

Communication Interoperability is Vital to Silo-Free Public Safety Communications

Anatoli Levine, Softil's Director of Products & Standards, looks at the issues and calls for new terminology, regulations and policies

TEL AVIV, ISRAEL, November 12, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As we know, the concept of

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Anatoli Levine, Director Products & Standards, Softilga

interoperability is multi-faceted. At a basic engineering level, interoperability simply means that all elements of the communication network can communicate with each other. In other words, they are interoperable.

But in many cases, basic interoperability is not enough – more regulations and new policies are often needed to achieve full interoperability between systems and networks.

There are only two ways to achieve interoperability – open standards and gateways. If all communication elements adhere to the same open standard such as 3GPP MCX, for

example, it means that all of those elements will communicate with each other directly. If, however, some of the elements are not standards-based, the only way to achieve interoperability is by using a gateway.

On the grand scheme of things, there is nothing wrong with gateways. Gateways provide connectivity between different types of communication technologies, such as PSTN and VoIP or LMR and MCX. Gateways have been around forever and will be around forever. When it comes to public safety operations, gateways are prolific and successful ... think of RoIP gateways, for example.

But when an emergency happens, gateways don't work. Ubiquitous broadband enables each agency to select their own proprietary communication technology, and then spend time and resources to address a specific interoperability use case with the gateway. However, emergencies don't announce themselves in advance giving you time to prepare. If multiple agencies are responding, they have to be able to communicate, and when their core technologies differ, they can't. You simply don't have time to build gateways if agencies that need to cooperate on an

emergency response use different technologies. The only way to be prepared for an emergency is by ensuring that one open, secure, reliable, interoperable communication technology is used by all. And this is why we have MCX.

An adoption of the open standard such as MCX can solve all interoperability issues of public safety communications. Now, the key word in the previous sentence is “adoption.” While MCX can solve interoperability issues, it first needs to be adopted by first responders – and that requires a significant effort.

I attended a number of “fire chat” sessions on the subject of mission-critical voice, hosted by PSCR researchers during the recent FirstNet 5x5 event in Chicago. In the sessions, the users and public safety IT folks expressed their concern and frustration with the state of the MCX/MCPTT technology, pouring over lots of user requirements that had not been addressed.



Anatoli Levine, Director, Products & Standards at MCX enabler Softil

I was attending one of such sessions listening to the “unaddressed” user requirements for MCPTT devices, such as the ability to control volume and channels (groups would be a proper MCPTT term), minimal UI, no need for the screen, sturdiness of the device and so on. Then at some point I simply raised my hand holding the L3Harris XL hybrid (dual-mode) radio, which answers all stated requirements.

It appears that many of the people in the audience – the people who deploy communication technology for first responders – didn’t even know that L3Harris devices are equipped with LTE capabilities and fully standard MCPTT client, and already deployed in the MCX networks.

So, there is hard (but critically necessary!) work required to achieve widespread adoption of MCX technology. And that in turn means that public safety professionals need to be educated on the benefits, value, capabilities, and availability of MCX/MCPTT solutions – today, and in the future. Adoption and education should be critical work items for FirstNet – and any other public safety communications service provider.

Communication Interoperability Summary

When multiple agencies are covering the same event or responding to a given incident, all first responders should be able to communicate with each other – and this is also called “interoperability” – this is the word used in the US congress hearings, for example – and open standards offer the best and proper way to achieve it.

Softil now wishes to take this terminology further and call inter-agency/first responder communications ... Communication Interoperability.

Ends

About the Author

Anatoli Levine is Director of Products and Standards for Softil, Ltd., responsible for developing strategy and product roadmap for Softil's portfolio of enabling products for developers, including technologies such as Mission-Critical Communications (MCX) over LTE and 5G, WebRTC, VoLTE/ViLTE/RCS, SIP, IMS and many others. Mr. Levine actively participates in the development of open international communication standards at industry bodies such as 3GPP, ETSI, IETF and other SDOs.

About Softil's BEEHD Framework Technology

Softil's BEEHD is a 3GPP MCX Release 17 standard-compliant cross-platform framework (SDK) designed for developers and manufacturers of handheld and ruggedized devices, MCX/LMR gateways, dispatch consoles, recording solutions and train/metro communication equipment. BEEHD technology is also destined for system integrators, MCX application developers and service providers looking to accelerate the development of IP-based mission-critical voice and video over LTE and 5G (MCPTT, MCVideo, MCDATA) solutions for first responders, utilities, mining, transportation and more. BEEHD offers market-proven interoperability with all major MCX systems deployed around the world.

About Softil

Softil is the leading enabler of IP communications solutions for mission-critical telecommunications products and services. Softil's BEEHD framework (SDK) is the key enabling technology behind a wide range of 3GPP MCX mission-critical communication solutions, devices, and products, as well as rich media applications for Enterprise and IMS/VoLTE. With more than 900 major corporations across the globe as customers, Softil's many technological achievements include the pioneering of Voice and Video over IP, combining its unique expertise in standards-based signaling, multimedia and IMS. Softil's award-winning suite of Protocol Stacks includes IMS, Diameter, SIP, MSRP, and others.

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Hugh Paterson

Whoosh PR

+44 7465 962446

[email us here](#)

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