



Open Mobile inks \$10M deal to roll out new phones

BY MICHELLE KANTROW VAZQUEZ

Of the Daily Sun staff
mkantrow@prdailynews.net

Wireless provider Open Mobile has entered into a \$10 million agreement with Ireland-based Advanced Innovations to launch a line of handsets designed with local consumer needs in mind, as well as the 3G wireless Internet device it will offer when it deploys EV-DO services islandwide this summer, the Daily Sun learned Wednesday.

Frank Bell, Open Mobile's CEO, said the agreement with AI calls for developing three handsets — including a texting device and a smartphone — with specifications responding to local consumer needs and tastes. For example, Open Mobile will target the youth market with stylish handsets in a variety of colors, while adapting less dramatic versions of the same handset for older customers.

The low-cost wireless devices are tailored to support Open Mobile's business in Puerto Rico, which does not require contracts for its services.

"Our commitment to our customers is very simple; we want to deliver their messages with the greatest efficiency and highest quality, at the most affordable price," said Bell, in an interview with the Daily Sun. "Our business model is focused on

providing affordable unlimited talk/unlimited text and data capabilities to all residents of Puerto Rico."

The initial agreement between the two companies covers the first three devices on Open Mobile's product road map, with the expectation that the partnership will expand to include future products, Bell said.

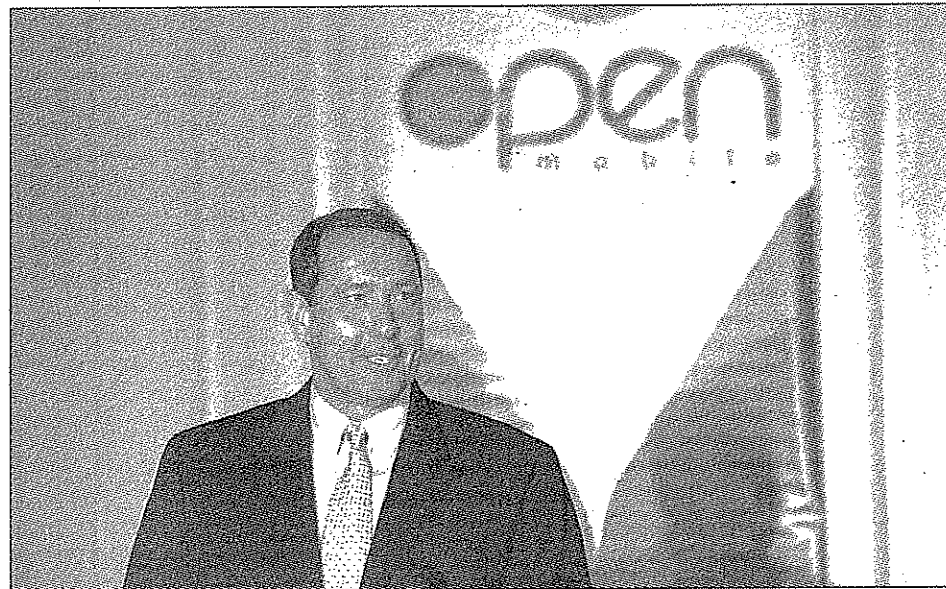
"This is just the initial phase. We expect the contract to be renewed. We got the mockup of the devices today and they look good," Bell said. "We want to test everything before we put it out. This is the first time anyone has designed a handset based on specific information provided by customers."

The deal was announced during an Enterprise Ireland-supported Trade and Investment Mission to the U.S. led by Ireland's Prime Minister, Brian Cowen.

Enterprise Ireland is the Irish state agency responsible for the development and promotion of the indigenous Irish business sector.

The agreement represents a major move for AI, which now has two operations centers in the U.S. to manage rising demand in the region for its intelligent outsource management services.

"Our innovative outsourced managed services model means we can cost-effectively provide Open Mobile with a range of hardware products tailored to their specific mar-



Courtesy

Open Mobile CEO Frank Bell

ket needs, while enabling them to meet the aggressive time-to-market goals required to support their growing and dynamic customer base," said AI's CEO, Robert O'Donnell. "More importantly, by partnering with AI, Open Mobile can focus on what they do best: provide outstanding wireless service to their expanding customer base."

AI will manage each element of the supply chain, from design through development, manufacturing and distribution.

"This launching should be pretty exciting. We're going to offer the first handsets asked for by Puerto Ricans, designed by Puerto Ricans," he said, noting that Open Mobile will also add a Blackberry smartphone to its inventory in coming months.

EV-DO in pilot phase

Meanwhile, Bell said Open Mobile's pilot program for its wireless Internet service, which began 21 days ago, is "going excep-

tionally well."

EV-DO is short for Evolution Data Optimized, a digital service that wireless carriers use to provide broadband data services.

In February, the carrier launched limited wireless Internet services in Caguas, Humacao and Mayagüez, in preparation for a full deployment in the summer.

"We're going about this systematically. When you launch a service like that you can either be very successful, or word of mouth can kill it," he said of the rollout that will also be offered without the need for a contract.

"Customers should not be bound by anything other than me giving them the service they deserve. If we don't deliver, they don't pay us," Bell said, of Open Mobile's no-contract philosophy.

Bell would not disclose how much the carrier will invest in network upgrades this year.