



A YEAR TO SPARKLE

TI Sparkle's CEO Alessandro Talotta is looking to raise the carrier's profile on the international stage. He's already made a speedy start in 2015.

It's been a busy 2015 so far for Alessandro Talotta. Appointed CEO of TI Sparkle just last December, he has already overseen the successful launch of a major new IP hub in Sicily as well as continued the company's impressive push into cloud services.

Talotta has been involved in Telecom Italia's domestic wholesale operations since he first joined the company in 2001 as head of operational coordination, eventually becoming executive officer of Telecom Italia National Wholesale Services.

His recent appointment formed part of a major restructure programme at Telecom Italia aimed at empowering its international wholesale arm TI Sparkle. TI Sparkle now reports directly into Telecom Italia's Group CEO as it aims to boost its profile globally: "TI Sparkle is the group's strategic pillar internationally," comments Talotta.

Supporting this push is the impending launch of a new hub in Sicily. In May, TI

Sparkle will open its three storey facility in Palermo with an initial space of 1500sqm, dedicated to tele-housing services which will be offered to carriers, ISPs and content players. It aims to provide a top class internet experience for the region. "The facility in Sicily has been designed to become a leading IP hub in the Mediterranean basin where content providers can meet ISPs and peer directly in the premises," says Talotta.

PUTTING SICILY ON THE MAP

Located closer to North Africa, the Mediterranean and the Middle East than any other European peering point, the facility is connected to all cable landing stations in Sicily. It will be served by TI Sparkle's Tier 1 grade IP transit service Seabone, and is designed to provide top quality and cost efficient connectivity services with reduced

latency and lower bandwidth costs. "In addition, Sicily Hub's open and resilient configuration supports carriers and ISPs that want to enhance the redundancy of their networks, while enjoying a rich ecosystem and market place of multi-breed interconnected players," says Talotta.

TI Sparkle also made another major announcement on Monday exclusively in ITW Daily: The carrier has partnered with Omantel to expand its reach into Middle East and support growing local demand of IP services.

The partnership will see both companies jointly develop IP infrastructure in order to support IP, Ethernet and IPX solutions, as well as provide transit services in the region through a new point of presence in Muscat, Oman.

The PoP will provide access to key international submarine and terrestrial cable systems that will launch in Oman over the coming year, such as AAE-1 and SEA-ME-

WE5. “The partnership with Omantel, a natural gateway to the Middle East, will enhance TI Sparkle’s Tier 1 IP Transit service Seabone leading positioning in the region, especially in the Gulf market, as we are able to better address the high growth demand for sophisticated IP services expressed by local players, with a top quality and highly secure service proposition,” says Talotta.

CONQUERING THE CLOUD

TI Sparkle has developed a strong focus on its cloud service offering over the last 12 months. And this is an area which Talotta aims to target further moving forward: “We predict there will be more convergence between connectivity and cloud solutions. This new opportunity will integrate new services over the IP layer. For example, more and more enterprises have critical

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applications running on cloud that require more reliable and quality connectivity solutions. Specifically, layer 2 Ethernet and layer 3 VPN solutions will support these new needs,” he says.

TI Sparkle is becoming part of this trend by entering into large cloud ecosystems, such as Amazon Web Services and Microsoft Azure. “These partnerships will help us deliver new services to support future functionalities, such as self-provisioning and bandwidth on demand,” he adds.

In January, for example, TI Sparkle joined Equinix’s Cloud Exchange, an extended aggregation platform with access to over 450 cloud players on-net. Initial deployments began in Frankfurt, Washington and Singapore with plans to roll out to all 17 ECC markets during the rest of this year.

The move aims to support the cloud requirements of its corporate, service provider, system integrator and cloud service provider customers.

TI Sparkle will include its own cloud services portfolio within the ECX ecosystem. At the same time it is planning to introduce new on-demand/pay-as-you-go advanced connectivity solutions with the aim to add

further flexibility and scalability to its current proposition.

“The progressive adoption of cloud computing by corporate customers has led to an evolution of their needs in terms of network infrastructure, thus generating an increasing demand for dedicated high quality and bandwidth efficient network solutions,” says Talotta.

GAME CHANGERS

Talotta has targeted next-generation technologies as an important part of his new strategy for TI Sparkle. In particular, he views Software Defined Networking (SDN) and Network Function Virtualisation (NFV) as two game changing technologies for TI Sparkle and the wider carrier community.

“New technology trends contribute to making one single global platform allowing operators to meet their needs in a very efficient way,” he says.

He believes it is essential to focus any future investment on modernising the company’s network – ensuring it continues to migrate away from legacy systems. “When you have automation, you can manage all pillars of your network. The possibility of network functionality is an amazing prospect for the future,” he adds.

Talotta is also watching the consolidation that is unfolding in Europe with great interest. Prior to joining Telecom Italia in 2001, Talotta worked as head of strategic planning for national and international interconnection for Infostrada; Italy’s alternate fixed-line operator.

Talotta was with the company during its sell to UK operator Vodafone for £7 billion in 2000, and therefore has witnessed high-profile M&A activity first hand.

He believes the present M&A activity in Europe is mirroring the market in the US, and predicts there will be further consolidation in the months to come.

Interestingly, he also believes consolidation began earlier in Europe in wholesale, and now the retail side is catching up. “Wholesale is very competitive globally and there are fewer players in Europe now on the wholesale side,” he says.

TI Sparkle, however, is planning to expand its presence globally, in particularly growing its already considerable presence in Latin

BIOGRAPHY

Alessandro Talotta was appointed CEO of Telecom Italia Sparkle in December 2014.

Prior to that he was executive officer at Telecom Italia National Wholesale Services.

Alessandro’s extensive career in the telecommunications industry starts in 1990 at Italian manufacturing Italtel as senior manager of strategic planning and marketing development.

He joined Italian operator Infostrada in 1996 as head of strategic planning for national and international interconnection, while he maintained the responsibility of fixed and mobile international carrier development through 2001.

In 2001, Talotta joined Telecom Italia as head of operational coordination. In the same year he was appointed head of marketing, sales, customer service, project management and pricing in the national wholesale services department.

As EVP, he managed the entire national wholesale services organisation through to 2008, when in April of that year, he was appointed Telecom Italia Group’s chief regulatory officer and member of GSMA CRO group, a position he maintained through until 2011.

America. It is the number one IP transit provider in Latin America according to Dyn’s wholesale rankings, where it competes with the likes of Telefonica and Level 3.

“Latin America is strategically very important for us and we want to continue playing a major role in supporting traffic in and out of the region,” he says.

Talotta has also ensured TI Sparkle has played an active role in the Metro Ethernet Forum. The carriers became Carrier Ethernet 2.0 certified as far back as November 2014. In February of this year, Talotta was elected on to the MEF board of directors.

“The MEF has critical work ahead defining LSO capabilities to overcome today’s operational support system (OSS) challenges and bridge the gap to future SDN and NFV enhanced networks necessary to achieve the Third Network vision. I am looking forward to working in collaboration with other MEF leaders and industry bodies to make this happen,” he says. ■