Mobitex targets growing M2M market

Mobitex, the narrowband wireless packet data technology, is targeting machine-to-machine (M2M) and mission critical data applications as its main growth market.

"The biggest growth in the next few years will be M2M," said Kevin Swann, sales and marketing director of CML Microcircuits. "Because it is always-on it has an advantage over other networks."

Although GPRS and 3G are also always-on, Mobitex has the advantage in being a data only system. Swann, also chairman of the Mobitex Association, said voice gets priority on GPRS and in an emergency situation the network becomes congested with voice calls and no data can get through.

"In the tragic events of 9/11 the messages from the rubble were on Mobitex," said Swann. "It was the only system that wasn't swamped. As it's only data it was able to communicate reliably."

Mobitex is also seen as a companion technology to the Tetra communications network, currently being rolled out across the UK's police force.

"In the UK 55 per cent of the police are already using Mobitex - for its ability to provide always-on data," said Bob Tuck, head of business development, BT Retail Redcare, which acquired UK Mobitex company Transcomm earlier this year. "I see this as an opportunity for us," he said.

Andrew Fitton, chief executive officer of Mobitex Technology, said he was told that Tetra would be the last nail in the coffin for Mobitex. "But I don't see the coffin let alone the nail," said Fitton.

"Our historic mistake was to try to be something we weren't. We're now focused on what we're good at," said Fitton. "We're small flexible and quick and we have a technology that's better than others for certain things."

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