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CARRIER ETHERNET GLOBALISATION MEETS WORLD CONGRESS

I have barely set foot in Berlin - in the taxi from the airport, no less - before I am being quizzed: "*What's new in Carrier Ethernet? There's nothing new since last year, is there? What's new. what's new?*"

Welcome, dear reader, to my diary from this year's Carrier Ethernet World Congress - the 5th official MEF event, if I am counting correctly. A short ride on the S-Bahn and a brisk walk down *Friedrichstrasse* brings me to the Maritim hotel, a familiar venue for CEWC. Although rumour reaches me that we will be further East next year!

It may well be true that on the surface, Carrier Ethernet appears much the same as last year and there is little new of interest. As I pointed out in my opening comments last year, raw technology and standards innovation has slowed - but this is a necessary prerequisite for mainstream carrier adoption: nothing to be afraid of. Delegates are here in Berlin to take a deeper look.

The real action is occurring at the services level, driven by carriers as they work to meet customers' needs, support a circuit to packet transformation, and capture each others' contracts. This is what we are here to find out more about, over the next few days. I'll return to this higher level of innovation in a following diary.

Reflecting the change from legacy circuits to next-generation packets, the conference has transformed itself from a fixed one-size-fits all, broadcast-style agenda, into a multi-stream, multi-slot, pick-and-mix format. A wealth of different sessions from 9 carriers, 9 vendors and 3 analysts, plus the EANTC interop showcase and MEF keynote are on today's agenda.

As opening chairman, I'm looking forward to carrier keynotes from AT&T and Verizon - with Ancotel, Croatian Telecom and Deutsche Telekom flying the European flag later in the day. I'll moderate the much-anticipated Technology Debate, but I expect we are some distance from the MPLS vs T-MPLS vs PBT protocol storms of yesteryear. Nortel, we miss you already!

Recessionary pressures notwithstanding, MEF President Nan Chen was able to report a growing membership: to 160 companies, an increasing number of certified carrier services: up to 230, and 6 new published specifications over the past year. Under development for a couple of years, a slimmed-down ENNI is approaching letter ballot later this year, we are told.

From AT&T's keynote, we learn that Carrier Ethernet is seen as the "final solution" for data networking - and those experienced enough to remember Frame Relay and ATM were wisely silent. With a huge base in its domestic market, a global VPLS footprint of 20+ countries, and at least 17(!) different services in its Ethernet portfolio, according to my count, it's clear that AT&T has serious ambitions for Ethernet expansion.

I need to close today's diary early, but freed from my chairing duties I'll be able to report more on the key issues and opportunities facing Carrier Ethernet, tomorrow. Don't be late from the cocktail reception, and tune in then!



Don't forget CEW APAC - the MEF's official APAC Congress takes place in Kuala Lumpur this November 2-4. Full details are now available at www.carrierethernetworld.com/apac. This event is hosted by Telekom Malaysia

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