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CC-EXECUTIVE INTERVIEW WITH
ENRICO BAGNASCO
Chief Executive Officer at Sparkle

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Carrier Community is pleased to bring you another insightful CC-Executive Interview featuring Enrico Bagnasco, the Chief Executive Officer of Sparkle. In this engaging discussion led by Wida Schmidt, CEO of Carrier Community, Enrico shares the latest advancements Sparkle has made over the past year, how the company is harnessing the power of digital transformation, and what's on the horizon for the global telecom leader. Known for its robust network solutions and strategic growth, Sparkle continues to make waves in connectivity and enterprise solutions worldwide.

Wida Schmidt: Hello everyone, and welcome to the CC-Webinar Live Executive Interview. I'm excited to introduce our special guest, Enrico Bagnasco, Chief Executive Officer at Sparkle. Hello, Enrico, how are you doing today?

Enrico Bagnasco: Hello, Wida. We're doing very well, thank you, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to join you once again.

Wida Schmidt: It's always a pleasure to have you with us. It's our third consecutive year featuring Sparkle, and it's incredible to see the strides you and your team have made. Let's dive in. Could you start by sharing some of the key developments and accomplishments Sparkle has achieved over the last 12 months?

Enrico Bagnasco: Absolutely, Wida. It's been a remarkably busy year. Looking back, I'd say our flagship project, Blue Raman, stands out. Over the past 12 months, we completed seven landings for the Mediterranean segment of this system, stretching from Genoa to Corsica, Sardinia, Rome, Palermo, and Greece, including Chania, Crete, and Marseille. Every landing involves extensive ground and marine operations, so it's quite an achievement. Now, the system is commercially available from Crete to Genoa, Milan, and onward to Marseille, making it a key asset with robust market traction and multiple service activations.

In addition to this, we finalized a crucial terrestrial crossing in the Middle East, making our service operational from Aqaba in Jordan, adding yet another important segment to our end-to-end system.

On the IP transit side, we saw significant growth in traffic volume and revenues, reclaiming the number four spot in the CAIDA rankings for global IP transit carriers. We're even number one in regions like South America and the Middle East. Another major highlight is the new data center we've launched in Panama, which now connects to the Curie submarine cable. This allows us to offer enhanced northbound and southbound services from Los Angeles to Santiago, Chile, with a new drop in Panama.

In September, we also launched full service on the Equiano cable, running from Portugal to South Africa. It's seen substantial demand already, and I'm pleased that our early investment in this segment has proven successful.

These visible developments reflect our dedication to delivering meaningful results, not just ideas. There are, of course, many ongoing

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enhancements in our network and services, but these are the highlights.

Wida Schmidt: Thank you, Enrico, for sharing these exciting updates. It's remarkable to see Sparkle's ongoing commitment to expanding its network across continents and sectors, from submarine and IP transit to data centers. Now, with digital transformation accelerating, how is Sparkle adapting to emerging trends like AI and cybersecurity to ensure an optimal customer experience?

Enrico Bagnasco: Thank you for the question, Wida. This really highlights the other side of the coin, in a way—beyond the industrial delivery actions, we're taking deliberate steps to adapt to digital transformation. We have several well-planned initiatives that are already paying off, and I'll start with the most prominent topic today: AI.

Everyone is talking about AI, but let me explain how we're using it at Sparkle. About a year ago, we launched an AI program, starting by consulting directly with our network operations team to find out what they needed to simplify and streamline their work. Our team defined nine key use cases that have now become the primary objectives of this program. The first applications of AI we've implemented focus on automating network and service operations, particularly in areas like alarm correlation, trouble ticketing, SLA management, and customer-facing reports. These are processes that generate large volumes of data requiring correlation across different network factors, and AI is proving highly effective in managing this complexity.

Today, four of those nine initial use cases are in full operation, with another four set to go live between now and the end of Q1. The impact is clear—repetitive, manual tasks are increasingly handled autonomously, shifting much of the operational load off our human teams. This allows our experts to focus on higher-level, strategic work, and our performance KPIs have improved as a result. We've also kicked off an internal initiative called "AI Days" in early October,

where all business lines gathered to discuss their needs and potential new applications. This bottom-up approach has been effective for us, as we believe that the people directly using these AI tools know best what will add value to their work.

Our second area of innovation is around SD-WAN, particularly for enterprise clients. We're seeing a significant shift toward software-based networking solutions, with our approach being technology-agnostic and vendor-agnostic to stay flexible for clients. Some large enterprises prefer specific solutions, while others look for alternatives. Our goal is to offer flexible options while maintaining reliable connectivity and security, as this shift to software-based networking aligns with the broader network-as-a-service model that is gaining momentum. Security is naturally an integral part of this, adding a key layer of value on top of our connectivity solutions.

The third area is focused on people and knowledge. There's a clear industry trend: the demand for highly skilled experts far exceeds the supply, particularly for system engineers who can view and manage projects end-to-end. We need professionals with strong project management skills who can negotiate effectively with vendors, partners, and authorities. To meet this demand, we're committed to developing this talent both internally and by looking outside the company.

In September we launched a new initiative with the University of Genova, which has a rich history in maritime fields. Together with the SubOptics Foundation, we've developed a specialized master's program, providing a postgraduate degree that covers everything from engineering to economics and maritime law, all centered on the field of submarine cables. This program, with its multidisciplinary approach, aims to grow and attract future talent to our field.

In short, our focus on AI, SD-WAN, and developing end-to-end expertise is helping Sparkle adapt to and benefit from the fast pace of digital transformation. We're optimistic that these strategies will drive continued

growth and enhance the quality of service we deliver to our customers.

Wida Schmidt: That's fantastic, Enrico. Congratulations on these impactful initiatives! It's inspiring to see how Sparkle is turning ideas into action, whether through AI integration, SD-WAN, or educational partnerships. As you look to the future, are there any new strategic directions or projects that Sparkle is exploring?

Enrico Bagnasco: While our strategic plans remain aligned, they have evolved to become more concrete. Moving forward, we're doubling down on enterprise solutions, particularly IoT. We're seeing steady growth in our IoT mobile services, where our focus is connectivity, SIM management, and multi-carrier coverage. It took longer than expected to establish this, but now it's gaining traction.

On infrastructure, we're focusing on key routes. For instance, the GreenMed project, which we announced last December, will connect Europe through the Adriatic Sea, extending from Milan to Turkey, Greece, and the Balkans. This project is well-defined and already in the pre-sales phase.

In the Americas, we've developed connectivity through several cables like Curie and Monet and have announced a partnership with Liberty Networks and Gold Data for the development of the MANTA submarine cable system in the North-Central-South American corridor. Finally, we're enhancing our position in Southeast Asia. With Singapore as our easternmost point, we're working on expanding connectivity between Singapore and India, an area rich with growth potential.

Wida Schmidt: Thank you, Enrico, for sharing these strategic insights. It's great to hear how Sparkle's future initiatives span across continents and industries, from IoT in enterprises to extensive infrastructure development. We wish you and your team all the best for the year ahead and look forward to catching up next time.

Enrico Bagnasco: Thank you, Wida, for this opportunity. I appreciate your team's dedication, and I look forward to sharing more updates with you in the future.

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