

Comverse: Most operators to offer RBT by 2008 - Brazil

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(BNAmericas.com) The majority of Brazilian telecom operators will offer their customers Ringback tone (RBT) service by 2008, according to **Marcelo Fernandes, Latin America marketing manager** at US telecom applications supplier Comverse.

Ringback tones, which first appeared in Asia around two years ago, substitute the standard dial tone heard by a caller with personalized sounds such as music, jokes or voice messages.

"In terms of tendency, once one operator launches, the rest tend to launch and the trend in Brazil will probably be similar to Europe where the service is rapidly growing," **Fernandes said.**

RBT service was first launched in Europe about one year ago and European consultancy Vision Gain estimates that 50% of operators there will offer RBT service by 2005 and up to 90% will offer it by 2008, according to Fernandes.

Comverse already has an RBT solution, known as Fun Dial custom dial tone, available for the Brazilian market and expects operators to begin adopting it in 2005.

To launch the service, Brazilian operators are currently negotiating regulatory issues with telecom regulatory agency Anatel, which traditionally regulates dial tone service.

"We are not in direct contact with Anatel but the feedback we get from operators is positive," **Fernandes said.**

RBT service is hosted within the operator's central system and therefore can work on any telephone line, either fixed or mobile. Because operators control dial tone service, RBT is also less vulnerable to the influence of other technology solutions, such as those that permit users to customize their phone units for downloading MP3 files, **according to Fernandes.**

Comverse segments RBT consumers into the corporate market, which primarily uses it as an advertising vehicle, and the young adult market, which uses it mainly as an entertainment service.

RBT may have more revenue potential than other forms of phone customization such as musical ringtones.

"Some analysts think that the RBT market may have more potential than the ringtone market because ringtones aren't used by the corporate market and RBT can get more penetration since it is easier to use," **Fernandes said.**

Telephone subscribers can acquire the service either via telephone menus (IVR), SMS, Wap or operator sites. Subscribers will probably rely mostly on telephone menus and websites to sign up for the service due to their ease of use, according to Fernandes.

Comverse currently offers the service to 21 clients in Europe and North America, and Brazil is the first country in Latin America in which the service is offered. Comverse declines to disclose the amount of investment spent on bringing the service to Brazil.

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