Wireless Networks Anywhere With Facebook's OpenCellular

Written by Marco Attard
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Facebook retains ambitions to provide internet anywhere as it presents OpenCellular-- an open source software-defined wireless access platform.

Designed for use in remote areas, OpenCellular promises to support networking options ranging from simple wifi to "everything from 2G to LTE." It consists of 2 main subsystems, general-purpose and base-band computing (GBC) with integrated power and housekeeping system, and radio frequency (RF) with integrated analog front-end.

The hardware, firmware and control system are open source (via the Telecom Infra Project), allowing telcos, OEMs, entrepreneurs and researchers to easily implement, deploy and operate wireless infrastructure based on the platform. The actual hardware promises to be tough enough to handle high winds and rugged climates, and it should be mountable at a range of heights by just one person.

"With OpenCellular, we want to develop affordable new technology that can expand capacity and make it more cost-effective for operators to deploy networks in places where coverage is scarce," the social networking giant says. "By open-sourcing the hardware and software designs for this technology, we expect costs to decrease for operators and to make it accessible to new participants."

Of course, Facebook is hardly the only American online giant wanting to share its networking prowess-- Google has been pushing similar projects, if through the use of drones and high-altitude balloons. Will the more humble OpenCellular box help Facebook reach the 4 billion people it says are still lacking in internet access?

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