

DragonWave: Greg Friesen's 2014 Trends

Greg Friesen

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2014 will continue to be a year of 3G deployments and expansion in emerging markets, with the start of initial LTE deployments.

The focus will be coverage, with modernisation of backhaul to enable service and capacity scalability. Backhaul will continue to have a reliance on wireless with a trend to packet-based systems and higher throughput capability. Expansion of coverage will drive rural deployments, putting a greater focus on all-outdoor systems, and solar powered sites, which will drive the need for energy efficient base stations and backhaul.

Adoption of higher frequency bands such as 70/80 GHz will start for high capacity core metro links. This year will begin the planning of small cell networks, and the testing of associated technologies for emerging markets. Deployment is still a few years away, but research and preparation will start now. As a first step to this, distributed radio access networks (RAN) will start to move beyond the traditional stadium application to outdoor deployments, igniting the beginning of wireless fronthaul installations.

Lastly, operators in emerging markets will continue to focus on profitability, especially in the face of low ARPU. This will be evident in all CAPEX decisions, but it will also drive a very strong OPEX focus in all network infrastructure decisions. Low-hanging areas such as backhaul spectrum costs will start to see reductions through new, more spectrally efficient equipment.

One of the big questions is will some of the major CAPEX increases announced by Global Operator Vodafone and US operator Sprint leak and drive faster investment in emerging markets?

Greg Friesen is the VP of Product Management for DragonWave.

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