MTN introduces next-generation Nexus platform

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MTN Satellite Communications (MTN) has launched its next generation MTN Nexus system—a hybrid network combining satellite communications, terrestrial connectivity and a cloud computing-based optimisation platform in one package.

MTN Nexus will also offer a range of new products and services that will be enabled only through this hybrid solution, the company said.

“There is no communication network like MTN Nexus in the world,” said Errol Olivier, CEO and president of MTN.

“For 30 years, we have innovated new ways to deliver connectivity and content where no terrestrial wireless or wireline networks could connect vessels far out at sea. But passengers and crew no longer accept limitations—they want to stream video, post their updates on Facebook and share vacation images with friends … or even family members sailing with them on the same ship.”

The new service will make use of MTN’s recent investment in a purpose-built payload on Intelsat’s EpicNG satellite constellation.

MTN says it partnered with Intelsat to engineer the delivery of “maximum bit-to-hertz efficiency” for the satellite, which will allow for the delivery of a High Throughput Multi-Spot Beam (HTMS) solution delivering up to 500 Mbps per beam in the Caribbean.

MTN HTMS will enable vessels to seamlessly roam between MTN HTMS beams and conventional Ku-beams, for extended coverage and redundancy. The MTN service will remain backward compatible with existing Ku-band satellite systems, current network infrastructure and customer-preferred network topology.

MTN notes that this network design was the first step in developing MTN Nexus, with the second being the combination of its satellite capabilities with a terrestrial network to build a Near-Port/In-Port network using Wi-Fi, 3G, 4G, WiMAX and/or LTE.
As vessels move into port, they will switch to Wi-Fi infrastructure using in-built switching technology. As a Wi-Fi connection is established, MTN will reallocate unneeded satellite capacity back to ships at sea, to maximise efficiencies in unused bandwidth when ships are in port.

MTN ShipCloud will provide the integrated shoreside and shipboard platform for the MTN Nexus hybrid network.

Leveraging cloud computing technology, MTN says this aspect of the service will allow it to deliver a powerful infrastructure for processing and caching of data and content.

According to the company, this combined platform should allow for the provision of a range of communication and content products specifically optimised for maritime use to deliver applications in areas like social media solutions, content and calling.

In addition, MTN Nexus will be an open platform, to allow MTN products and products from third parties to be integrated and optimised.

MTN says it is currently aiming its next-generation network at the cruise market, but it hopes to ultimately expand these capabilities to other maritime sectors.

“Bandwidth is only part of the solution to the connectivity demands we see every day from our cruise partners,” said Mr Olivier.

“The complete solution is an integrated hybrid communications platform specifically designed for the cruise market to further enhance the total user experience. MTN’s next-generation network, built on a worldwide infrastructure, will minimise costs, maximise throughput, optimise operations and deliver the greatest profitability to our partners.”

“MTN Nexus is a purpose-built solution to deliver the at-home experience at sea and in or near port. We know this market better than anyone, and we know how to solve the problems. MTN Nexus will forever change the way we all think about communications at sea.”