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BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: REGIONAL ISP INNOVATION

Webinar: Questions and Answers



Tuesday 26th April 2022

Bridging the digital divide: Regional ISP innovation

This document outlines the questions and answers from the STL Partners and A10 Networks webinar, **Bridging the digital divide: regional ISP innovation**, which was hosted on Tuesday 26th April 2022.

You can watch the recording of the session, and access the slides, using the link [here](#). In this document, we seek to address the questions raised in the webinar as well as questions that we were unable to address in the time available.

The presentation is based on insights and findings from a research programme ran by STL Partners which focused on the work regional ISPs are doing to close the digital divide in America. **We published the report on these business models, with three in-depth case studies on particularly innovative examples, earlier this year. The report can be found [here](#).**

Results of an audience poll are contained in this document as well. We asked attendees to what extent they agreed that ISP networks are sufficiently secure today to protect themselves and end customers from the vast majority of malicious attacks.

If you have any questions not addressed in the webinar or this Q&A document, or want to hear more about our latest research or from our panellists, please contact:

- Patrick Montague-Jones, STL Partners, patrick.montague-jones@stlpartners.com
- Tim Otto, STL Partners, tim.otto@stlpartners.com
- Carla-Ann Anderson, Bluewater Regional Networks, carla-ann@bregional.com
- Venky Swaminathan, Trilogy Networks, vswaminathan@trilogynet.com
- Terry Young, A10 Networks, tyoung@a10networks.com

What changes of expectation have you seen from your customers and partners in this digital divide space?

Venky Swaminathan, Trilogy Networks: We are definitely seeing the realisation of the “what next” question. We have wider broadband coverage coming in, we have ISP enabled services, and this realisation has sparked a number of other initiatives across ISPs. These ISPs look at what else they can layer on top of their existing services, beyond network connectivity and internet access. And that's a good place to be. The ISPs missed out over the top video evolution that happened in the last decade. They were the victims of massive downlink of data coming from the cloud to consumption, but now you're going into an era of massive data generation. And ISPs are asking how can I participate in that value chain? How can I enable those kinds of solutions – applications – that generate data and go through my network and how might I be a part of that value chain?

Carla-Ann Anderson, Bluewater Regional Networks: From a local perspective here, when there was only one provider that was providing fibre optics in the area, customers were okay with paying high rates for just an okay service. But now that they know fibre is available in their area, they expect to be able to afford a high-grade service of premium quality, at competitive rates.

What do you see as the big challenges on the horizon for ISPs and securing their networks?

Terry Young, A10 Networks: One thing that really strikes me about trying to bridge the digital divide and looking at Regional ISPs is how fragmented the market is. You have fibre to the home, you've got wireless, you have fixed wireless and satellite providers – all are trying to provide innovation. Everyone is trying to overcome the cost of access and to build initial connectivity. As a result, there are four or five different kinds of technology industries that are fighting against rising cyber threats. They care less about the technology; they just want a high-speed pipe to wherever they're trying to go. The approach to protection and security is very fragmented because every technology has their own way of approaching things. Each is tied into different industry associations. This is the challenge: people are trying to overcome a really large threat, but with a much lower level of resources and a relatively narrow focus on the overall industry picture. In the wireless and 5G industry, there's one major industry association that sets some standards and tries to guard against specific mobile network threats. But in the regional industry there are a lot of individual companies that are trying to approach the same problem. So, I think that fragmentation actually makes the industry more vulnerable.

What about satellite either GEO or LEO for primary or secondary rural links and backhaul?

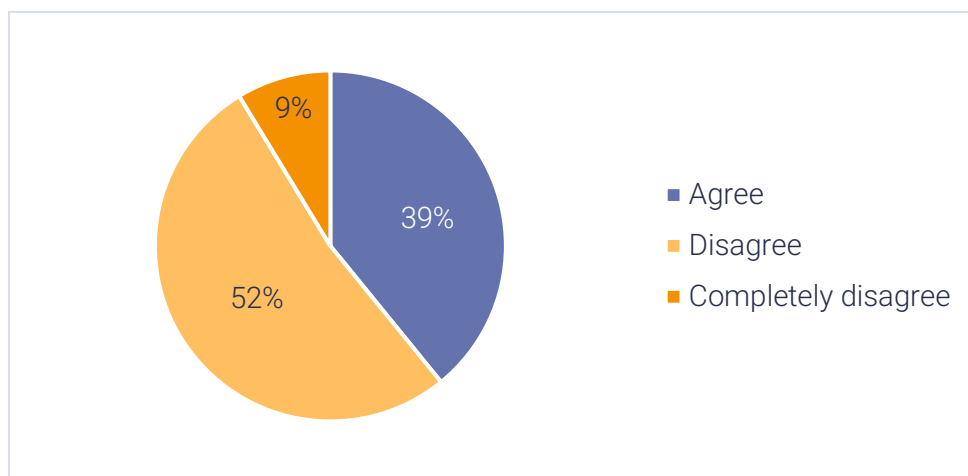
Venky Swaminathan, Trilogy Networks: GEO Satellites are a great option for backhaul in rural where there is no existing wireless or wireline broadband available. Integrating edge computing infrastructure with satellite backhaul can bring down the costs for many use cases for agriculture and energy fields. As the LEO satellite technology matures, it will rapidly accelerate coverage and increase adoption of technology in farming practices all over the world.

What skills are key to launch an ISP aside from network engineering?

Carla-Ann Anderson, Bluewater Regional Networks: BRN believes that good old-fashioned Customer Service is the number 1 skill you require to launch an ISP and to remain successful. When a customer

calls in for support, whether its billing support, Network support etc. they talk to someone in Sarnia at our local head office. We often contact a customer about an issue we may be seeing on their network before they are even aware there is a problem. We go that extra mile with customers to make sure they know we care about their them as a customer and their business. Being born out of the electrical utility, we have adopted those principles of quick response and quick restoration. I would also like to note how important it is to have relationship building skills. Get involved with the community you're serving. Get to know the people in your area. BRN has strong relationships with partners and customers all over Sarnia-Lambton. This helps us stay informed with the demands and expectations of customers in the area and helps us better serve the region.

Audience poll: To what extent do you agree that ISP networks are sufficiently secure today to protect themselves and end customers from the vast majority of malicious attacks



61% of respondents disagreed with the statement, suggesting regional ISPs feel there is work to be done in securing the network. No attendee completely agreed with the statement.

We published an in-depth report on how regional ISPs are using innovative business models to close the digital divide earlier this year. All registrants to the webinar can [find the report here](#).

Get in touch with our panellists to learn more:

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