

Expanding Web access is biggest challenge, industry leaders say

April 9 2010, By Bridget Carey

Everybody wants every computer to be able to access the Internet and all their documents from anywhere, all the time. Meeting that customer expectation is the biggest challenge top technology and communication companies said they were facing at the eight annual Telefonica Leadership Conference.

"The very backbone and infrastructure of the Internet is evolving to support that change," said Michael [Dell](#), founder and CEO of Dell, who was the event's keynote speaker. "Customer needs are changing, and they're changing at an unprecedented rate."

This year's Telefonica conference is designed to open discussion about what lies in store for the future of mobile computing and doing business abroad, with about 900 attendees and 280 companies from around the globe swarming the Loews Miami Beach Hotel Wednesday and Thursday.

As more [consumers](#) move to smart phones, faster networks to connect online will be required. As applications, videos and Web sites offer richer content, they will require [bandwidth](#) that can handle larger files. One company that's facing this issue is AT&T, which has dealt with huge bandwidth demands created by iPhone users consuming large amounts of data on its network. And the demand for companies moving their data storage and operations to the Internet -- known as cloud computing -- is growing at six times the rate of other solutions. Spending on cloud computing is expected to reach \$42 billion by 2010, Dell said.

Top that all off with a consumer that has less load-time patience.

"I suffer from BSA: Bandwidth Separation Anxiety," Dell joked.

The topic that kept coming up throughout the morning was Apple's trendy tablet computer, the iPad.

When asked if the success of the iPad would shift the Dell product line to focus on tablet computing, Dell said, "Touch-screen tablets and notebooks are not new to our industry ... I think you'll see a variety of devices from Dell and from others that enable this kind of touch interface."

During his presentation, Dell held up the Mini 5, an Android-powered handheld smart phone, but no ship date or price has been revealed.

At a panel on disruptive forces in mobility, Chris Anderson, editor of Wired magazine, moderated a discussion with executives from Sony, Nokia and BlackBerry maker Research In Motion.

Anderson said that with the iPad's arrival, Apple "finally gave us a digital platform that can compete with paper."

Cloud computing -- having files stored on the Web versus on a single computer -- was another hot topic. Sony's senior vice president of consumer electronics, Mark Hanson, said people won't necessarily want it all on one device, but rather seamlessly access everything from every device. Information "may travel with each device, regardless of what that device does," he said.

Telefonica USA CEO Diane Sanchez called the new demands, coupled with a troubled economy, "the new normal" for the information technology industry.

"The crisis has reshaped the whole business and economic landscape in a totally unprecedented way," Sanchez said.

Cesar Alierta, CEO of Telefonica South America, said by 2010, there will be 50 billion connected devices in the world. Today, there are seven billion. Converging the three screens -- computers, mobile phones, and television -- is key to the future.

"We are going to be the bridge between the new economic world," Alierta said.

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