





Special Focus

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Teliwave extends Hoiio service to enterprises**It says firms can save up to 80% of mobile-phone bills**

By CHEN HUIFEN

HOME GROWN mobile technology firm Teliwave has extended its call-back Hoiio service to enterprises after a successful run in the consumer segment for more than a year.

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CEO Ong Kok

Choong, 28, says the service, which helps individuals save up to 70 per cent on their phone bills, already has 20,000 registered users, of whom 1,600 are active paying customers.

The move to serve the enterprise segment has been driven by the company's wish to expand beyond Singapore.

Mr Ong points out that mobile-phone services in many jurisdictions are regulated, so new entrants must obtain licences. And this would limit the pace at which Teliwave can grow if it continues to focus on the consumer segment alone.

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- Mr Ong

'We've already deployed the Hoiio solution for MNCs in Singapore, Indonesia and Australia,' he says. 'And we have another

buyer for 800 people in the UK.'

Mr Ong says SMEs can benefit from Teliwave because call savings cut across enterprises of all sizes - as long as the company pays a portion of its workers' mobile-phone bills. He estimates that businesses can save up to 80 per cent of their mobile-phone bills by using Hoiio Business Mobility Solutions.

'An interesting social phenomenon we see is that while people may be in the office most of the time, they still talk on their mobile phones than on their fixed lines,' he said. 'Like our first customer on board, its mobile-phone bill is actually five times higher than its land-line bills.'

Hoiio's proposition is to convert outgoing mobile-phone calls into incoming calls. It works like a call-back service, only that instead of punching special dialling codes and remembering PIN numbers, users dial as they would normally, or select the number from their contact list.

'Most businesses understand the savings they can get from using a call-back system,' said Mr Ong.

'The obstacle has always been to get the mobile employee to use the service. Many employees balk at having to enter PIN numbers or edit their contact list to add special dialling codes and prefixes. Hoiio Business Mobility makes the experience hassle-free. There is no need to change the way the call is made,' he adds.

For example, a call to China using Hoiio solution will cost about 4.9 cents a minute versus the \$1-plus per minute charged by most telcos, says Mr Ong. And to make the service even more attractive for SMEs, Teliwave has a pay-per-use model - a company is billed only for the calls made on its Hoiio system, without any capital expense.

The solution is available direct from Teliwave, as well as through technology partners such as CrossPoint Telecommunications and Cisco, which bundle it as part of their offerings to re-sellers. By the first half of next year, Teliwave plans to launch Hoiio to enterprises in North Asia and Europe.

'In North Asia, there is a China-Hong Kong-Taiwan phenomenon, whereby companies in Taiwan or Hong Kong have operations in China or vice

versa,' says Mr Ong. 'Likewise, a lot of European companies have telecommunications traffic in Germany, Britain, France and Italy. A lot of companies operate across these borders. And those provide ready clusters of countries for us to enter.'

Founded by Mr Ong in 2007, Teliwave has 20 staff and is backed by \$1.55 million in funding from angel investors and a grant from Spring Singapore's Technology Enterprise Commercialisation Scheme. The technology behind Hoiio was licensed from A*Star's Exploit Technologies.

A computer engineering graduate of the National University of Singapore, Mr Ong started his first venture as an undergraduate. Back then, he was dabbling in mobile surveillance software. Although one of the products was sold to a few companies, he did not succeed in this initial venture because he underestimated the cost of bringing a product to market successfully.

'At that time, I had only \$40,000,' he says. 'And with that, I tried to build three products. That's almost suicidal.'

However, he continued to be inspired by the social impact that mobile phones are making on people and companies, and hopes Teliwave can be the Skype of the mobile-phone world. Although he understands that Teliwave's proposition may make traditional telcos uneasy, he reckons that some other - foreign - player may join the foray sooner or later.

'My key aim is to launch the product worldwide,' he says.

Teliwave posted revenue of \$100,000 last year and is close to hitting \$1 million this year.

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