Sharma said he thinks that the wireless industry will no longer be using a business model driven by usage and

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price but will instead will be forced to figure out how to make money from different services. Some operators, for example, will focus on the home automation, security or the cloud market. Others may focus on entertainment and video. Still others may become leaders in health or retail.

And those different business models that carriers embrace will likely drive different competitive scenarios as well. Wireless operators won't just be competing against other wireless operators, but they will be competing against security firms, cloud providers, media companies and more.

We are already seeing early signs of this shift occurring today--just look at AT&T's (NYSE:T) pending acquisition of DirecTV, which, when finalized, will likely set that company up as a bigger competitor in the video and entertainment space.

5G is a topic that is getting a lot of buzz right now and if you want to get the latest on 5G from the biggest experts in the field, then join me at the Mobile World Congress trade show in Barcelona, Spain, for "**The Path to 5G: Defining the Next-generation of Wireless Networks**" luncheon panel that will be held on Tuesday, March 3, from 12:30 p.m. until 2 p.m. at the Fira Congress Hotel, which is just a five-minute walk from the main Fira Gran Via MWC venue.

I have compiled a great group of speakers for the panel, including:

- Adam Koeppel, VP of network planning and strategy at Verizon Communications
- Tom Keathley, SVP of network planning and products at AT&T
- Eduardo Esteves, VP product management at Qualcomm
- Alex Jinsung Choi, EVP and Head of Corporate R&D Center at SK Telecom
- Asha Keddy, VP and GM of Standards and Advanced Technology at Intel's Mobile Communications Group

But aside from these compelling speakers, there is another reason you should attend this panel discussion--I've structured it to include plenty of opportunity for members of the audience to ask our panelists questions. And of course, we will also be serving a great buffet lunch!

Please join me for what I believe will be one of the most interesting discussions at Mobile World Congress. And don't delay, we have limited spaced. [Click here to register.](#) --Sue

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Effort Isn't Good Enough. Mobile operators are now looking towards Wi-Fi to help to meet consumers' insatiable demand for data with lower cost networks. However ensuring customer quality of experience on Wi-Fi and developing strategies to best monetize Wi-Fi has proven challenging for many operators. [Learn more!](#)

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