

CC-EXECUTIVE INTERVIEW

DANIELE MANCUSO

Chief Product Management
at Sparkle



In this CC-Webinar.Live Executive Interview between Wida Schmidt, CEO at CC and Daniele Mancuso, Chief Product Management at Sparkle, we are invited to learn about the latest happenings at the leading global service provider company. Moreover, Daniele also discusses the launch of BlueMed as well as Blue and Raman's initiatives in partnerships with Google and others, and building powerful new infrastructure within the industry.



Interview by Wida Schmidt
CEO at Carrier Community



WIDA SCHMIDT:

We're delighted to have you, Daniele, and are very much looking forward to hearing all that you have to share with us. Before we start, please let me take this special occasion to congratulate you and the entire Sparkle team for receiving the Carrier Community Global Award for Best Data/Capacity Provider of the Year, as well as the Best Digital Transformation Program Award in Berlin during the Europe 2022 GCCM. Once again, congratulations.

DANIELE MANCUSO:

Thanks a lot. You anticipated me. (laughs)

WIDA SCHMIDT:

Daniele, could you please tell us about the latest happenings at the company?

DANIELE MANCUSO:

Well, as you said in the spoiler, we just came back from the Berlin CC-Days with two important awards. The Best Data/Capacity Provider,

which recognizes our DNA as a capacity data provider and as an infrastructure provider. The second win recognizes the spirit of transformation within the company and is related to our transformation program, which is reshaping the way the company presents itself to customers and faces challenges every day. The entire IT system is part of this transformation, and we are very happy that the industry has recognized the effort done so far. I have a lot of news, actually: for the first time, Sparkle has been recognized in the 2022 Gartner® Magic Quadrant™ for Network Services, Global, which demonstrates that Sparkle is no longer just a wholesale infrastructure provider but is also able to serve multinational enterprises with complex connectivity requirements. We are very pleased that the effort the company is making to change the customer experience and the global offering has been recognized. We are no longer limited to layer one of the ISO/OSI, but we are scaling up and being capable to design and deploy a secure and sophisticated private network for our enterprise customers. In addition, our CEO Elisabetta Romano has been elected as chair of the ITW Global Leaders Forum (GLF), while I have been confirmed as Member of MEF Board of Directors. We are currently riding a positive wave.

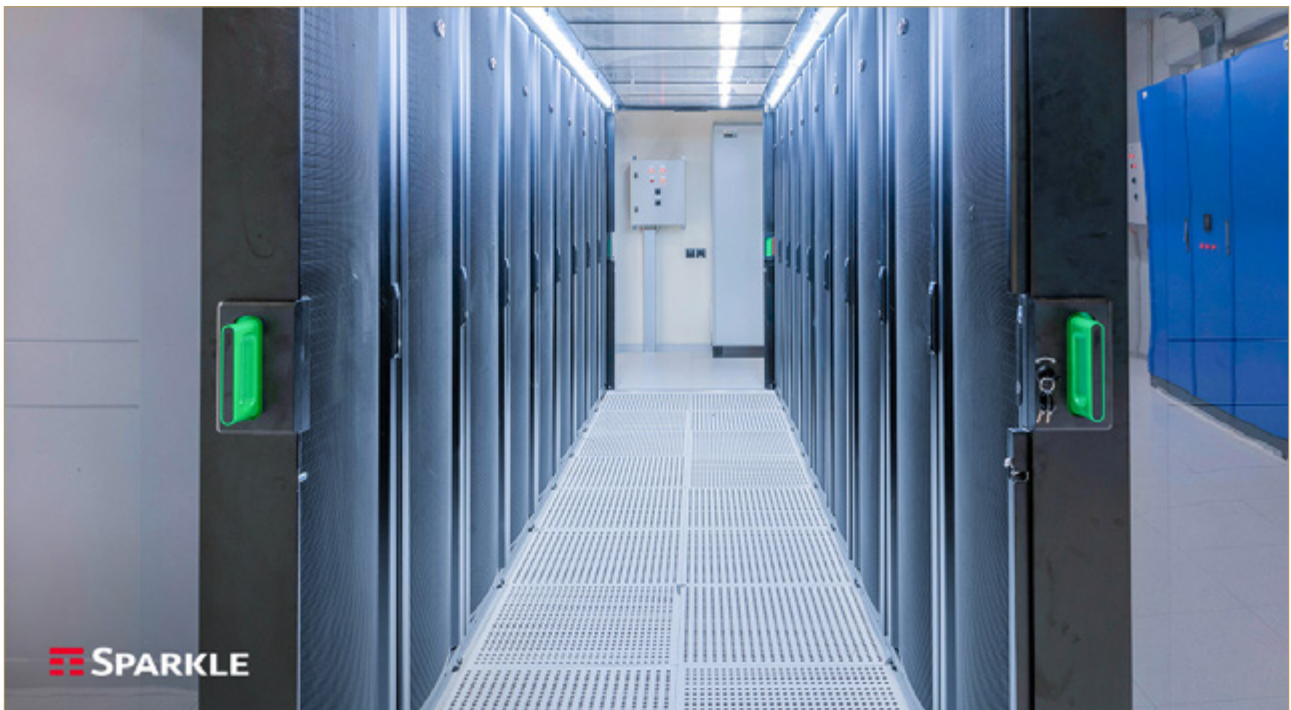
WIDA SCHMIDT:

Sounds like you have had a very

busy but very rewarding time lately at Sparkle. Once again, congratulations. Moving on, how does the new market situation and fast digital transformation impact your business, and what are the challenges and opportunities to meet the client's demands?

DANIELE MANCUSO:

One thing is certain: whatever is happening in the industry, whatever revolution, acceleration in transformation, whatever experience our customers require, there is always the need to increase bandwidth. This is where Sparkle blossoms. During the CC-Telco Infrastructure Summit last September in Rome, we saw the bandwidth demand was doubling every 24 months. One year later we confirm these growths for the next five to six years, at least. There is therefore a need for additional bandwidth to connect people and devices, and to move towards what we call the hyper-automation of industries. Being Sparkle, first and foremost, a provider of infrastructure and of data services, we are always on the verge of this demand. The main challenge is to study which are the new and most interesting corridors, balancing the ability to implement as quickly as possible new capacity to serve our customers, while keeping the cost as low as possible. It is necessary to keep two curves as parallel as possible, that is, the price decline in a specific region and the cost decline. As long as



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we can work on this equation, our business will be fine and we can be a very good player in the industry. But, as I said before, we are not just witnessing the transformation from the infrastructure point of view, we are surfing on it because we directly recognize what the new needs of our customers are. Therefore, we are investing in all those technological enablers that have a direct impact on enterprises. As an example, at the end of 2021, we launched a global IoT connectivity product to support the needs of companies

in managing their devices spread all over the world in a kind of one-stop-shop fashion. We provide the cloud management platform, the core network, supporting analytics, and SIM/eSIM management and, of course, the connectivity thanks to our new role as Global MVNO and to our extended list of roaming agreements. SD-WAN and SASE are our flagship services for the enterprises. Any company facing today's digital transformation has to completely rethink the way connectivity of applications and their own data centers or branch offices is studied, designed, and implemented. Security is also a very important requirement for an enterprise: not only because it obviously wants to stop attacks before they reach its perimeter, but because the perimeter of a company is now spread. There is no longer a central data center: the concept that what is inside the data center is protected and what is outside is not, is no longer relevant, because applications are in the cloud, at the Edge. It is therefore necessary to have a ubiquitous policy system that manages both connectivity and security at the same time, and probably from a cloud/edge perspective.

WIDA SCHMIDT:

It's great news to hear that Sparkle has seized these benefits of this digital transformation, especially in the areas you mentioned of IoT connectivity, security, and bandwidth infrastructure. Next, I would like to

hear about the future for Sparkle, Daniele. What is your company focus in the coming years and what are perhaps the investment plans, if you can share those insights with us?

DANIELE MANCUSO:

Well, as I said, we are surfing this increased bandwidth demand, and we are looking at new corridors. We are already deploying a new infrastructure: A few months ago we launched the BlueMed and Blue and Raman initiatives together with Google and others because we felt the need for a new powerful infrastructure, not only in terms of bandwidth capacity, but also, I would say above all, in terms of diversification. So Blue and Raman, as you know, have a unique root design and are completely different from traditional submarine cables serving the same corridor. We talk about differences both in the route, but also in the way the consortium is built – we are only few partners so it's almost, I would say, a private investment. In future years, this model will be prevalent in the realization of our infrastructure. We are already studying new infrastructure on the other side of the world, in the Caribbean and Latin America. In general, as you can see in the last few years, wherever we move with subsea cables, we move also with our co-location infrastructure. The latest developments were Genoa and Milan which will serve as landing platforms





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for BlueMed in Italy. In Israel we recently launched a facility that offers an ecosystem for submarine cables and companies to connect. We are doing the same in Panama: we have a facility there that is almost finalized and will be launched by the end of the year. Our mantra is definitely “facility and subsea cable”: an infrastructure to create an ecosystem of interconnected operators. We are not moving, let's say, towards a direct corporate business in terms of co-location. We remain at the operator level because it's in our DNA. At the same time, we want to leverage the fact that we are recognized as a global service provider that can really understand the requirements of enterprises and implement them.

We are therefore developing our enterprise strategy investing in new technologies for SD-WAN as well as looking at new technological enablers as potential revenue sources. I'm talking specifically about blockchain, Distributed Ledger Technologies. We are among the founding members of a new initiative called Integrated Trust Network, a kind of consortium of several companies: Telecom operators like Sparkle, but also car manufacturers, insurance companies, OTTs and hyperscalers. At the moment we are in the testing phase of the network, but we already have 15 node operators for about half a trillion dollars of turnover per year. This is a very interesting experience for Sparkle, moving towards digital self-sovereign identity and everything related to business automation. When you want to have business automation between multiple parties, there is one key word: trust. If one part does not trust the other, you cannot have an automated business. Blockchain and the Integrated Trust Network are the pillars of this new business. So, it is an interesting moment, both from the traditional point of view, and from an innovation point of view. As you can see, Sparkle is still a submarine cable company, but it is also something completely new.

WIDA SCHMIDT:

Wow. Sounds like Sparkle has a rewarding path ahead of itself and also nice to hear about those partnership examples or collaborations, such as projects like Blue and Raman and also the blockchain that you mentioned to

manage all the challenges currently facing operators in the market and to meet the client demands, so thank you for sharing again. Before we finish, Daniele, is there anything else you would like to share with us today? And of course, we are all excited and looking forward to the CC-Telco Infrastructure Summit in Rome, which takes place 14th-15th of September, to meet you all there.

DANIELE MANCUSO:

Yes, absolutely. It's an event we can't miss. Last year, we were able to come back in presence and it was a very nice event, well managed by Carrier Community. This year we want to double our commitment because I think it is something that truly enriches the industry.

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CHIEF PRODUCT MANAGEMENT AT SPARKLE