Lucent continues to follow enterprise path to 3G

The time is now right for 3G investment to step up a gear again, according to David Poticny, vice president, Mobility at Lucent Technologies. He stated, "Operators have held back on spending but they have now got their positions to a manageable level. Their cash positions are generally good and some are very good. Therefore we expect investment to start again." He also stated that the market was not closed to those infrastructure vendors that had so far made little impact on Europe. "Operators are reviewing how they go to market with UMTS and they are also reviewing their choice of suppliers."

In line with the general industry mood, Poticny was adamant that operators will only be interested in UMTS if they can see a sound business in it. For Poticny and Lucent the central point of this is mobilising the enterprise. He said, "It is a market that hasn't been tapped yet and has a willingness and ability to pay."

Lucent's proposal is based around laptops connected to UMTS PC Cards, for the delivery of which it has signed agreements with Option and Novatel. But that is just the beginning as Poticny stated that for services to be successful they had to offer three things — adequate throughput speeds, security and easy set-up and access.

In terms of speed, Lucent's research suggests that European businesses are looking for three to four times the speeds of dial-up modem connections (around 150kbit/s) from their wireless connectivity. However, if this can be achieved then Poticny says many "Will do most of their business over wireless networks."

For security, Lucent is putting its faith in IPsec to secure VPN tunnels and last year formed partnerships with Agere Systems, H-P, iPass, ipUnplugged and Sierra Wireless to deliver a fully integrated solution.

Despite all the energy being expended by Lucent, Poticny stated that the company was not moving away from the infrastructure business. "We are not doing this to sell PC cards but to make 3G a success and position Lucent as part of that success." He did concede that Lucent was "working in areas where it won't make a lot of money." But, he stated, the company is "still committed to sell infrastructure as its core business but recognises the need to sell services with that."