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Hybrid hubs considered to support busy sites

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By Luke Collins

US WiFi hub maker Xirrus may introduce femtocells to its high-capacity hubs to improve overall wireless coverage in large buildings and outdoor venues.

The company already sells WiFi hubs with multiple radio and antenna systems, which are used to provide WiFi connectivity in densely trafficked areas such as conference venues and sports arenas.

According to Sean Lerner, area vice president EMEA for Xirrus, “conversations are going on in that space,” although it is still early days.

Adding femtocells to the hubs would help improve cellular coverage in places where large base-stations get swamped with traffic, such as stadiums, by distributing the cellular radio system throughout the venue. Improving the availability of the cellular network could also enable some emerging schemes that use the cellular network's authentication infrastructure to automate the transfer of data traffic onto WiFi networks.

Peter Degelin, regional director EMEA for Xirrus, says that mobile operators have to find ways to offload the rising data traffic from smartphones, dongles and tablets from their networks. “Every operator has to do it, even if they are doing LTE,” he said.

The company is working with Orange in France on creating a WiFi network that will support up to 30,000 simultaneous connections in a stadium. Lerner says that Xirrus's first order from Africa is for a stadium network providing 40,000 connections.

Lerner argues that good wireless connectivity will be vital in a world of cloud-based services. “Digital natives will see wireless as the natural way of doing things,” he said “Delivering the cloud over the air is all about consistency.”

