

Mobile World Congress 2022 – 5 key themes

BAE Systems' Sami Istephan reports from the recent Mobile World Congress in Barcelona

I was lucky enough to experience a key event in the communications industry calendar.

Mobile World Congress 2022 (MWC) returned with a vengeance, from being staged virtually over the pandemic to a physical event (along with a virtual version of course) at the immense Fira de Barcelona Conferencing Centre.

Widely recognised as the event that identifies the state and wellbeing of the communications sector, the event went ahead without a glitch. Industry execs, market analysts and serial conference attendees jostled for position to showcase what is new and great and will be shaping our lives in the near future.

Here's a summary of the key themes that I picked up whilst there.

5G moving from hype to hypothesis

A number of organisations chose MWC to launch their 5G strategies. In previous years 5G attracted much hype but it is now evident that 5G is ready to deploy. No one organisation is approaching 5G from exactly the same angle. The hyper-scalers and tier 1 operators have mass market in mind and are building alliances to build up confidence in early solution adopters. The Global System Integrators and Communications OEM's are laying out convincing 5G roadmaps and taking hybrid 5G out of test beds and exemplars and into live deployments. A plethora of vendors, specialist integrators and solution providers are adding their special ingredients to the 5G mix.



Partner to exploit early

Possibly the most over used word in technology, an “ecosystem” of partners is emerging and very evident at MWC 2022. For larger players working with partners de-risks deployments and allows for hybrid solutions. Smaller players like the scale and credibility a larger player brings. MWC had both large, small and everything in-between to demonstrate their advantage. Traditional partnership between hardware and software players are likely to continue and be augmented with AR/MR/VR and IoT players, creating cross platform technologies merging the physical and the virtual worlds.



Security is the key to the door

It really brings it home to you at MWC the breadth and diversity of industry players. Whilst this is encouraging it also creates impressed security risk and complexity. Therefore security vulnerabilities need to be managed very carefully. Although 5G standardises some of this complexity it also creates grey areas in the standards, compatibility issues and exposure to external sources be they sinister or malevolent.



Accelerated revenue diversification

Operators have always had to balance their reliance on traditional core telecoms portfolio with launching new and diverse digital solutions in both the B2C and B2B markets. In almost every corner of MCW 2022 was a richer and more diverse array of options. The pandemic looks to have accelerated the shift to new digital services in particular increasing demand for cloud and security services. The strongest growth appears to be in the B2B market and many T1 operators are backing these new services and targeting large and attractive sectors like healthcare and life sciences, high value manufacturing, critical national infrastructure and national security and defence.

Sustainability & social responsibility

Notwithstanding the pandemic and recent international developments this has been the year of the climate change agenda. MWC saw many operators and tech sector players assert their climate credentials. For example, GSMA Intelligence has found that over a third of operators have publically stated net zero targets in the next decade. The huge reduction in foreign travel during the pandemic by operators has obviously helped to reduce carbon emissions in the airline industry during that time. The hope is that increased adoption of cloud solutions with zero touch provisioning and remote authentication and smart provisioning tools further drives down that footprint further still.




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