



# Sonera gets in first with Nokia Operator Wireless LAN

When it comes to the business of supplying Wireless LANs, Sonera of Finland has one piece of advice for other mobile operators. Advice that overrides almost all other considerations – make sure you are first.

Sonera has been a very early supplier of Operator Wireless LAN, turning this exciting technology from a potential threat into an asset and money-maker. The operator saw the immense potential of providing Wireless LANs in public places. It also had the vision to recognise the danger that competitor operators and even other types of supplier could jump in and offer Wireless LAN services, eroding Sonera's market and taking traffic from the company's network. Petri Huhtala, Product Group Manager for Sonera, says: "We knew it was vital to get into the market first."

Sonera made sure it was the first in Finland to offer Operator Wireless LAN services in public places – it started in mid-2000, with an installation at Helsinki airport.

Today, it has over 50 Operator Wireless LAN access zones, at traffic 'hotspots' such as airports, hotels, ships, conference centres, cafes, cinemas and like. All are areas in which the technology's core market, mobile business people who are already high speed GSM data users, tend to congregate. Sonera has found that at airports, subscribers use the services for between 10 and 30 minutes per session, while in a hotel they might spend from 30 minutes to up to one hour.

Finland has the potential for around 500 Operator Wireless LAN sites, or more if the service really takes off.

"We haven't been marketing the service yet, because we needed enough access zones to make it attractive," says Huhtala. "Now, with 50 sites set up, we can start our marketing campaign – our whole organisation is ready for the launch."

Marketing to these users concentrates on the message that Operator Wireless LAN increases efficiency while working on the move. It offers totally new possibilities for the user to set up a 'mobile office' at the hotspot, in a more user-friendly way and with higher bandwidth.



## Benefits on site

One important aspect of setting up the business has been to get the property owners on board – persuading them that it is worth their while to have an Operator Wireless LAN access zone in their building. The main advantage to them is that it improves their image by letting them offer their customers a communication service that will quickly be seen as increasingly vital. Sonera provides web application tools that allow the log-on page to be tailored by the airport or hotel to sell their own services. The fact that costs for the property owner are close to nothing is also attractive.

Users themselves need to have a wireless LAN card in their laptop and pay a monthly fee, plus a tariff for usage. Hotels and airports also sell pre-paid access.

Apart from the direct increases in revenue, there are other monetary benefits to the operator – Nokia estimates there will be a 30 to 40 Euro increase in ARPU, because the service will also lead users to make extra voice calls in the access zones and to stimulate them to use more data services also outside access zones benefiting GPRS and 3G services.

## Nokia solution eases the path

The ease of billing users was a deciding factor in Sonera opting for Nokia Operator Wireless LAN. Huhtala says: "Nokia technology implements the Operator Wireless LAN as simply another part of our mobile offering. The use of a SIM card was a crucial factor in our decision. We can use the same infrastructure in the GSM core network for billing, customer care and subscriber provisioning. Customers only get one bill, making it simpler for them."

Nokia Operator Wireless LAN also makes roaming easy, using existing agreements and SS7 technology – Sonera sees non-Sonera subscribers as a substantial source of revenue.

## A strategic technology

Yet, Operator Wireless LAN is more than simply another revenue stream. To Sonera, it is a strategic technology that has major implications for the company's future: "Using Nokia Operator Wireless LAN allows us to test all the business models and services for 3G in the field and make decisions about future technology right now", says Huhtala.

"Network planning becomes more efficient this way – Operator Wireless LAN is not a separate service but rather a complementary technology for 3G."

Sonera clearly sees itself as having a stake in Operator Wireless LAN's future. "We have worked closely with Nokia to improve this technology. Also, Nokia is

a global player with many operator customers, so it can help implement roaming, which is very important – together, we can move the market."

Huhtala summarises the importance of Operator Wireless LAN in the company: "We see Operator Wireless LAN as part of our mobile offering for our customers. It plays an important role, as it is currently the only way to provide broadband to customers. In future, although we will be able to combine different access technologies to provide broadband, it will still have an important role as part of our package."



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