

Large telecoms invest heavily in local networks

P.R. CofC telecom conference to key on sector's growth and change in face of economic downturn

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As Puerto Rico's economic growth has halted, given the current economic recession-turned-depression, one sector still going strong is telecommunications. Companies across the sector continue to invest in infrastructure.

Claro Puerto Rico, AT&T and T-Mobile, some of the largest telecommunications companies, have deployed fourth-generation (4G)-equivalent mobile-broadband service throughout Puerto Rico.

To help entrepreneurs and business leaders better understand the mobile transformation, the Puerto Rico Chamber of Commerce (PRCC) will host the "Puerto Rico TELECOM Conference 2011: The New Future" Oct. 5 at the Conrad San Juan Condado Plaza Hotel.

"The telecom industry isn't just about phone calls anymore, it is also about devices, content, download speeds and Internet connections," said Salvador Calaf-Legrand, chairman of the board of

the PRCC. "As the mobile transformation continues, all entrepreneurs and business leaders need to re-examine the bigger IT [information technology] picture, creating the business processes and building the infrastructure needed to take more advantage of the economic opportunities the digital world offers."

The conference will gather more than 300 executives and entrepreneurs from the telecom and technology sector, as well as venture capitalists, angel investors and public-market investors who want to strategize, stay abreast of new trends and develop new business.

The one-day conference provides a unique opportunity to exchange ideas on how telecommunications technologies, greater Internet access and open information flow online can allow companies to grow, reach new markets and innovate, explained Miguel A. Vivaldi, president of the Technology & Telecom Affairs Committee of the PRCC.

Speakers at the event will include senior and chief executives from telecom and technology

firms, emerging leaders and other industry experts from Puerto Rico, the U.S. and around the world.

LOCAL UPGRADES

Claro invested \$100 million to boost its network to High Speed Packet Access plus (HSPA+) last December. The upgrade of 417 cell sites in its telecommunications-tower network tripled the carrier's mobile-network speed.

Beyond the HSPA+ project, Claro invested an additional \$140 million in the other telecommunications services the company offers, such as landline, Internet and television.

For its part, AT&T has invested \$225 million in the past three years to improve its own system, including installing and optimizing about 800 antennas at approximately 400 cell sites throughout the island, as well as adding new sites.

Meanwhile, AT&T is seeking approval to acquire T-Mobile operations throughout the U.S., including Puerto Rico, from German parent company Deutsche Telekom. ■

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