



To print: [Click here](#) or Select File and then Print from your browser's menu

This story was printed from silicon.com, located at <http://www.silicon.com/>

Story URL: <http://networks.silicon.com/telecoms/0,39024659,39399786,00.htm>

Why BT is panicking about the 2012 Olympics

"If a butterfly wing beats somewhere in Weymouth I want to know about it"...

By Natasha Lomas

Published: Thursday 26 February 2009

Telco BT has revealed the Olympic-sized challenge it faces in ensuring the comms infrastructure behind London's 2012 Olympic Games hits the ground running and finishes its laps without a hitch.

Speaking at the annual CMA conference in London yesterday, Stuart Hill, BT's VP and director of BT 2012, told delegates: "This has to work."

"This is the most complex logistical peacetime challenge I think we've had to face," Hill said. "We have one spin of the circle... So I want to panic every moment from now 'til the Games to make sure we've got that right."

"If a butterfly wing beats somewhere in Weymouth I want to know about it," he added.

BT was announced as the official comms services partner for the Games back in March 2008 and is providing and managing all the voice and data networks, internet access and land lines required across all Olympic venues and facilities. It will also meet the comms needs of the athletes, Olympic committees and the media. The telco says it's investing 640,000 man hours in the project.

Hill screened a video showing sprinter Usain Bolt breaking a world record in 9.69 seconds to underline how the 2012 network won't be able to tolerate even a few seconds of downtime or the watching world could miss out on seeing another record being broken. "That haunts me," he admitted.

"Every image, every sports report, every visit to the 2012 website along with millions of calls, millions of mobile calls and texts will be down to BT to deliver with its partners," he said. "Every second 6GB of information transgresses across this network. That's equivalent to 6,000 novels or the entire contents of Wikipedia every five seconds."

Because of the scale of the task - there are 94 sites across the UK to be hooked up - Hill said BT is having to re-engineer some of its day-to-day business processes so it can function at Olympic speeds.

"The fixed times and deployment times I have on services mean I have to re-engineer a number of BT's processes and change the way we work with our clients," he said, adding the telco hopes some of these changes stick around with BT after the 2012 games.

With so much responsibility on its shoulders BT is treading a risk-averse path. "We're going to use tried and tested technology. This isn't the time to be a hero with fancy holograms or the latest mobile technology. We want the Games to run smoothly," said Hill.

The telco is also taking no chances on network failure. "We're going to have duplication of LANs, routers, it's going to be fully diverged routing - I'm going to have a one to one sparing strategy; I don't want to fix faults. If there's a fault I want to spot it. I want devolved responsibility to every one of the team who've been trained and credited for the Games," Hill explained.

Hill said he's worked out there are 1,650 points of failure in the Olympic Park and said he plans to be pulling plugs at forthcoming test events to see how quickly his team can fix the failure. "That's the sort of thing you've got to do," he added.

Meanwhile outside the venues there will be "physical security" at every BT exchange feeding the network and manholes will be "taped and secured" - to prevent equipment thieves from causing any **nasty surprises**. "We're

not leaving any stone unturned in the way we're actually putting this together," Hill said. "We are overcompensating in a way we've never done before."

He added: "We're in training. I've started my press-ups, I've started my sit-ups. I haven't done that for a long time but you can't be in charge of this and look out of condition."

About CBS Interactive

Copyright © 2008 CBS Interactive Limited. All rights reserved.