



Leading global smart card vendors form SIMalliance

Cannes, 1st February 2000 -- A significant consortium of four leading global smart card manufacturers has been formed with the primary aim of maximizing the GSM Operator's benefits from SIM Card and SIM Application Toolkit usage in the growth of value-added-services.

Called SIMalliance, the idea was first discussed during World Telecom '99 in Geneva. Since then, the four founding members Gemplus, Giesecke & Devrient (G&D), ORGA Kartensysteme and Schlumberger have wasted no time in officially establishing the consortium. It comes at a time when the major concerns and challenges in mobile communications are the raft of proprietary operating systems that are inevitably created, competing against each other not always in the interests of end users, or the interoperability that will drive the industry as a whole.

Dr.Klaus Vedder, Executive Vice President Telecommunications at Giesecke & Devrient, thinks nobody should be too surprised. "SIMalliance is a natural progression. Within ETSI, SIMalliance members have been driving GSM standardization forward for over 10 years." In the real world proprietary systems will always exist, of course. The aim of SIMalliance is to produce open and global specifications essential in facilitating mass-market penetration of new SIM-based applications and services. It aims to accelerate the introduction of services designed for WAP, by exploiting existing GSM handsets and infrastructure. As the concept of the mobile Internet becomes reality, software rather than hardware interoperability will be the key concern for issuers and users, creating the need for good Virtual Machines (VM's) and interpreters.

The industry is only too well aware of the value of interoperable solutions, as Eric Tholomé, Product Line Manager for Mobile Communications Servers and Applications at Schlumberger was quick to point out. "Over The Air technology, although a commercial success for operators, has so far not reached its full potential because of interoperability reasons. Therefore, the aim of SIMalliance is to get it right from the start and get it right quickly."

At the new SIMalliance headquarters in Brussels, two groups of representatives from each member company meet on a regular basis. It is the responsibility of The Technical Development Group (TDG) to draw up the new specifications, whilst the Business Development Group (BDG) handles the marketing, promotional and industry communications requirements. The two groups are coordinated by the SIMalliance Chairman, who in this launch year is Vincent Biraud, Product Marketing Manager at Schlumberger.

The SIMalliance is already announcing its first open global specification. S@T (SIM @lliance Toolbox), the new specification for interoperable systems and products for the mediation of WML-based (WAP) services to SIM Toolkit enabled phase2+ handsets.

Four major competitors sitting round the table together, can it really work? Phillipe Martineau, VP of Next Generation Networks Group from Gemplus is confident they have made a promising start. "We see S@T, the first output of the group, as being the catalyst for enabling WAP based services to be delivered to a broader base of customers".

The consortium welcomes new members who are able to contribute to its stated objectives, especially experts in the SIM and SIM Application Toolkit fields, as well as operators and service providers who desire to maximize the implementation of SIM-based applications and solutions.

Representing the fourth alliance member, Heinz Schaefers, Head of International Marketing and Sales at ORGA Kartensysteme, is in no doubt about the important future role the SIMalliance will play within the entire global telecommunications community. "SIMalliance members estimate that 70 million customers with SIM Application Toolkit-enabled handsets can benefit from S@T."