

Constant and significant demand for wireless

The demand for wireless in high-fibre areas of South Africa continues unabated according to Brenden Pronk, Chief Commercial Officer of Comsol.



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Even in the most dense fibre areas, Comsol and its biggest ISP client continue to deploy a significant number of wireless links. A review of the wireless deployments the company has been involved in over the past two years confirms that demand for wireless has been both constant and significant, with 69% of their wireless deployments during that time being within high-density fibre areas.

Comsol's experience is that telcos and ISPs are using wireless as an interim solution while they wait through the long lead times associated with fibre, and most are keeping these wireless installations as their back-up disaster-recovery plans. However, some clients get tired of waiting for fibre and make the decision to keep wireless as their primary connection after all.

"This is because wireless is an increasingly sophisticated yet affordable solution, offering speed, reliability, and high levels of uptime, particularly if it is coming off licensed spectrum as ours does," said Pronk.

The extensive deployment of fibre in metro areas has reduced the distance between available nodes and exchanges, so eliminating the need for multiple and expensive hops. Add to this the fact that fibre deployment has made bandwidth cheaper due to both the larger backhaul capacities (intermediate links between the core network and sub-networks) and economies of scale on the respective carrier networks, and the cost of interconnectivity for a last-mile wireless option is further reduced.

Speed, performance and reliability

Fibre promises speed, performance and reliability, but it faces the challenges of long lead times, fixed infrastructure, high levels of feasibility failure, and high deployment costs. A last-mile licensed wireless solution - the final stage of the connectivity process between the telco and the client - bridges the gap and provides a competitive and complementary service for the last-mile access component.

A wireless last mile adds many commercial and strategic benefits:

- Even though there are high volumes of fibre installed nationally in all major metropolitan areas, it can still take telcos and other service providers anything from three to seven months to install the last-mile fibre access component to the client's premises. Clients are unable to access critical business applications and telcos and service providers are losing revenue;
- The planning, installation and maintenance costs incurred by telcos and service providers to deploy fibre as a last-mile component (distances of between 500 and 5000 running metres) can be as much as 35 times higher than the costs of deploying wireless;
- Wireless provides a purely OPEX cost, which eliminates the risks associated with expensive capital infrastructure and long payback periods whilst increasing the ROI of their overall value proposition;
- A last-mile wireless component alleviates any future risk that telcos and service providers face if their client moves premises or changes technology or access provider; it means they are not left with an expensive asset that offers no ROI; and
- Fibre structure is immovable and is best suited to high-capacity, long-term clients that are constrained by fixed requirements. Fibre to the premises only secures client occupation for the term of the contract, which is often less than the required payback period or investment term. These days clients want shorter, more flexible contracts and are not happy signing up for five years.

Comsol's tip for speeding up deployment and reducing costs: If you're waiting too long for completion of your network, the last mile may be all you're waiting for. Ask your telco or service provider to make your final connection wireless and see what happens. This is the type of installation Comsol routinely does within six days.

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