



Synchronoss lands deal to power Dell device shop

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E-commerce giant's move into smart phone sales will be fueled in part by OSS player best known for enabling AT&T's online iPhone shop

Dell's recently announced connected devices shop on its e-commerce Web site will be powered by back-office technology from Synchronoss Technologies, the two companies announced this morning.

It's a high-profile deal for Synchronoss, which has hit the spotlight before – most notably helping to run online sales of the iPhone via AT&T's Web site (although it took a brief hit when [Apple decided to scale back in-home activation](#) to reduce "jailbroken" phones).

Since then, however, Synchronoss has broadened its device activation vision to encompass the full ecosystem of mobile device players including operators, OEMs and retailers, scoring deals with Time Warner Cable, NokiaUSA and other large players.

Dell will use the Synchronoss ConvergenceNow platform to enable on-demand activation of its entire connected device portfolio, including its own recently-announced first smart phone built on Google's Android operating system, expected later this year. The Synchronoss platform will sit behind Dell's well-known e-commerce Web site systems, helping customers once they make their device choice to get them up and running across multiple mobile operators – initially in North America and Europe but expanding globally throughout 2010. The Synchronoss system handles distributed order management, provisioning and activation of those devices.

The latest version of Synchronoss' platform, released this fall, is [specifically designed to enable much more open and distributed](#) mobile device marketing, sales and support channels. The shift away from relying on mobile operators as the sole channel by which customers can buy their devices has "led to significantly more freedom in the ecosystem versus there being one overpowering element," said Omar Tellez, executive VP and CMO of Synchronoss. Even in its early days, this new, more open mobile approach is "driving innovation and improving the customer experience."

Dell's high-profile entry into smartphone sales comes as another high-profile player, Google, [has struggled in recent days to support e-commerce-only sales](#) of its first phone, the Google Nexus One.

While critics can slam incumbent operators all they want, their current system of offering a wide array of subsidized, reduced-cost phones with bundled service contracts, supported via fully-staffed call centers and retail locations, provides consumers – particularly in the U.S. – with a degree of comfort and hand-holding to which they've become accustomed.

As an early player in helping companies explore alternatives to that status quo, Synchronoss has seen the good, the bad and the ugly of emerging new approaches. To help such new-style customers better handle phone sales, the latest versions of the ConvergenceNow platform include click-to-call and click-to-chat features to improve online customer service. For some customers – though not Dell – Synchronoss even handles the first 30 days of customer support from their own call centers. "At that point, we know more about the customer and their order than anybody else," said Synchronoss' Tellez.

The reshaping of the mobile ecosystem "is still in its infancy right now," Tellez said, "but it is on its way to being reshaped."