



# SPARKLE: AN ACCELERATING EVOLUTION

AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE GLOBAL WHOLESALE INDUSTRY WITH ITS EXTENSIVE PROPRIETARY BACKBONE, WIDE SERVICE PORTFOLIO AND CUSTOMER-FACING STANCE, SPARKLE IS NOW MOVING TO DIVERSIFY ITS ENTERPRISE SERVICES. THE COMPANY'S CHIEF OF PRODUCT MANAGEMENT, DANIELE MANCUSO, TELLS US MORE ABOUT CABLE ROLLOUTS AND NEW SERVICES LAUNCHING IN THE AREAS OF SECURE CONNECTIVITY, MULTI-CLOUD AND IOT.



Daniele Mancuso, chief of product management, Sparkle

## Q. How do you view current trends in global bandwidth demands?

International bandwidth is doubling every two years globally, driven by the digitalisation of households, businesses and public administrations. The pandemic has increased this phenomenon too, with more people working from home.

In general, bandwidth demand is growing in both saturated and emerging markets: we see that through the traffic increase on our backbone in Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa. To support this, carriers must upgrade their networks and invest in new infrastructure, creating new corridors and diversifying.

## Q. Can you give me examples of how Sparkle is looking to diversify with its cable rollouts and upgrade its infrastructure?

Diversification is one of the key drivers of our flagship project – the Blue and Raman Submarine Cable Systems, aimed at building a

digital highway between Europe, Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. The Raman system lands in Jordan, differing from the traditional route of subsea cables connecting Europe to Asia. The Blue system, meanwhile, crosses the Strait of Messina rather than following the usual route through the Sicily Channel.

The chosen routes, together with “open cable” and “open landing station” designs, improve diversification, scalability and latency throughout the systems’ geographies. The Blue and Raman systems are expected to be ready for service in 2024, with the Tyrrhenian segment of the Blue system planned to be operational in 2022.

In addition, Sparkle’s new Open Landing Platform in Genoa, backhauled to Milan’s rich digital marketplace, is set to become an alternative priority access for other upcoming submarine cables looking for diversified entry to Europe.

Due to exploding bandwidth demand, we’ve also upgraded our pan-Mediterranean optical network, Nibble, introducing 400G capabilities and extending its footprint, which now seamlessly links Israel with major points of presence and data centres in Europe. In addition, we recently upgraded our global tier-1 IP backbone Seabone, which now supports port speeds up to 400Gbps.

These powerful infrastructures are designed to respond to growing market demand, keeping our core products state of the art in terms of features, diversification and latency.

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## Q. What else is Sparkle doing in other parts of the world to meet capacity demands globally?

Sparkle is also investing in the Americas. Following the company’s acquisition of fibre on the Curie submarine cable between the US and Chile, we are now launching the Panama Digital Gateway, an open landing and connectivity centre.

The first branch of Curie will land at the centre, which will aim to become the digital hub for Central America, the Andean region

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and the Caribbean. The facility is under construction and should be operational by the first half of 2022.

Panama is already a natural crossroads thanks to its strategic positioning between North and South America, and between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Neutrality and openness are key here if we want to reach our ambition to make this hub a reference ecosystem for interconnected players, replicating the success of our Sicily hub that was built on the same concepts.

### Q. Sparkle is currently enhancing its enterprise services – what does this entail?

We have dedicated the last few years to understanding enterprise pain points during the digitalisation process. In particular, we have assessed the requirements for a new secure wide area network that is able to support the best possible quality for each application, no matter where the application is running – whether in a corporate data centre or the cloud – or where the user is located, from the workplace to even the beach.

We have therefore decided to launch a multi-vendor SD-WAN solution based on the major technologies available on the market, blended with a suite of security features and professional services. In addition, we will support customers in the design, implementation and co-management of the underlay and overlay, and offer optimal solutions tailored to their needs.

And we have not just focused on connectivity, as customers have asked to be supported throughout their full cloud journeys. That is why we have enhanced the capabilities of our Cloud Connect platform, allowing enterprises to establish direct and secure connections between their premises and major cloud providers. Likewise, we launched a multi-cloud product, allowing our customers to position their workloads on different clouds and in different geographies, and manage the whole commercial lifecycle through a single point.

These new products, together with the existing MEF 3.0-certified Ethernet suite and IP/VPN suite, allow Sparkle to reposition itself as a global service provider, able to orchestrate complex scenarios and provide a full journey from traditional to software-defined WANs and the cloud.

Our repositioning has recently been recognised by Gartner, which included Sparkle in its “Magic Quadrant for Network Services, Global”.

### Q. What are Sparkle’s plans for 2022 and beyond on the network side?

We’re in a data-hungry age and bandwidth demands will keep on surging, driven by emerging countries that are overcoming the digital divide and the continually evolving requirements of enterprises undergoing digital transformation.

On the infrastructure side, we shall embrace the challenge of enabling this traffic surge on our network, keeping unit capex sustainable. At the same time, we will look for new potential traffic corridors and build state-of-the-art submarine and terrestrial network infrastructures to exploit these routes.

We are currently evaluating new subsea routes in the Caribbean to consolidate our positioning in Latin America and empower the new hub in Panama. In the Mediterranean, meanwhile, we are working to improve connectivity between Africa and the main European hubs, and studying potential new landing points for the Blue and Raman systems.

### Q. And what about on the product side?

We will continue addressing enterprise requirements, focusing on new products and features, as well as the experience.

In 2022, we will expand our portfolio with a Secure Access Service Edge offering, to complement SD-WAN with cloud-based security, and a new voice product dedicated to enterprises. We have also launched a global IoT suite to provide connectivity, geolocation tracking, remote management and control, and data analytics to multinational enterprises.

On the experience side, we are investing in API development and exposure to enable our most advanced customers to digitally interact with us.

Leveraging on my position on the MEF board of directors since 2019, we’ve particularly been influencing and supporting MEF initiatives on interparty business process automation – aimed at improving automation between different players in the industry. We also recently concluded a project with a tier-1 US-based telco, allowing automated quote-and-order carrier Ethernet services.


Moreover, in 2021 Sparkle was the first service provider to achieve MEF 3.0 LSO Sonata API certification.

### Q. What kinds of things is Sparkle doing to meet the market’s long-term needs?

We are investigating innovative technologies and disruptive initiatives that could enable major breakthroughs in the years to come. We are collaborating with specialised companies and institutions on quantum key distribution, which is aimed at guaranteeing secure communications after quantum computers are introduced, as these could potentially disrupt all known security practices.

As a consequence of this work, we’ve already demonstrated our ability to secure a multinational optical link between Italy, Croatia and Slovenia during the G20 summit in 2021, and we’re now joining a consortium to participate in an EU project on the matter.

In addition, we are one of the founding members of the Integrated Trust Network, an initiative by the MEF and MOBI. This envisages using blockchain and, in general, the concepts of decentralisation and token-based economics to address new opportunities arising from Web3, which will initially focus on the mobility ecosystem, but could potentially span to any industry.

To conclude, if you knew Sparkle’s brand in association with submarine cables and wholesale connectivity, that powerful DNA is still there today, along with its excellence in customer experience and international soul. But all these characteristics are being augmented by new people, energies, skills, processes and products that are accelerating Sparkle’s evolution and enhancing its position as a global service provider. 

**Big Interview**

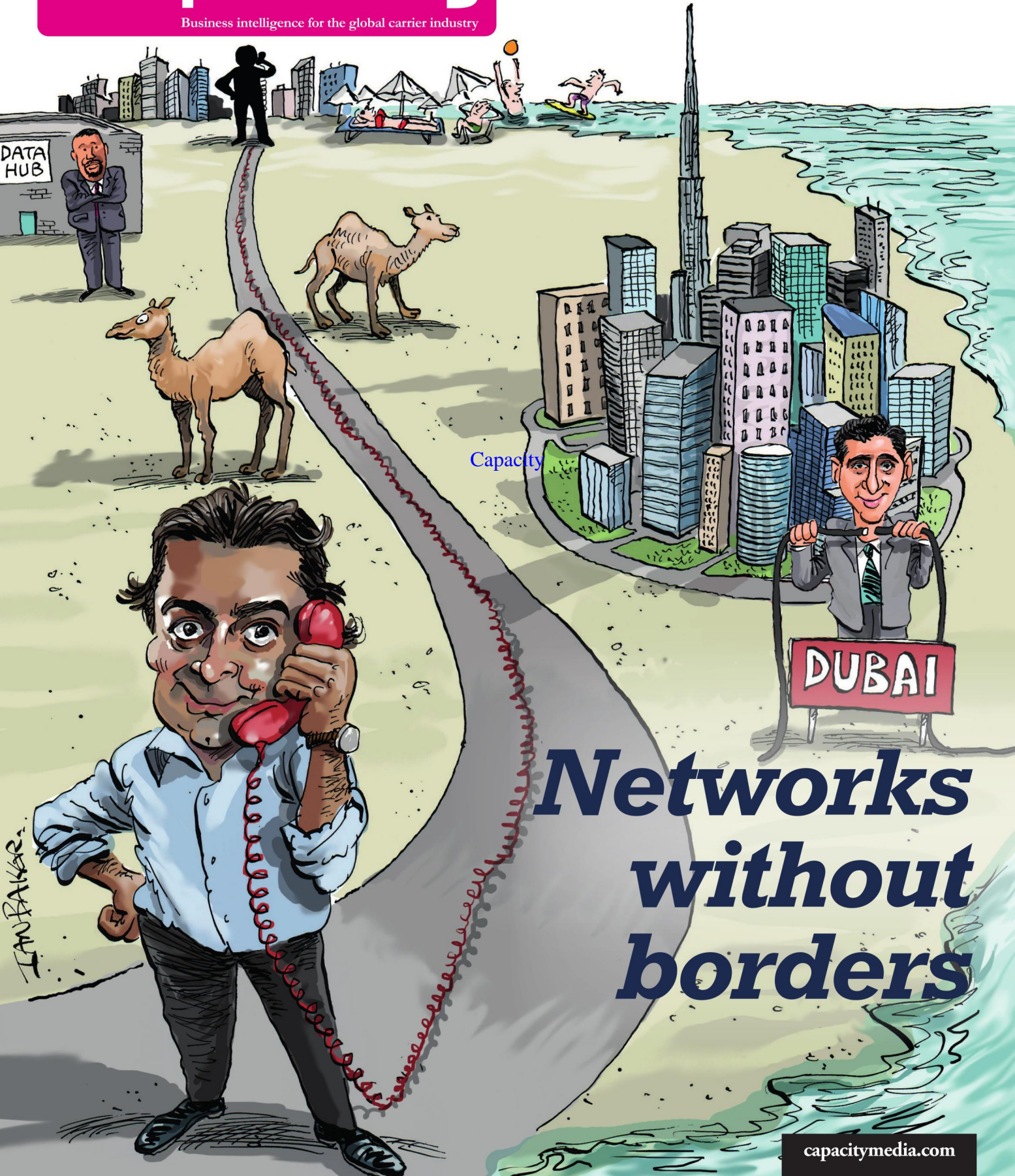
The CEO of wholesale's new star talks rebrands, ownership and enterprise services

**Feature**

Lifting the lid on the carriers that spoof call data and land MNOs with bigger bills

# capacity

Business intelligence for the global carrier industry



## Networks without borders