

## Ericsson Canada opens 3G test lab to developers

A new arrangement between Ericsson Canada Inc. and a Vancouver-based wireless and new media commercialization centre could save small Canadian wireless application companies hundreds of thousands of dollars in development costs and speed up time to market.

The agreement between Ericsson Canada and Wavefront will allow wireless developers to test new wireless applications at the company's Montreal 3G network test facility. "It's not every day that the small and medium wireless development community has the opportunity for this kind of direct access to the kind of technical resources that Ericsson Canada is offering to our partnerships," said James Maynard, president of Wavefront, a not-for-profit organization that specializes in accelerating the growth of wireless companies in the international market. "It's literally hundreds of thousands of dollars in terms of cost savings and market opportunities that we take out of the equation for these small companies."

The announcement is an important one for the small wireless development community because prior to the Ericsson Canada/Wavefront agreement, companies had no access to a similar resource unless they built their own. "For most small companies like us – and there's many in Vancouver – the cost of trying to build this test infrastructure ourselves in-house would be just too much and it would be prohibitive for us to test to the quality that we need," said Chris Hill, vice president of marketing at Mobidia Inc., a Vancouver-based company that develops software for companies like Rogers, Telus, AT&T and Vodafone to manage network congestion.

While it's critical to have test on large networks, few, if any companies are able to before moving their applications to trial phase, according to Hill. "Because our software is installed in a very critical part of the operator's network, it's really important for us to have bulletproof code and we really need to make sure our software works well on their network before it's deployed," he explained. "What's really helpful for us is this Wavefront/Ericsson Canada framework allows us to trial our software ... but without any of the risk associated with any of the real subscribers. So it provides a test bed for us to fully test our software and make sure it's carrier-grade, if you will, in terms of quality before we go ahead and deploy it on a real network."

According to Maynard, the arrangement will be a game changer for the companies who get access to the test facility. "It's a scarce resource," he explained. "What this allows you to do is build your application and test it in a controlled network so you can tell if you're having problems with the application or the network. You're able to sort it out because you've got this level of quality control with the Ericsson Canada test environment that you normally wouldn't get."

For Ericsson Canada, the agreement will mean sustained commitment to the future of wireless, Ericsson Canada president and CEO Mark Henderson told InfoExecutive. "At Ericsson, we produce our solutions end-to-end all the way from the application layer, down to the device," he said. "But ... you don't want to stifle innovation. You actually want to enable it. And so being able to partner with Wavefront and provide these facilities and all developers to access this equipment and bring their products forward quicker helps them, but helps us understand what is really happening out there. What are people developing and why are they developing it and what's the pick-up and the market reaction to the products being developed."

In Maynard's view, the partnership is a sign of large wireless companies understanding the innovation that starts in small companies. "I think increasingly, there's been a move by large global players to recognize that you have to look outside as well as inside to find innovative ideas and solutions to different problems," he said.

By Maria Cootauco, IT in Canada