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Ethan Group eyes wireless, VoIP boost

Integrator Ethan Group has signed up with wireless provider BigAir and upgraded its nine-month-old Mitel agreement to platinum status in moves to strengthen its IP communications arsenal.

Tony Geagea, director at Ethan Group, said partnering BigAir meant Ethan Group could offer customers an alternative to buying wireless broadband from carriers.

"It really doesn't make sense for organisations to really partner with carriers that might be inflexible," he said. "This is a great way to provide redundancy to an organisation and is very cost-effective."

Ethan Group saw the BigAir collaboration as a step forward in business and telecommunications offerings. Ethan Group would target organisations with pressing needs for coverage and availability, Geagea said.

"BigAir's network is extremely solid and sound. We tested that," he said.

Jason Ashton, chief executive at BigAir, said the wireless provider had 13 base stations across Sydney and more would follow.

"Our continued expansion, along with recently-formed partnerships allows us to leverage our partners' expertise to reach those businesses in need of a high-quality, high-speed broadband service," he said.

He said Sydney businesses had shown "enormous interest" in BigAir's business-grade broadband services. The wireless company offered 99.5 percent reliability and speeds up to 100Mb/s, Ashton said.

Ethan Group has outlined plans to target the VoIP space. Nine months back, it signed a deal to partner IP communications provider Mitel and this week upgraded the partnership to platinum status.

Geagea said Mitel added "significant value" as a partner with its strong products and services. "The opportunity for us with the Mitel relationship is to really offer applications and collaboration for businesses at a voice and data level," he said.

"What that means for organisations is cost savings and efficiencies to the business, increasing productivity and also leveraging the network that can be put in."

Market analysts such as Gartner and IDC had suggested 50 percent of businesses would be starting a move to VoIP by 2005. "I think that statistic is coming through," Geagea said.

Gwilym Funnell, country manager at Mitel Australia, said Ethan Group offered strong support capability across its range of products and applications. The integrator had also seen "fantastic growth" of some 760 percent in revenue terms last year, he said.

"Ethan Group is very strong at providing full end-to-end solutions," Funnell said.

Mitel itself had seen a 46 percent jump in IP system shipments overall in the past quarter. It had 40 partners in Australia and Ethan Group would be the second to achieve platinum partner status, he said.

"It's a very new relationship but their growth has been absolutely dramatic," Funnell said.