



**PRESS RELEASE**  
Tellumat Telecoms  
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## **How African partnerships can – and must – benefit all**

Tellumat boosts up-and-coming Nigerian cell provider's fortunes; more success awaits

Doing business in Africa is a daunting prospect, with Nigeria near the top of the 'no-sissies' list. And yet the country is an extremely attractive proposition, with sound economic fundamentals and largely untapped potential. What will it take to unlock it, and what possibilities are there for foreign providers?

Bennie Langenhoven, managing executive of Tellumat Telecoms, concedes there are numerous challenges to doing business in Nigeria. However, he says, the right partnership ethos, backed by enabling solutions that overcome traditional 'African' limitations, will reap recurring rewards for everyone involved.

Speaking at the 3rd Annual High Speed Access Technologies conference earlier this year, Langenhoven said: "The best solutions recognise and overcome the challenges, and focus on helping customers to meet their own challenges. In this way, doing business in Africa can benefit everyone – the customer, the buying public, and even the country and Africa as a whole."

### **Making of a Star**

Tellumat's involvement in Nigeria started in 2002, when it implemented a customer call handling system (PBX) for little-known cellular provider Starcomms (20 agents). After three upgrades to cater for its customer's rapid expansion, the system hosts 140 agents; next year it will accommodate 200. This year in February Starcomms celebrated 1 million subscribers, making it a minnow in a country with 138 million citizens. In 2009, its subscriber base is expected to cross the 2 million mark, thanks to a customer focus that Starcomms has followed by engaging with partners such as Tellumat and their contact centre platform.

While performing incremental capacity upgrades, Tellumat also introduced CallView call management software, with features like multimedia channels, automated call distribution and supervisor interrogation into agent activities.

Manoj Vashisht, Starcomms marketing director, says the upgrades were hugely important to Starcomms's customer growth and expansion. Firstly, it could handle many more calls with IVR functionality, and its six-line Inter-Tel phones allowed for monitoring. Dialed number identification service [DNIS] promoted efficiency and customer relationship management.

ACD reporting further allowed Starcomms to capture all customer service metrics in most regions, to plan for shift patterns and agent blending. All in all, Vashisht says, customer service improved through call personalisation, shorter handling times and traffic projections.

Langenhoven says implementation success and the customer's business enablement had been achieved despite significant challenges. "One must prepare for poor infrastructure [telecoms coverage, bandwidth, transport and electricity], as well as logistical issues [the slow release of imported equipment by Nigerian customs officials]". But provided one can absorb delays, plans to overcome obstacles and provide a



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solution that meets the customer's challenges, the scene will be set for the future success of all concerned."

### Future success

Vashisht provides a peek into an exciting new avenue for Starcomms – mobile broadband. "We will use CallView not just for inbound voice support, but have already successfully used it for 3G data and value-added services support."

However, 3G success is not a foregone conclusion. Despite excellent GDP growth (nearly 7%), low inflation (2.9%) and a population of 138 million, 80 million Nigerians still don't have telephony, and only 550 000 use mobile broadband.

There are challenges aplenty: After endorsing a national fibre backbone, the government has back-tracked on its plans. Nitel, the state-owned telco, retains a monopoly on international bandwidth through exclusive landing rights of the SAT3 cable, and the unreliability of its links has left the country dependent on satellite connectivity. Due to poor fixed-line rollout, ADSL penetration remains low. All this has hamstrung a country with the potential to invest heavily and be a connectivity gateway into the West African region.

But backed by the right partners and armed with a vision for the future, Starcomms is determined to lead the market in overcoming its hurdles: It was the first Nigerian cellular network to introduce a 3G data offering, signalling a strong intent to continue its rapid ascension with new services. In the process it hopes to help lift the country to its rightful position as a leading regional and African economy.

And when that happens, Tellumat will be there to continue a path of true African partnership, and to build on a mutual success story that has been years in the making.

*Ends.*

### About Tellumat

Tellumat is an innovative, black empowered, South African technology company that has achieved a BBBEE Status Level 4 rating, defined as "Superior Contributor to BEE" in terms of the DTI's Codes of Good Practice. It consists of three major trading divisions; Communications, Defence and Contract Manufacturing, and three partly owned companies; Sia Solutions (Pty) Ltd, Encee Engineering (Pty) Ltd and SIMpill (Pty) Ltd. Tellumat services three primary market areas, namely wireless voice and data communications, defence communication systems and high precision electronic and mechanical manufacturing. Tellumat is a world-class business focused on innovation, offering our customers dynamic and competitive technology products and services. We focus on understanding our customers' needs and forming long-term strategic alliances with likeminded enterprises worldwide.

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