

# BOOSTING INTERNATIONAL BACKBONE CAPACITY FOR GLOBAL EVENTS SUCH AS THE RIO 2016 OLYMPICS

With the Olympic Games closing and the Paralympic Games kicking off in Rio de Janeiro, **Michael Wheeler**, executive vice president of global IP networks at NTT Communications, tells Jason McGee-Abe how the company prepares for traffic surges at global events

*The 2016 Olympic Games has just finished but how has NTT Com coped with and managed the demand for capacity in Rio de Janeiro?*

The tricky thing about any type of event-based or infrastructure deployment, whether it's the Olympics or the World Cup, are the business cases which are only going to be used for a short time.

With the Olympics it's a case of three to four weeks every four years, so it's a bit of a challenge.

As a provider, you're forced to – and required to – look at more traditional linear growth and then fold in the event-specific needs, trying to match those up as best as you can. When we looked into 2016 as part of our annual forecasting cycle, we certainly looked at those two things relating to Brazil.

While we don't have a point of presence

**“ This year we increased our international backbone capacity by 50% ”**

*Michael Wheeler, EVP, global IP network, NTT Communications*

(PoP) in Rio de Janeiro, most of the international traffic out of Brazil goes through Sao Paulo, where we have already established a PoP.

In the first half of this year we increased our international backbone capacity by 50% at a raw level to make sure that we had the capacity that would be required.

We then watched our linear growth in the build up to the Games and while you can't accurately predict a spike that may

occur during the course of the Olympics, you give yourself plenty of headroom and a buffer in case there's any problems.

That's what we've done, watching it on a daily basis, managing any flows of traffic which we've needed to and we've been in good shape.

We've added a number of standard customers, whether it's signing a 12-month or 24-month contract, but some customers specific to the Games have signed much shorter-term deals.

These are typically three to four months long, as most want to be able to put their infrastructure in place, conduct tests, end-to-end trials, and evaluations.

Once it's over there's not a lot left to do with infrastructure but they wind it down over a shorter period of time.

From our point of view, if you only deploy infrastructure specific to an event it can be costly or you need to absorb the cost over a long period time if it's not being utilised. That's where the challenge comes.

*So it's similar to finding the balance with physical infrastructure at the Olympics as well?*

Absolutely. It's a very similar problem. Firms have to find the balance between investment and the deployment of physical permanent and temporary infrastructure at world events.

There have been well-documented examples of upkeep struggles and abandoned venues and stadiums.

*What are some of the capacity and scale challenges you face around global events?*

There are multiple types of capacity to be concerned about – and ensuring traffic flows without any problems or congestion is key. On a metro basis, we also need to



**Wheeler: Ensuring traffic flows without congestion is key**

make sure that we're in the areas where customers are so they can interconnect with us in a local way and effectively gain access to the network.

*How different will the 2020 Games in Tokyo be for NTT Com?*

The Olympics in Tokyo will be a different story for us because of NTT being the incumbent provider in the country. We're going to have much more network responsibilities than just the IP network business.

We've already started building infrastructure for 2020.

We'll more likely err on the side of much larger amounts of infrastructure builds than what we've done in the past couple of Olympics, because the nature of our role in the market is quite a bit different than what it was in London or it has been in Rio.

The Rugby World Cup [in Japan in 2019] will be a good testbed for us to make sure that certain things are coming together well, but there will be some infrastructure which won't have been deployed yet at that stage. **G**