Macrocomm's smart solution solves South African telecoms industry energy challenges

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Advanced metering infrastructure investment significantly cuts operational costs and improves efficiencies

A complex financial and economic landscape is placing mobile network operators under increased pressure to optimise network OPEX and CAPEX. Telecom operators need to refine network maintenance processes and establish strategic solutions to reduce costs and streamline efficiencies. One of the costliest OPEX impacts is that of the electricity utility – a service that is not only associated with irregular supply, but with queries of legitimacy around reading validity and volume. The industry needs an accurate, secure and reliable way of ascertaining energy usage in real-time and with real data.

"The industry faces challenges around accurate meter readings, tariff-related billing, historical usage patterns, and bill validation," says Vinny Perumal, Managing Director, Macrocomm. "Currently they don't have access to tools that allow them to monitor the energy usage at base stations and most municipalities guesstimate the fee. The telco can't disprove the numbers and has to pay the bill or face being cut off – a reality that can cost as much as R10k per week in generator costs if a site goes down."

It is the classic case of a rock and a hard place. The telco needs more accuracy to manage its costs more effectively, but struggle with limitations in visibility and reliable meter infrastructure. A reduction in this cost could have a significant impact on the bottom line, and allow better control of energy usage to create meaningful long-term strategic energy savings plans – a reduction that Macrocomm is about to make a South African reality.

"With our smart metering solution, mobile network operators can now tailor their energy usage in the same way that they tailor their subscription services for customers," explains Perumal. "It has already delivered measurable results for international organisations in Italy, the Netherlands and Australia and is uniquely suited to the energy management needs in the South African market."

Macrocomm's technology allows for mobile operators to accurately manage their energy consumption in real-time alongside a data analytics dashboard that provides instant insight into fluctuations and usage patterns while eliminating the

need for physical meter readings. The consulting and management arm of the organisation utilises the data provided by the smart metering network to validate the bills, ensure that the correct tariffs are being charged and manage bill resolution. Macrocomm goes in and handles any issues around bill validity and credit using the data as proof, ensuring that customers only pay for what they have used, nothing more.

"To ensure that our customers achieve absolute confidence in their electricity expenditure across all assets, we undertake a comprehensive survey of sites and we analyse bill tariffs across applicability, change impact, and meter applicability," says Perumal. "These are just some of the assessments we undertake to ensure that every aspect of energy spend and usage is collated prior to our implementing the smart network."

The smart metering solution provides automated meter reading functionality, real-time visibility into load profiles, accurate tariff billing, comparative billing for suppliers, historical usage and comparison data, instrumentation data, carbon footprint analysis, and bottom line financial benefits. The cost savings of the solution are measurable and tangible, and leading African telecoms companies are already seeing significant savings.

"The Macrocomm smart meter can provide valuable data and insight across a wide range of queries and applications," concludes Perumal. "The data can be used to assess carbon footprint and emissions, meeting this legal requirement effortlessly, and it can even be used to analyse peak loads and manage load profiles in real-time. Our solution empowers organisations, allowing them to gain richer control over budgets and expenditure."

With a proven global track record and return on investment, the Macrocomm solution provides the South African telecoms industry with seamless energy management and control with its smart metering, consulting and management. The process is automated, the data delivered in real-time, and the methodology proven across Africa, Europe and Australia.

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