The inaugural World Communication Awards provided the first global stage for honoring the movers and shakers in the communications industry. Ian Scales reports

OXford, so it wasn't Hollywood. But for a few hours on a crisp mid-October evening, Espace Sekhmon in Geneva was a magnet for some of the biggest names in the telecoms world who had assembled to pay homage to a cross-section of the best and brightest the industry has produced. The occasion marked the first ever World Communication Awards (WCA), a long overdue event in the international telecoms calendar.

Organized by Emag Media, publisher of Communications Week International, the inaugural WCA on 16 October attracted a heavy-weight audience some of whom had actually been nominated to receive awards (see next page) and some heavyweight sponsors as well.

Arthur Andersen sponsored the headline lifetime achievement award, and Cisco Systems Inc. the Best Carrier award. Also lending their support were Compaq, Accenture, the Wall Street Journal Europe, Cap Gemini, Gena, Jorikura, Network Equipment Technologies (NET) Carrier and Rosenblatt Solicitors.

After a thorough-protracted judging process the winners were selected and the guests gathered beneath a canopy of star-like illuminations that lit up the hushed auditorium to bear the final deliberations.

Those who made it to the celebrations included entrepreneur Colin Williams - the man who hopes to repeat the success he enjoyed with MFS Communications at next-generation carrier Level 3 Communications - who was nominated for the Technology Foresight Award. In the event, Williams just missed out to the equally thoughtful Alex Malpas, whose mind-blowing Arbitrage, a computerised trading network, is helping to commoditize bandwidth, the raw material of the communications business.

The evening produced a clutch of worthy winners. Top honours went to Craig McCaw, who scooped the Arthur Andersen Lifetime Achievement Award. He couldn't collect in person, but instead sent a video in true pop-star fashion saying how honored he was.

Another video actually honored everybody who took part in the occasion. Arthur C. Clarke popped up to congratulate the winners and praise the idea of the awards.

As befitting an industry over 100 years old, but now with the advent of competition and convergence starting to move at a lightning speed, the awards presentation was compared by sharp-tongued British TV personality, Angus Deayton - was fast-paced.

But behind the glamour and glitz there was a serious side. Whilst applauding excellence in the industry and marvelling at just how far it's come in the last decade or so, from technological backwater to what is now arguably the world's most important sector, the audience was also reminded that there was still some way to go. As Craig McCaw reminded the assembled company, beyond the closed world of technology and jargon there is a world where millions still have scant access to telecommunications. It is to this world that industry leaders must now turn their attention.

Readers offer

In order to celebrate one of the industry's leading pioneers, we are proud to be able to extend a very special offer to readers of CWI.

Greeting cards, Carbon-Based Bipeds! in Arthur C. Clarke's latest collection of essays and includes his original 1.945 prediction of the future importance of satellite communications: Can Rocket Stations give Worldwide Radio Coverage?

We are able to offer our readers a special discount offer of £17.99 (for the United Kingdom and Ireland only) including packaging and postage for this 550-page hardback. To order your copy at this special price, send a cheque or postal order made payable to HarperCollins Publishers for Arthur C. Clarke offer. Dept 8286, HarperCollins Publishers, Wetherhill Road, Glasgow G64 2QT. Credit cards and Switch customers may call 0800 900 2050 and quote Dept 8286 to make their order by phone.
**Lifetime achievement award**

The worthy winner of the Arthur Andersen Lifetime Achievement Award at the World Communications Awards was Craig McCaw. McCaw started his now huge communications empire with a small cable TV business he inherited from his father in the 1970s while still a student. He built it up and sold it on, using the proceeds to bid for U.S. cellular telephone licenses.

In 1993 that business, McCaw Cellular, was sold to AT&T for $11.5 billion, and McCaw went on to face new challenges. His companies now include local exchange carrier NextLink, PCS operator Nextel Communications, and he also holds a major interest in Teledesic, the broadband satellite venture he founded with Microsoft's chief executive Bill Gates.

The industry is now waiting for McCaw's next move. Will he consolidate his holdings and emerge with a next-generation "total communications" company? The taciturn McCaw is unlikely to tell us in advance. Having already accumulated a lifetime's worth of commercial achievement, the biggest and best may still be to come.

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**Best wholesale carrier**

*Winner: Global TeleSystems Inc. (GTS), Washington DC.* Credited with changing the economics of broadband access in Europe through its subsidiary Hermes Europe Railnet, which provides transmission services to more than 350 carriers, GTS has managed to pioneer carrier-carrier services in Europe on what it claims will be the largest operational dense wavelength-division multiplexed (DWDM) network in the world, while at the same time maintaining a good record on reliability.

*Finalists: Internet Telephony clearing house (IT), and ARINet.*

*Sponsor: Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing specialist, Cisco Corp.*

_Brian Thompson (L) and Gerard Caccappolo (R) of GTS accept the award, which was presented by Dennis Mathies, of Cisco._

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**Technology foresight**

*Winner: Arbinet Communications, New York.* Arbinet provides an online market for the exchange of international telephony minutes. Around 3175 service providers buy and sell both spot and contract minutes through the Arbinet Global Clearing Network (AGCN) and undertake their trades through the Internet. Arbinet provides real-time authentication and settlement in return for a 2.5-cents transaction fee. It recently added forward and options contracts to the range of trading instruments.

*Finalists: Level 3 Communications Inc., and The Parlay Group.*

*Sponsor: The Wall Street Journal Europe.*

_Arbinet's Alex Mashinsky (L) accepts the award from Ricky Hudson, of the Wall Street Journal Europe._

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**Entrepreneur of the year**

*Winner: Nina Brink, founder of World On-line (WOL), for developing a successful pan-European model for Internet service and content provision. WOL has a uniform look and feel but is supported by localized content, and separate editorial operations in 14 European countries. WOL has attracted 800,000 individual and 30,000 business subscribers, and was the first ISP to offer free access in France.*

*Finalists: Red Flag, founder of Project Oxygen, and Jim Balsillie, founder of Internet telephony exchange carrier (MC).*

*Sponsor: Rosenblatt Solicitors, specialist in e-commerce, media and telecommunications.*

_World Online's Gerard Brikenaar (L) accepts the award on behalf of Nina Brink from Ian Rosenblatt, of Rosenblatt Solicitors._

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**Best e-commerce service**

*Winner: Stamps.com, Santa Monica, California.* The company won with an innovative service which enables users to purchase and print postage stamps from their Internet or a conventional printer. The stamps can be generated from within word processing or contact management applications to automate the generation of paper mail. Unlike rival systems, no additional software or hardware is needed by the user. The company says it will market the system to postal administrations globally.

*Finalists: Lastminute.com, and MCI WorldCom Internet.*

*Sponsor: Global IT supplier Compaq is the company sponsor.*

_Malcolm Laws (L), publishing director of Emap Communications Group, accepts the award on behalf of Stamps.com from Compaq's Vice, Market Development._

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**Most innovative service**

*Winner: Deltelt from Tele Danmark A/S, Copenhagen,* in a field where hype still too often runs ahead of reality, Deltelt offers fixed-mobile integration at sensible prices, allowing calls to be fixed line to be diverted to mobile phones or a voice messaging service. Calls diverted from a fixed line are charged at the fixed rate, and the service offers a lifted monthly bill and a fair rate between Deltelt's 210,000 subscribers.

*Finalists: Online Group's London Carrier Ring, and Lastminute.com.*

*Sponsor: Software specialist Telcordia Technologies (formerly Bellcore).*

_Telcordia's Kevin Connolly (R) presents the award to Louise Ry of Tele Danmark._

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**Best branding campaign**

*Winner: Sonera, Helsinki, Sonera won by taking the radical option to rebuild its brand from scratch with a name change—from Telenor Finland—a bold move for a traditional carrier with total brand recognition in its home territory as "Telia." A year later, following a structured branding program, that bold move is paying off, with Sonera being closely associated both at home and abroad with the company's strategic direction into advanced mobile and data services.*

*Finalists: MCI WorldCom with On-set, and U.K. mobile operator Orange.*

*Sponsor: Multiservice network solutions provider, Network Equipment Technologies N.E.T.*

_Sonera's Louise Mast (L) accepts the award from Bert Whyte, of Network Equipment Technologies._
Innovation: it's one of this year's favorite buzz words, if carriers think they exhibit that magic quality, they flaunt it; if they think they lack a reputation for it, they're keen to be seen to be mending their ways.

But according to CWi's Winning Carriers survey, carried out in association with telecoms research specialist Renaissance Worldwide, corporate users aren't interested. Innovating on new services and technologies may be necessary and admirable for the good health and future development of the industry as a whole, but it should be done on somebody else's network when it can't do any damage.

When it comes to choosing their own carriers, our end-user readers are looking for reliability and quality of service (QoS).

These were the qualities that this year brought Global One, BT and France Telecom to the front of the carrier pack. Global One and BT users, in particular, awarded their carriers top marks on reliability and QoS, with Global One nudging into a well-deserved top spot with home markets on pricing, always a user concern.

And the same dynamic brought surprising results at the top of the mobile operators' scale as well, with France Telecom's Minitel and Dutch incumbent KPN sandwiching Vodafone—readers were polled before the merger with AirTouch—in second place.

Walking up to competition

So have the incumbent operators suddenly woken up to competition and transformed their performance in response to heightened global competition? The answer, to some extent, is yes, but how do you decide what constitutes an increase in performance? How should one compare QoS in comparison to another?

To get a really fair result we decided that our Winning Carrier criteria needed a preliminary survey of their own. So we decided to take one step back and ask our readers first to rank the range of qualities they sought in their carriers. We could then establish an appropriate weighting to apply to the different measures of carrier performance to arrive at a final score sheet more aligned to their real requirements (see methodology).

This, after all, is how users themselves would approach any supplier selection—decide what they want first, then pick the supplier that best meets the specification.

As an added bonus, we know the exercise would return some interesting results about what users really valued in their suppliers and how that differed from what carriers appear to think users want.

Our first question in the survey asked our respondents to rank nine carrier qualities in order of importance. We assigned each quality an average ranking and from this we applied a weighting broadly in line with the scale above are the aggregate results for the top scoring overall carriers, mobile carriers and new carriers in our poll. As well as excluding the low-scoring carriers, we have excluded those whose users returned a statistically insignificant sample. To help readers make sense of the mass of data we have visually represented the results above as deviations from the "mean" score on all nine individual "quality" measures. A thick bar extending right indicates a higher than average score for that measure, a thick bar extending to the left a lower than average score. Thin bars indicate scores around the mean.
Best carrier

Winner: Global One’s loyal and enthusiastic user community pushed it decisively to the top of the poll to take the prestigious overall Best Carrier Award at the WCA. The joint venture, formed by Deutsche Telekom, France Télécom and U.S. long-distance carrier Sprint, provides a managed services platform for multinational enterprises, governments and other customers around the world.

Finalists: AT&T, BellSouth, France Télécom and Sprint.

Sponsor: Leading internet, equipment, supplier, Cisco Systems.

New carriers and mobile/wireless carriers

New Carriers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Carrier</th>
<th>Quality of Service</th>
<th>Customer Service</th>
<th>Technical Depth</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Range of Services</th>
<th>Range of Devices</th>
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<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
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</table>

Cisco Systems’ Steve Whipple (R) presents the award to Klaus Czerniawski, of Global One.

Both the Winning New Carriers and Winning Wireless/Mobile Operators categories are essentially subsets of the overall Winning Carriers ranking. New Carriers are carriers that started life as a result of the introduction of new technology and are not included in the traditional carriers that are not included in the traditional carriers. The new carriers are expected to be the most innovative and the most successful.

Sponsor: Leading internet, equipment, supplier, Cisco Systems.

Best new carrier

Winner: Global network services provider, Equant, topped the poll with its extensive underlying networks, global presence, strong reputation and service and innovation. But it was the users’ perception of Equant’s pricing—particularly beat down by users and competitors, Global One—which pushed it ahead of its new carrier rivals.

Equant operates in the world’s largest data networks in terms of geographic coverage. It has a presence in 220 countries and territories and has used this reach to establish itself as a leading provider of managed data network services, end-to-end, for multinational businesses worldwide.

Finalists: Cable & Wireless (C&W), Global One, France Télécom, BT, and MCI WorldCom.

Sponsor: Leading internet, equipment, supplier, Lucent Technologies.

Best wireless/mobile operator

Winner: France Telecom, Paris, for its successful mobile subsidiary Orange, which was able to retain customers despite tough competition from pre-paid operators. The company is on track to win almost 90% of the market share for mobile subscribers by the end of the year, while mobile penetration in France moves up to around 39%. The company’s strategy introduced a customer loyalty program, and says this measure allowed it to reduce churn by 20%.

Finalists: Vodaphone, the leading U.K. mobile operator; and Orange, a major mobile provider in Italy.

Sponsor: Cap Gemini, which specializes in business consulting, systems integration and project management.

France Telecom’s Simoné Metz receives the award from Philippe Donche-Gay, of Cap Gemini.

The strong showing of both KPN and France Telecom this year is underpinned by these companies’ sterling performances in their markets. Growth in mobile, against stiff domestic competition, has pushed France Telecom’s overall profit margin up by some 10% this year, while in the Netherlands KPN has won a 15% market share against four competitors.

These results, therefore, send mixed messages to new carriers. To the extent that new carriers have, in the main, been keen to stress their "next-generation" credentials, our results suggest that they’ve been successful: Most readers (75%) think innovation defines a next-generation carrier. But since they’ve also clearly marked innovation as the least important of the criteria presented, the implication is that innovation may not be of immediate advantage when it comes to winning business.

What about sector differences? Might it be that innovation finds more favor in some sectors than others? Not according to our results, which are almost uniform across sectors. Telecoms professionals working in service and media sectors, for instance, who might be expected to have a predilection for supplier innovation to support business strategies which focus on new electronic channels to market, are just as focused on reliability and quality of service as their colleagues in ostensibly more conservative sectors.

Core values

The strength of Innovas is that innovation is expected from new carriers rather than from others. In the meantime, users want incumbents to stay focused on their core values.

So does this mean that users will "eagerly pick" perceived innovations from new carriers and rely on existing suppliers to provide the lowervalue PSTN and transmission services staples? Not necessarily. Our results also show that users don’t think next-generation carriers will be the newcomers at all. AT&T, MCI WorldCom, BT and Global One were most frequently cited as examples of next-generation carriers.

With Qwest Communications Inc., Colt Telecom Group plc and Equant NV, for instance, appearing well down the list.

The implications are that some of the incumbents have been successful at positioning themselves as next-generation carriers, by stressing their involvement in forward-looking or innovative projects and using their marketing muscle to spread the word.

Some incumbents, such as Sonera (formerly Telecom Finland), have overtly repositioned themselves. Others, such as AT&T and NTT, for instance, have hit the headlines by outlining ambitious next-generation projects, while France Telecom and Deutsche Telekom have been very successful in Internet access where their services have taken a major share of the dial-up market.

Our results show that some incumbents may actually be in the best of both worlds. These companies are large and diverse enough both to reinforce their traditional services and to add new strengths around technical reliability, and so position themselves as standard-bearers for next-generation services when and if users become focused on these in the future.

 Asked to describe what differentiates next-generation "traditional" carriers, our readers cited: the convergence of voice and data; a propensity to adopt new technologies, particularly those based on IP; and the potential to present new services.

But the word that appeared most often was innovation. Not necessarily good news, as we’ve established, because innovation is not the big focus today. But what about tomorrow, or at least in the first ten years of the next century?

Unfortunately, the way our readers see it, this outlook is not likely to change. Asked to identify which measures they expect to see becoming more important over the next two years, they plumped again for quality of service.
service and reliability. Innovation only moved up slightly from bottom to third from bottom spot.

Perhaps the biggest surprise was pricing. Always a factor, it occupied a strong number three spot in this year’s survey. But again, when it came to defining the qualities due to be offered by next-generation carriers, pricing and cost was only mentioned by about 10% of our respondents.

“Although there is good news for carriers in the survey, the bad news is that a gap remains between what customers most want and what they receive today from their suppliers,” said Renaissance’s Helen Souness. “Today carriers are best at providing reach and a range of services to their customers. Yet customers value reliability, quality and price well above these service attributes,” she claimed.

“Overall, our results suggest that senior management attention within carriers should remain on technical competence and on measures which amplify this competence to the market,” says Souness. “This may be a surprising result to many managers [within carriers] who are focusing on retaining customers in the face of increasing global competition, by focusing capital spending and resources on customer service and value-added services in order to ensure loyal customers.

The survey suggests they should not forget their engine room, network engineering and design and

### The main drivers of change

We also asked our readers what they felt was driving change in their corporate telecommunications needs. We asked them to rank eight factors in order of importance to derive an aggregate position for each driver. Globalisation achieved a medium ranking, hardly surprising considering that many organisations, including those in the regional public sector for instance, is effects have little immediate impact. As a result globalisation’s high and low ranks tend to cancel each other out.

Either side of “globalisation,” though, our readers had separated the “soft” business drivers for technology change from the immediate, tactical “hard” drivers. Our readers see changes in the technology, the requirement to cut costs, and the introduction of e-commerce as the main elements driving the change in their needs.

Occupying a clearly top spot was “New technologies and Applications,” that the evolution of the technology itself should actually be seen as advertising changes in the communications need indicates that communications professionals overwhelmingly see their role as meeting user and user department expectations for more technology enabled services, access to more bandwidth, and so on. The perennial requirement to cut costs and outsource services remains at number three (as does pricing in our main ranking).

But for vendors and service suppliers looking for signs of the emergence of communications as a strategic “value enabler” there are current signs which indicate, changing needs flowing from changes in business strategy or changes in customer demands (including perhaps investment in collaboration technology, for instance) are apparent faint blips on the radar screen.

### How users perceive customer service

Just what do users want when it comes to customer service? Our questionnaire asked respondents to rank seven possible measures of customer service in order of importance (see table).

The aggregate results show very clearly what they don’t want. Carriers who view “customer service” as an overt need to increase customer spend should be careful. Our readers do not equate service with the “ongoing conversation with customers” approach many carriers adopt. For example, one of our major service suppliers. Therefore service was labeled “offering new solutions” was marked down accordingly.

But the good news for carriers from our survey is that our readers are forgiving. They accept that problems will occur in even the best-run organisation—“It’s how and how quickly their suppliers respond that really makes the difference.”

The clear winner was “Responsiveness to problems,” well ahead of the less forgiving “Getting it right first time,” and, significantly, ahead of “Frequency with which problems occur.”

These results support our core analysis that corporate users expect, respect and value front-line technical competence in their suppliers and want to work closely with them in solving problems and engineering performance gains.

That “Being proactive” and “understanding our business” were marked above the hard-edged “Speed of Provisoning” and “Frequency with which problems occur,” is significant in this context and reinforces our conclusion that corporate users want suppliers as technical competent partners, rather than sales-sawy suppliers.

Our readers’ views on telecommunications carriers are held by teams of peers with whom they can work (mistakes, problems and all) on the shared goal of keeping their corporate networks “up” and meeting their own and user expectations.

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Q. How do I connect to Europe when everyone speaks a different language?

### A. Iaxis THE POINT OF CONNECTION

Iaxis nominated best new telco, FT Awards Summary 1999, already connecting the US with 9 European cities with a further 10 by the end of 1999, requires Sales Directors in Amsterdam, London, Milan, Paris, Frankfurt, Switzerland and New York. Reporting to VP Global Sales, you will be responsible for targeting and closing large contracts with key Telecommunications operators and ISPs.

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or email: recruit@Iaxis.com

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Circle Reader Service No.36
A note on methodology

The Winning Carriers survey on selecting Best Carrier, Best New Carrier and Best Mobile/Wireless Mobile Operator for the World Communication Awards, organized by Ernac Telecom's Communications Group and staged this year at Telecom '99 Geneva, Switzerland. The survey results are based on replies to a mailed-out survey to the group's end-user readership. In this questionnaire, we ask the readers to specify which carriers their organizations use and what services they use them for. We then ask them to rank the performance of their carriers against nine measures such as pricing and customer service (see results, page 34). We also asked our readers to rank the importance of the criteria we were asking them to score their suppliers against. The aggregate of these rankings was then used to apply a weighting to the score results, favoring the carriers that scored highest on the qualities really mattered to their users. The weighted scores in the table selected the Winning Carriers in each of our three categories.

Carrier1 DirectConnect provides you, the telecommunications operator, Internet Service Provider (ISP) and/or multinational corporation, a managed, point-to-point connectivity, capacity, and customer care solution via our unique European optical fibre network.

DirectConnect: Managed Bandwidth Services
At the heart of DirectConnect is fibreCarrier owned fibre. Beginning with your initial integration into the Carrier network and then at your bandwidth requirements, Missison, Carrier DirectConnect provides you dedicated access to your state of the art optical fibre network infrastructure and those human competencies that manage that infrastructure.

DirectConnect: Connectivity
The Carrier optical fibre network built on a high reliability, high speed capability redundant European backbone and multiple transatlantic trunks offers unparalleled connectivity throughout Europe, to North America, and on to the rest of the world. Carrier DirectConnect offers your organization exclusive access to this network through dedicated point-to-point links, 3.34 and 5.56 megabits and starts off our European network all managed by the Carrier Network Operations Centre.

DirectConnect: Capacity
Carrier DirectConnect provides a wide range of high-quality bandwidths from 61.4 to 31.5Mbit/s to wavelengths. Our DirectConnect: Managed Bandwidth Service encompasses speeds from 2Mbit to 155Mbit, including 64Kbit, 34Mbit and 45Mbit.

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Europe's long distance carrier, providing telecommunications service on a global basis to corporations, Internet service providers and multinational corporations in Europe and North America. Europe's leading networks in London, Paris, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Brussels, Milan, and New York are some of our offices.

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