

BUILDING A BETTER BTC

CWC Chief Executive praises BTC for a successful first two years

BTC has had a highly successful two years, in which it reduced calling rates for customers, introduced mobile data services and a full range of smartphones, and improved their experience, according to its majority shareholder Cable & Wireless Communications (CWC).

Marking the two year anniversary of BTC's privatisation, Chief Executive Tony Rice said the whole BTC team, led by CEO Geoff Houston, deserved praise for what they have achieved.

"There have been significant changes at BTC, but what we can say with confidence is that BTC is a much better provider of communications services than it was two years ago. When CWC invested in this business two years ago, there was only the BlackBerry smartphone and no high speed mobile data. Long distance charges for customers calling between the islands on mobile still existed with a confusing dialling process. BTC had only one retail store offering a very basic service, and customers weren't happy with the level of service.

"A new majority owner meant a new approach, and the BTC team has risen superbly to the challenge. We now have 'One Rate' for the nation on mobile phones. We have 13 flagship BTC stores and one new franchise partner, with plans to open up another 20-30 franchisees.

"We have installed three new networks – a 2G mobile network, a 4G mobile network and a Next Generation fibre network. Mobile data, and the latest smartphones, are now available to all customers in The Bahamas. A high speed home broadband service is now available at prices approaching 50% less than that of the competition. Almost 50% of the legacy landline network has now been migrated onto a state-of-the-art Next Generation Network (NGN) Platform. This NGN platform places BTC customers on par with those of any major metropolitan commercial or financial centre anywhere in the world.

"While we have had to manage complex issues during the upgrading process, the end results of these new networks are unequivocally good for The Bahamas:

- A 27-fold increase in mobile data activity and traffic, supported by our 4G network
- A 60 per cent increase in the quantum of voice traffic occasioned by an expanded and more robust network
- Approximately 500,000 more calls per day on average (from 2 million calls to 2.5 million calls)
- Mobile voice call integrity in line with "best in class" networks in the world. Seven brand new cell sites constructed to address additional capacity; four more in service by June 2013
- The formal introduction of a full line of smart phones and devices such as the iPhone and the Samsung Galaxy ranges.
- A reduction in prepaid data pricing of 25 per cent and an effective reduction in postpaid rates of up to 25 per cent depending upon selected package

“We have reshaped the business, rebuilding it to a point where we will be able to pay a significant dividend to our partner, the Government of The Bahamas, compared with when the business was under full state ownership, despite the significant fall in prices for the consumers and businesses of The Bahamas.

“We aim to grow it further. BTC now has a 2G/4G mobile network and we intend to introduce an even higher speed LTE network experience later this year keeping The Bahamas in touch with the best available in the Caribbean and North American region.

“In the past two years we have been proud to commit our support to some great Bahamian institutions and significantly increase BTC’s community investments. We sponsored the 2012 Bahamas Olympic team, part of more than \$750,000 we have committed to the athletics in The Bahamas. We have signed up to sponsor the Junkanoo parades for five years, in the amount of \$850,000. Most pleasing we have also given our support to community initiatives like Urban Renewal 2.0 and the Sick Kids organisation to provide a telemedicine lab to provide Bahamian children with cancer with diagnostic and treatment care from specialists abroad

“In our first two years, BTC has made huge progress in fulfilling our commitment to deliver world class telecoms to The Bahamas. We have invested more than \$100m in capital projects alone and we plan to invest further in the business and in so doing create new opportunities for Bahamians. It has been a great first two years, but we have no plans to slow down the development, and there is plenty more work to do.”

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