

AT&T: DirecTV Deal Won't Affect Network Plans

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ORLANDO, Fla. - Bill Smith, president of AT&T's network operations, said AT&T's pending acquisition of DirecTV won't have any effect on how the carrier invests in its network.

"Don't be concerned that this is a left-turn by AT&T," Smith said during a presentation at PCIA's annual conference in Orlando.

Smith said that if anything, the acquisition of DirecTV was complimentary to AT&T's current network plans.

"One of the advantages, or one of the reasons to put these companies together, is because more and more people are looking at content on their mobile devices," Smith said.

Smith said AT&T's Project VIP initiative is right on track, beginning with over 280 million people covered with LTE. AT&T has said it is ahead of schedule and intends to have 300 million people covered by the end of 2014.

"I won't say that we're done, but I think we can see the finish line from this first phase," Smith said.

The next phase in AT&T's network evolution will be adding capacity through the deployment of small cells, and DAS systems for large in-building venues. AT&T is also pursuing technologies such as carrier aggregation and self-optimizing networks (SON) to improve the speed and efficiency of its networks.

Smith said SON is one of the most impressive new features he's seen in recent years.

"Historically, it has taken a lot of time to optimize the network...this is something that generally would take 6 to 12 months for engineers to go out and re-optimize," Smith said. "Today, our network processes a half million re-optimizations a day...looking at 15-minute increments."

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