

## Breaking out of the communications cubicle

**S**INCE THE late 1800s, this industry has been busy perfecting the noble art of communication. Question is, do we really need a new word to describe it?

According to Merriam-Webster, “con-nec-tiv-i-ty is the quality, state, or capability of being connective or connected <connectivity of a surface>; especially: the ability to connect to or communicate with another computer or computer system.”

This is yet another import from the IT-industry. We all know there isn't exactly a shortage of hyped and blurred concepts coming from that space. Skeptical at first, I now think connectivity adds something important to the way we think about the rapidly transforming telecom industry.

It is no longer a specific service, or services, that comes to mind when we start looking at connectivity as the basis for this industry. What happens when not just everyone, but everything, is connected? Everywhere?

**CONNECTIVITY CAN** be seen as an asset, a raw material, or a natural resource that carries an almost magical versatility.

Think electricity. Who would have imagined back in the 1800s that this exclusive and hard-to-get form of power would scale up to lifting national economies, incite new enterprises by the millions, change lifestyles

completely, become ever-present, and on top of that allow us to brush our teeth more efficiently? My point is that it would be impossible for anyone to even try envisioning all the possible future applications of connectivity. Most of this thinking will probably not be done by the suppliers of this basic asset itself, just like power companies probably did not come up with the idea of the electrical toothbrush. And they were right in focusing on other things.

**WHAT'S THE VALUE** of being connected? After all, we are talking business here. The value is immensely great, but on the other hand it can't be measured because it all depends on the circumstances. The Japanese government is doing a good job of trying to define the value of connectivity to society and to the individual citizen. It is inspiring, not least because they dare to be visionary and set goals in an era when this has gone out of fashion in the West. The U-Japan project described in “Unrecognizable Japan” hinges on unlimited connectivity. And, yes, Japan is actually in the lead and you'll find some proof of this in “Who needs a next generation network, anyway?”

Connectivity could be the next big driver after, and on top of, electricity.

Looking at history again, even if this is the last of telecom as we know

it, the article “Bridging the gap” shows that the lesson from consumer retail and mass-media businesses has been one of positive cooperation in creating more efficient markets, improving distribution, adding choices, and making happier customers.

**OBVIOUSLY, IT'S** a new ball game for all concerned. Why not get to know your future teammates better by reading Multimedia is a team sport? And while you're at it, read Digital natives to find out what makes your new customers and employees tick.

What is it that carriers can do to change the game? Well, you can start by being an internet company before you become a carrier. Though not an option for everyone, Softbank made this move and stirred up the Japanese market considerably, as shown in “Confidence in being different”.

With this issue we would like to shed some light on some of the forces that threaten to expand the traditional telecom business universe in every direction. That can't be bad.



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