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MAGAZINE

FRAUD
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BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER AT LANCK TELECOM

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THE FUTURE EVOLUTION & **BUILDING BLOCKS OF**
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EXECUTIVE INTERVIEW WITH
ENRICO BAGNASCO
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER AT **SPARKLE**

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New cables systems, digital hubs and services. Sparkle, one of the top global service providers, is working to extend horizons beyond connectivity by developing new interconnection models and introducing innovative services. We interviewed Enrico Bagnasco, Chief Technology Officer of the company, who took stock of the activities in progress.

Please tell us more about the recent announcement of Blue and Raman Submarine Cable Systems. How these new submarine cable systems will meet existing and potential customer demands?

On July 2021 we announced our collaboration with Google and others to build Blue and Raman Submarine Cable Systems, a cutting-edge intercontinental infrastructure that aims to improve communications between Europe, Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. In particular, Blue will con-

nect Italy, France, Greece and Israel, while Raman will connect Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Oman and India. Each equipped with 16 fibre pairs, the two systems will set a new reference in terms of diversification, scalability and latency throughout these geographies. Think about Blue, for example: it will be deployed along a new northbound route in the Mediterranean, crossing the Strait of Messina, rather than following the traditional route through Sicily Channel. This means that ISPs, carriers, telecom operators, content providers, enterprises and institutions will benefit from high-speed Internet and state-of-the-art capacity services with unparalleled diversity and performances, with a focus on la-

tency reduced by several milliseconds. In addition, the new cable systems will embrace the innovative concepts of "open cable" supporting multiple fibre tenants, and "open landing station", to ensure maximum openness to other operators in terms of fiber management and access. Our BlueMed submarine cable becomes an integral part of Blue, sharing the wet components of the Blue system and adding four fibre pairs - with an initial design capacity of more than 25 Tbps per fibre pair – as well as private branches in the Mediterranean. Thanks to BlueMed flexible design, we will be able to provide our customers seamless express connections throughout the Mediterranean Basin, with unprecedented latency and spectral efficiency, as well as sophisticated regional subsystems. With this project, our Genoa Open Landing Hub sets itself as an alternative priority access for other upcoming submarine cables looking for a diversified entry to Europe and thus a new reference gateway between Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe.

How does the new market situation and fast digital transformation impact Sparkle business and how the company is equipping itself with new flexible solutions and platforms to manage it successfully?

The restrictive measures adopted around the world and the need to connect remotely have accelerated the digital transformation process for businesses, families and the public administration, with more and more public, commercial and entertainment services now provided in completely digital mode. The combined acceleration in entertainment (including live events) provided by network streaming, in office activities conducted regularly and massively on remote video and collaboration platforms and in business backend applications moved to cloud, has caused both a high growth traffic rate as well as high attention on end2end availability, with pressure on major international routes becoming very intense. As a consequence, global operators such as Sparkle are called upon to enhance their networks to provide fast international connections with high levels of reliability and security between corporate and residential infrastructures and the main cloud providers that

operate on a geographic scale. However powerful infrastructures are not enough to respond to the growing and increasing market demand. We need to find new and diversified paths to avoid single points of failure, both at the interconnection points and at the cable landing points. At the same time, we have to differentiate our offering beyond pure connectivity and act as enablers for the digitalization process, introducing SD-WAN to virtualize Corporate networking and Multi-Cloud services to address back-end resilience and scalability.

What is your company focus in the coming years and new investment plans?

Our investment plan for the next three years will be developed along three main drivers: build-up of new infrastructures, extension of network capacity and development of new service and business fea-

> ## We want to differentiate our offering beyond pure connectivity to act as enablers for the digitalization process

tures, with specific focus on international enterprise customers. Regarding infrastructure, we are currently designing and evaluating new cables and routes as well as new connectivity hubs in specific geographical regions. These new projects will be typically developed together with selected key partners in order to share the effort while retaining our complementary benefits. The network capacity challenge is the well-known, never ending, balance between market price erosion of connectivity services on the one hand and equipment and maintenance cost on the other. In this context we are running extensive negotiations to select the key technology and operation partners that can share and support our journey. The most ambitious area is that of new digital services and features that will respond to the needs of our customers. Regarding the wholesale market I think the key needs relate to Carrier2Carrier automation for all commercial and operational processes, while for the enterprise market the strategy is to develop our portfolio of secure connectivity services, leveraging on the new technologies - in SD-WAN, SASE, Multi-cloud connectivity and orchestration and Cybersecurity - which represent the pillars of digital transformation of such customers. The overall plan is under design and review and we plan to finalize it, as usual, by the end of the year.

Interview by Wida Schmidt, CEO at Carrier Community

Watch the recorded interview: https://carriercommunity.com/cc-executive-interviews/