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DSL Forum: Focus on the Worldwide Market

[Normal View]

While cable operators dominate broadband in the U.S. market, capturing two out of everything three new high-speed Internet customers, DSL is the predominant player on the world stage. That's the message that the DSL Forum, a telco-industry backed organization, is trying to spread.

Citing a study from Frost & Sullivan, Bill Rodey, head of the forum and also SVP, Engineering & Marketing of the HyperEdge Corp., told Supercomm attendees earlier this month that global DSL sub. counts have soared over the past two years, with the industry targeting an ambitious 200 mil. DSL subs. by 2005.

As of March 2002, telcos had captured 23.3 mil. customers worldwide, up from 7.6 mil. at the end of 2000. The bulk of the customers, 48% or 11.1 mil., can be found in Asia-Pacific, with Korea counting for a lot of the high-speed growth in that region.

In Europe, Germany is the engine for growth, while France Telecom finished the first quarter of 2002 with 530K subs. One stumbling block for DSL in Europe, according to Rodey, is the lack of local loop unbundling, which keeps competitors from joining the fray. But broadband was identified as a priority by the European Council in March, a policy declaration that could ease deployment problems in that region.

DSL providers stand a good chance of reach the 200 mil. figure, according to Rodey, now that a snarl of issues that held the industry back have been resolved. Wider deployments, self-provisioning and greater interoperability among equipment makers can now ease the path to stronger DSL growth, all achievements that the DSL Forum had a hand in making.

But, there's more to be done to spur DSL growth, according to Rodey. First, phone companies need to be freed of some of the domestic and international government regulations that have proved to be a drag on the development of the industry. Secondly, the costs of deploying and providing DSL need to come down.

Third, as users move past the need for high-speeds and always-on connections, DSL providers need to develop better content. Fourth, DSL service has got to be easier to use, particularly in the area of home networking. Finally, deployments must continue apace to make DSL as widely available as possible.