Wi-Fi to be seen as a "utility" in 2018, says Ruckus

According to Gartner, artificial intelligence, immersive experiences, digital twins, event-thinking and continuous adaptive security, create a foundation for the next generation of digital busines models and ecosystems will be the top strategic trends for 2018. No matter the industry, there v be significant potential for disruption as technology becomes embedded in everything in the digi business of the future and Ruckus agrees.

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Nick Watson, vice president for EMEA, Ruckus says: “Digital disruption is not new. Right from the daw of the internet, people have been using technology to benefit business (augment an existing model) and/o disrupt an industry. The only difference today, is the speed of change. For those that are open to change, coupled with strong ideas, technology is opening up new opportunities and new ways of doing business a Wi-Fi is certainly making its mark.”

Watson shared insights into the global Wi-Fi market:

- There are eight times as many devices connected to Wi-Fi as there are to mobile/cellular data networks; therefore, the future of Wi-Fi looks much more like a utility rather than an add-on. This expectation is driving the need for ubiquitous coverage to accommodate emerging technologies and the increasing number of connected devices.
- There is a move towards a free public Wi-Fi model where Ruckus anticipates larger cities to roll out smart city initiatives to improve efficiencies and drive wider connectivity.
- The newly certified 802.11ac Wave 2 standard is opening the door to gigabit Wi-Fi. Significant advantages this standard includes: one access point can transmit multiple data streams to multiple connected device simultaneously; better overall performance with the ability to transmit larger files; more bandwidth and flexibility; and greater interoperability options. 802.11ac Wave 2 has gained ground quickly, as it provides wireless speeds as fast as–or even faster than–wired networks. Many businesses are already using Wi-Fi as the primary way to connect to the local area network (LAN)—a they are rapidly migrating to 802.11ac Wave 2 to take advantage of its performance and capabilities.
- We are going to see an increase in people connecting to devices, along with devices connecting to devices. The internet of things (IoT) market in growing exponentially, and we are likely to see more

practical rollouts of IoT deployments, particularly for global sustainability.

- The ability to use virtual reality modelling (high definition video) over Wi-Fi in localised environments. Networks have always been a constraining factor but we are starting to truly realise ubiquitous communication – one where we can disregard the network, but still get a fantastic experience.
- Everyone is talking 5G but we are likely two to five years away from a realistic delivery data. It has not been ratified as a standard and there is no clear path to market. While early adopters with low market share will try and be first to market in the hopes of gaining market traction, proof of concepts will neec be completed and verified – where standardisation will drive uptake.

African perspective

From an African perspective, **Riaan Graham, sales director for sub-Saharan Africa**, highlighted the following:

- Increasing effective connectivity – we see positive signs with regards to infrastructure developments across the continent and this is exactly what Africa needs.
- There are few things that prevent Africa from truly connecting wirelessly to the internet and as these barriers fall, we are likely to see larger African cities roll out smart city initiatives in some shape and form. The technology is available but it's up to local governments to bring budgets and departments together to make this a reality. We need a champion – someone to boldly take on this role.
- The story of fibre in South Africa has just begun. Government plans to have fibre cables in place throughout South Africa by 2020 and while fibre to the home is continuously on the rise in South Afric main residential suburbs, there is still a far way to go – especially outside high affluent areas. The goc news is there are a number of service providers who are focusing on fibre and driving residential connections, as more connections come online and speeds increase, prices start to drop. Fibre is bringing a more stable, reliable and faster level of connectivity that makes accessing cloud services a the possibility of the internet of Things easier and quicker – opening up innovation for both businesse and consumers alike. What's more, we are seeing similar models rolling out across Africa – including countries like Kenya, Botswana, Nigeria.
- As the urbanisation of the African Cities continue to grow we will see that efficiencies in service delive in these cities become key. How do the cities scale to service a growing urban population? Think of basic services such as water management, traffic management and waste management. All of these services are under strain. With the development of "Smart City" initiatives, new technologies such as IoT will be used to address these ever-increasing demands, ensuring real life efficiencies in service delivery. Wi-Fi is the ideal technology to use as backhaul for IoT sensors. Wi-Fi is cost effective and widely deployed in the larger African cities and will drive the mass adoption of IoT in our cities.
- "Looking into 2018, we believe the state of the Wi-Fi industry continues to look positive. The bottom l is that Wi-Fi is the perfect solution for the data challenges that are coming from a worldwide infatuatio with, and insatiable demand for, more and better wireless data services of all types – a utility certainly worth the investment," concludes Graham.