

Ensuring continuity of communications

Helen Jameson speaks to Rich McCauley, Director of Product Management, Network Services Business Unit for Loral Skynet, about their disaster recovery and business continuity solutions.

Question: Many thanks for your time today. Would you kindly introduce yourself and Loral Skynet to our Readers?

Rich McCauley: My name is Rich McCauley. My role here with Loral Skynet is Director of Product Management for the Network Services Business Unit. Loral obviously has a rich history as a satellite operator/provider and innovator and our business is split into two different units. One is our satellite capacity, which is called our FSS end and the other business that I'm in which is Network Services.

It's Network Services that is a lot more network oriented and customer centric. By that we mean our objective is to bring satellite into mainstream networking solutions and that doesn't mean that we are looking to compete or to replace terrestrial networks, but rather we recognise that satellite, in any regional or global network, is some component of that due to geography or due to special applications. With regard to disaster recovery, we have developed several products and services that play into those requirements.

Question: In the event of a disaster, whether it is natural or man-made, what solutions can Loral Skynet offer to restore communications and how do they work?

Rich McCauley: Loral Skynet looks at it in two senses – ensuring the continuity of communications and also the restoration of communications. So, the first that is business continuity is an automatic fail-over where the

satellite network stands as a backup network to the terrestrial. The disaster recovery service is one where the disaster has already happened and you are looking at bringing your network back up. That really consists of a flyaway antenna and usually that is a customer-initiated service whereas business continuity is an always-on automatic fail-over type of service. So we feel that those two types of services really meet the needs of government, retail and enterprise as well as into the health and finance verticals.

Question: How long does it take to deploy the solution in such a challenging environment?

Rich McCauley: We prefer to pre-deploy systems. What we learned from the tsunami and Katrina and some of the other large-scale disasters was that it is actually the everyday cable cuts where the majority of outages are resulting in losses for businesses. So we prefer to have our systems, that are antennas, pre-deployed so they are set up already which gives continuity for customers who can just roll it out, point and it will self acquire the satellite.

If people are lacking that, it depends on the logistics chains that have access to the region. We've got equipment that we can put on planes within 48 to 72 hours but again, what we've seen is that if a company is going to be successful in minimising the impact from any outage resulting from a disaster, man made or natural, it does need to have a plan in place with equipment that is there already.

Question: Can you give us an example of SkyReach Saver in action? What was the situation and why was SkyReach Saver the best solution?

Rich McCauley: We have a customer, AmberAir which is the largest aircraft builder in the world and they have some facilities in what we would call high risk areas. So we provide our SkyReach Saver, which is our disaster recovery solution. They originally went with the SkyReach Ensure, which is our business continuity solution. However, their problem was that in at least one location they were getting a lot of network interruptions.

So SkyReach Saver really put them in charge and was able to accept outages on



either network. This allows them to be in control when there are big outages as they can use the satellite network instead. So SkyReach Saver really gave them the customer control when they wanted to failover and gave them the choice of how they wanted to manage their contingency network.

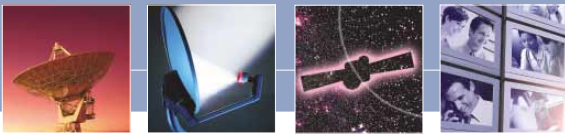
Ensure is automatic. It's where the CEO or CTO sends short messages on their phone saying 'by the way there's no interruption to your customers, there's no interruption to your business operations but your company is now transitioning over satellite links' during a terrestrial outage. In demonstrations, we simulate an outage on a laptop and you could just see that the switchover was absolutely seamless. They just switched from a terrestrial to a satellite network.

Question: What obstacles can Loral Skynet come up against in the deployment of emergency communications?

Rich McCauley: Honestly, I think the biggest problem that we have is fighting the sense of complacency. Fibre continues to make its way and make itself more and more available across the globe and a lot of businesses continue to buy into the false assurance that if I have two T-1s on either side of my facility or even if I have two different carriers providing my lines that reflects true path diversity. And what we learn, through disasters in the US and the UK where there is one cable cut, that it has enormous ramifications across businesses because people aren't backed up.

Through one conduit you have several large optic lines passing through. In 2003, we had an auto fire in our Baltimore Tunnel that goes under the harbour and it damaged the conduit and this knocked out communications up and down the eastern seaboard. So, really the obstacle we've been fighting has been complacency.

After the tsunami and Katrina and the



flooding over in Europe, business owners and managers and stakeholders started demanding more path diversity but in the wake of those disasters they started to think that maybe it was just a one in a hundred year type event and, again, I think the most poignant note is that business continuity and disaster recovery play more to the everyday outages.

Businesses are affected more by the everyday low-scale outages than they are by the highly publicised terrorist events or large-scale natural disasters. Education is key but you are only going to see a change when there's a true requirement. I think if you look at the evolution at a corporate governance level you'll see that previously when the CEO and the corporate officers are briefing the shareholders and stakeholders they used to talk about risk management. In the US where we have more stringent laws that are hitting our books there are real requirements for business continuity plans.

In the wake of 9/11, there were significant changes to how we tell businesses how to manage alternate sites and alternate locations. So I think as those laws and regulations start to have more and more teeth they will force businesses to adopt this and I think this is where we will see the changes. But certainly, education is a very large part of combating complacency.

Question: How is Quality of Service maintained even in the harshest of conditions?

Rich McCauley: Well it depends on where you are. Following the tsunami, the quality of communications on the links themselves and from a network perspective was very easy for us to manage. We went through a

very comprehensive exercise to develop our service level agreements that mirror terrestrial types of quality assurance. So from a customer perspective your network experience should be as seamless as it can be whether it's over terrestrial, fibre or satellite links.

But following the tsunami and some of the large-scale disasters, the quality of the overall service is driven by some of the external forces such as the security of the facility. In some cases, you had people who were going in and stealing gasoline for the generators, stealing the generators, stealing the antennas. So security was one issue and power is another. Other than that, satellite is the easiest network to deploy – to drop into a site and immediately have high quality communications and by that we mean multimedia – voice video, data and so forth.

Question: In a world where natural disasters are becoming more and more frequent what developments does Lorat Skynet see emerging in the field of disaster recovery? What is needed to help make first responders even more effective?

Rich McCauley: As I said earlier, I think the whole concept of preparation is key. In the case of Katrina for example, it was weeks and months afterwards and still the ability to deploy equipment into that region was difficult as airfields were flooded as well as streets and so on and so forth.

But I think in terms of in going first responders, what you're going to see on the satellite side is more in the way of mobile communications. We have made efforts with some of our partners to develop a very ro-

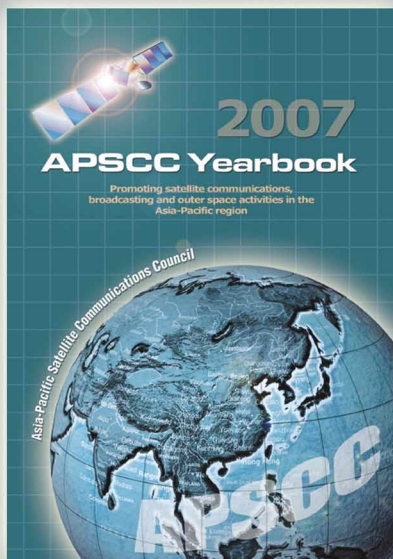
bust satellite on the move where we are putting satellite communications into a vehicle such as a humvee. We are putting together packages so that the first responders find satellite becomes even more portable and easily deployable. We will have self pointing antennas so it doesn't require any real expertise on the ground other than just putting it up, balancing it and the antenna takes care of itself.

I think some of those activities will help as will our efforts to make the satellite communications more rapidly deployable, more mobile.

We are putting these antennas onto vessels and onto search vehicles. And we have an advantage being Lorat, because we also own a fleet of satellites so our ability to really speak on two levels – on a satellite and a networking level – helps us to meet the needs of these first responders.

Question: In terms of disaster recovery, what are Lorat Skynet's aims for the next 12 months?

Rich McCauley: Our aim for the next twelve months is to continue what we have been doing. It's really getting the word out. It's trying to de-mystify satellite as people do tend to have an outdated opinion of satellite which is either a huge 9m antenna dish or as something that never seems to work quite right when people try to get their television signal. So our objective is to show that ever since we had IP over satellite in 2000, from our perspective, it's all networking. Our objective is to marry up satellite and terrestrial networking so businesses can focus on their business and we can bring them the networking solution. ■



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