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Equinox Exec Sees No Slowdown in Spending

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Equinox Information Systems (News - Alert) provides a range of software solutions for telecommunications carriers, including revenue assurance, fraud management, mediation, network analysis, and custom application development.

Recently, the company announced TeleLink 5, an upgrade to their existing offering that is designed to deliver "significant functional and performance enhancements." According to the announcement, the new software features a set of powerful tools, which allow carriers to perform a wide range of business-critical mediation, reporting, and revenue assurance activities, enabling them to process usage data in any format and link with any number of additional data sets to filter, enrich, correlate, and analyze the information that directly impacts the top-line and the bottom-line.

David West, executive vice president of Equinox, was kind enough to respond to a series of questions regarding current market conditions and offered a vision for 2009.

GG: When you look back on 2008, was it a good year for your company?
DW: 2008 was a very good year for Equinox. Sales were up more than 40% over 2007. We signed contracts with many new customers, as well as engaging in large development projects with existing customers. We also released a major version upgrade for one of our key products, TeleLink Mediation and Revenue Assurance Platform.

GG: What was your firm's biggest achievement last year?
DW: The release of version 5 of our TeleLink Mediation and Revenue Assurance Platform marked the culmination of a significant development effort. This release was well accepted by the marketplace, with many existing customers already purchasing and implementing the upgrade as well as new customers purchasing it. We also deployed our Protector Fraud Management System at a large carrier (FairPoint Communications), and launched a significant development project for a facilities-based provider of wholesale international voice services including the development of a wholesale rate management and billing application.

GG: What can we expect to see from your company for the next 12 months?
DW: For 2009 we are projecting continued sales growth as existing customers purchase additional licenses, upgrades, and new products. For new customers our sales focus will be primarily on extending market share in revenue assurance and mediation with TeleLink, and extending existing products to better serve wireless carriers — a key strategic focus for us next year.

GG: Do you think a new administration in Washington, D.C. will be good for the communications industry? If so, how? If not, why not?
DW: Yes. I think a change in the FCC (News - Alert) leadership will bring a new approach to solving the ongoing problems with carrier compensation. My hope is that this change will benefit small rural and competitive carriers, but any clarification of policy and enforcement will ultimately help carriers to better run their business based on commonly agreed rules of competition.

GG: In your view, please describe the future of the IP Communications industry?
DW: I see continued growth among small, hosted IP PBX (News - Alert) providers. This business model has low barriers to entry and seems to meet a growing market need for an integrated solution to serve SMBs. As businesses reduce travel expenditures, demand for communications services from this sector will only increase.

GG: How do the current market conditions affect your potential customers? Do you think they will hold off on purchasing new solutions or do you think the economic conditions will spur them to make purchases that will allow them to be more competitive?

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DW: I don't see any signals from our marketplace of a slowdown in spending. Communications service providers in the tier 2 and lower space have been weaned off debt based on past economic down turns and current market conditions. Spending has and will continue to come from operations, and purchasing decisions will continue to be made in the framework of stringent ROI requirements. Solutions that allow carriers to reduce losses, avoid costs, and enhance profitability will continue to be a sound business decision, as long as they can be funded from operations and off-set by demonstrable savings.

GG: What sets your company's solutions apart from the competition?
DW: Our market focus has always been tier 2 and smaller carriers. Based on our history and corporate structure — 22 years in business, private, profitable, debt-free, all new development customer-funded, and a large installed base generating recurring revenue — we are well positioned to provide low-cost, time tested, market proven solutions scaled to meet the needs of our target market. We have been disciplined in our product development approach to ensure that our solutions meet real needs without unnecessary functions which increase cost and complexity for our customers.

GG: If you had to make one bold prediction for 2009, what would it be?
DW: My boldest prediction for 2009 is that the Titans will defeat the Giants in the Super Bowl. In terms of the Telecommunications sector I predict that at least one major mediation and/or revenue assurance vendor will exit the market or be acquired and that spending by tier 2 and smaller carriers on support systems will increase.

Greg Galitzine is editorial director for TMC's (News - Alert) IP Communications suite of products, including TMCnet.com. To read more of Greg's articles, please visit his columnist page. He also blogs for TMCnet here.

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