

Africa shines at CommsMEA Awards

The CommsMEA Awards took place at Jumeirah Emirates Towers in Dubai last week honouring those operators, vendors, regulators and professionals that stood out in the regional telecoms sector in the past year. Here are all the winners...



All the winners:

- **African Vendor of the Year:** Ericsson. Paul Tzambazis, service line TV & media director, collected the award. Ericsson enjoyed a stellar year in Africa, carrying out projects in many countries spanning the continent. Just to mention a few highlights, it signed major new agreements with three operators in Egypt and brought new ICT solutions to Ivory Coast and Central Africa. It also connected remote parts of Africa allowing local clinics to offer life-saving services.
- **Most Innovative New Service:** AT&T. John Wimpole, general manager, director of sales, Middle East and Africa, collected the award: AT&T developed a connected car service that will transform the experience of motoring, whether you're behind the wheel or in the passenger seat. With a high-speed wireless connection, the service can monitor the car's condition, checking to see if it needs maintenance. Drivers can access accurate traffic data while passengers can stream movies.
- **Telecoms Professional of the Year:** The winner of this prestigious award was Anders Lindblad, President, Region Middle East and North Africa, Ericsson. Siddarth Gupta, engagement director, Ericsson, collected the award on behalf of Lindblad, who was out of the country at the time of the awards ceremony. With a responsibility for 23 countries across the Middle East and North Africa, Lindblad has worked diligently to drive his company forward and help the region's operators navigate an increasingly tough telecoms landscape. He is known to listen to his team, mindless of hierarchy, and ensures decisions are based on certain objectives, capabilities and observations. It's an approach that has helped land an array of contract wins and cement strong customer relationships.
- **African Operator of the Year:** Bharti Airtel. The judges were impressed by Bharti Airtel's new and innovative services in Africa and also by the way the operator expanded its footprint on the continent. The winner brought mobile financial services to nine of its operations in Africa and partnered with Nazara Technologies to launch a Games Club. It also found time to acquire operations in Congo and Uganda.

- **Middle East Vendor of the Year:** Huawei. Pan En, VP Middle Region and head of technical solution marketing, collected the award. Huawei has taken a leap forwards in the Middle East in the past few years. With 3,800 employees in the region, the Middle East has become one of the fastest growing regions for the vendor, which landed some major operator contracts this year. Its revenue from the Middle East in 2012 alone totaled some \$2.1 billion, an incredible 18% increase over the previous year.
- **Regulator of the Year:** TRA Bahrain. Mohamed Hamad Bubashait, general director, collected the award. In the past year, TRA Bahrain has continued to drive competition in a country that has already set a benchmark for the region. The winning regulator allocated LTE spectrum to the main operators and also released additional spectrum. It also carried out a campaign for online safety and focused on quality of service with quarterly audits.
- **Best CSR campaign:** Tunisiana. Maha Al Khulaifi, senior analyst at Ooredoo (which owns Tunisiana), collected the award. This category attracted many nominations, but the winner managed to stand out from its rivals with a scheme to aid youth employment. Tunisiana, part of Ooredoo group, launched a service that allows mobile technology to help young people reach job opportunities and acquire the right qualifications.
- **Best Marketing Campaign:** Ooredoo. Maha Al Khulaifi returned to collect the award. The winner of the category created a stir earlier in the year when it launched its new brand, a major process that was handled with finesse. The vibrant new brand has already become an established part of the telecoms landscape with its bold colours and clear message that puts the customer first.
- **Customer Service Provider of the Year:** Zain Jordan. Laith Wreikat, RAN planning and optimisation team leader, collected the award. The judges were impressed by Zain Jordan's special program to address the needs of postpaid subscribers at each stage of the customer lifecycle. The strategy helped the operator to boost customer satisfaction, reduce churn and gather important customer data.
- **Editor's Choice for Outstanding Achievement:** STC Group. Ayman Aldham, general manager, corporate communications, collected the award. STC staged a series of network investments in 2013, allowing it to increase efficiency and performance. The company has also forged numerous agreements with partners, helping it to streamline its business and launch new services. The results speak for themselves. In Q3, the operator saw its net profits rise 73% to \$904 million.
- **Telecoms Deal of the Year:** Batelco. Rashid Abdulla, CEO of Batelco Bahrain, collected the award. Batelco scooped the award for its acquisition of key assets from Cable & Wireless Communications. The winning deal was in many ways a classic M&A transaction, expanding operator's customer base and addressable market. The \$570 million dollar deal presented solid value at a time when the cost of deals has been spiraling.
- **Telecoms Technology Investment of the Year:** Abu Dhabi Police and ALROWAD IT Solutions. Ahmed Al Mahain, director of communications and transportation at ALROWAD IT Solutions and Captain in Abu Dhabi Police in Dewan, collected the award. This nomination, for Abu Dhabi radar system, stood out for its laudable mission: to save lives, and for the technical prowess of the project's deployment. The winning investment draws on the latest telecoms technology to detect and reduce speeding offences in the UAE.
- **Best Business Service:** Du. Jatin Sahn, VP of enterprise marketing, collected the award. Du impressed the judges by introducing an all-in-one mobile plan dedicated for business users. The plan offers value and control including privileges such as one rate to all major international destinations and privileged calls within the business. The plan clearly raises the bar for mobile business packages in the region.
- **Converged Service Provider of the Year:** Mobily. Abdulla Al Hariri, executive manager, media relations, collected the award. Mobily invested in all areas of its network in 2013 with a view to strengthening converged services. Notably, in August, it activated the first commercial 400 Gigabit per second IP core network in Saudi Arabia. The upgrade will help the operator to cope with surging demand for data backhaul and positions it as a truly converged service

provider.

- **Middle East Operator of the Year:** Zain Iraq. Haider Akab, corporate communications director, collected the award. Zain Iraq operates in one of the region's toughest markets, but this has not stopped it from pushing forward with ambitious investments in its network and services. With its customers in mind, the operator launches some 70-80 new offers per year, with 50 new offers in the first half of 2013 alone, each catered to specific customers needs and further driving revenue and customer satisfaction. Indeed, revenues remain strong and account for a massive 40% of revenue contributions to its parent company.
- **Overall Operator of the Year:** Etisalat. Fares Fares, senior director, digital marketing, collected the award. Etisalat continued to achieve growth in its home market in the face of tough competition by launching a raft of offers to increase uptake of services, from IPTV packages to mobile broadband and business packages. It also invested in its network and successfully completed testing voice over LTE earlier in the year, allowing it to launch HD-quality voice services. It also announced its partnership in the construction of the new Bay of Bengal submarine fibre optic cable, which will be capable of delivering huge data capacity and will enhance intercontinental connectivity.

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