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TRANSFORMING Telecommunications

Get is leading the next generation of telecommunications products and services with its focus on a holistic user experience.

Images courtesy of Get

As a leading force in the European telecommunications industry, Norwegian cable-TV operator and internet service provider Get is providing a streamlined and service-orientated user experience to its large base of customers across the nation.

Get offers broadband internet access, cable telephone, digital cable television, and streaming services to 1.3 million business and residential customers in Norway from Kristiansand in the south to Hammerfest in the north. With its base in Oslo and a long history of delivering excellent products and services, Get is perfectly placed to serve this burgeoning market of savvy consumers.

Gunnar Evensen, CEO of Get, spoke to *The CEO Magazine* about the evolution of the telecommunications industry and the pivotal role Get has played in this journey.

The CEO Magazine: You've been leading Get for around 15 years. What sort of changes have you seen, not only within the company, but also within the industry as a whole?

Gunnar: I've been working in this type of industry for my whole career. I started with Apple and I spent eight years working within that company. I also spent three years with Telia doing telecommunications and I saw that we were in the middle of a transition towards converging together.

I started at Get because I felt that it was the best place to be if I wanted to be part of that converging technology and things have happened around that. The first years were largely spent taking an old cable company and making it a modern fibre-based telecommunications company.

From 2007, things really started to pick up and happen. Broadband

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started to grow significantly and people started to use services differently. We saw that we could combine more services into one type of service portfolio. I think that evolution of the industry definitely mirrors things that we've been doing for a long time and it's becoming more and more important for people in their lives. That's been an important driver for me and the company; to really participate in the changes in the way we use technology, like broadband services, TV services, video-on-demand services, and other devices. We can consume entertainment on multiple platforms now and all of that drive within the industry has been extremely challenging and interesting.

Those technological shifts have driven us towards being capable of delivering those types of solutions. That's also been an interesting part of it. We now have an integrated proposition where everything is produced over IP [Internet >





Protocol]. It's a completely different environment and it makes it possible for us to combine these services in a very interesting way for consumers.

Get has been voted the fastest growing company in Norway so you're obviously moving at a very fast pace. How do you keep up with the demand for this new technology and these new products?

I think we are one of the fastest growing companies in this industry in Europe. We have been growing in double digits for 12 years in a row, on both revenue and EBITDA. Last year we grew revenue by 14 per cent and EBITDA by 18 per cent. In quite a mature market, as most people have broadband and they have access to pay television, it's still possible to drive consumers to new services and update what they would like to consume. We are an extremely growth-orientated company and compared to our

peers, on many important parameters, we are growing at double the rate.

It's not just from a Norwegian perspective that we're growing, but also from a European perspective. It relates back to way we think. I think that's the most important part. Of course, Norway has a strong economy and people are happy to spend on these type of services, but I think driving product innovation so that we're producing something that people would like to have has also been an important factor.

With TV, we have very advanced and sophisticated boxes which have a lot of functionality so people love to use them. The Get box in Norway is in many ways like time-shifted TV, like how TiVo used to be in the good old days. This year we integrated television on tablets and smartphones in the basic television offering, making it possible for Get customers to take their television

experience with them wherever they want. We have high-speed broadband services up to 200 megabytes available to all of our customers. We integrate that into the total experience, which fuels this growth that we've been seeing.

How many customers use the Get box or Get apps within Norway?

We have 496,000 houses connected, with 1.3 million people using our services. There are different box types but all of them have the user interface provided by Get. That's been very important for us. We have been extremely focused on the user experience and I can say that the brand name Get is largely related to the way you navigate your TV and the things that you can do on your TV, iPad, iPhone, and other devices.

If you're a Get customer then you should have the Get experience. We're not like some other cable companies in Europe who just

provide the signal and then make you buy a separate branded device. The consumer doesn't really get the full relationship, which is very different from what we're offering. That's the big difference between us and some of the other players in the market.

It goes back to who we are. We are a very culture-driven company. We do a lot of fun stuff. For example, this year we had an employee congress where we all met and discussed strategy. In preparation for that, we divided all of our employees into 60 groups and their mission was to develop the kind of strategy they think the company should have on different levels, looking towards 2018. They then had to describe that strategic input and make an art piece based on that, so they did a lot of fun stuff. We integrated that strategic thinking into all of our employees and we score fantastically, in terms of our employees understanding our vision and where the company is going.

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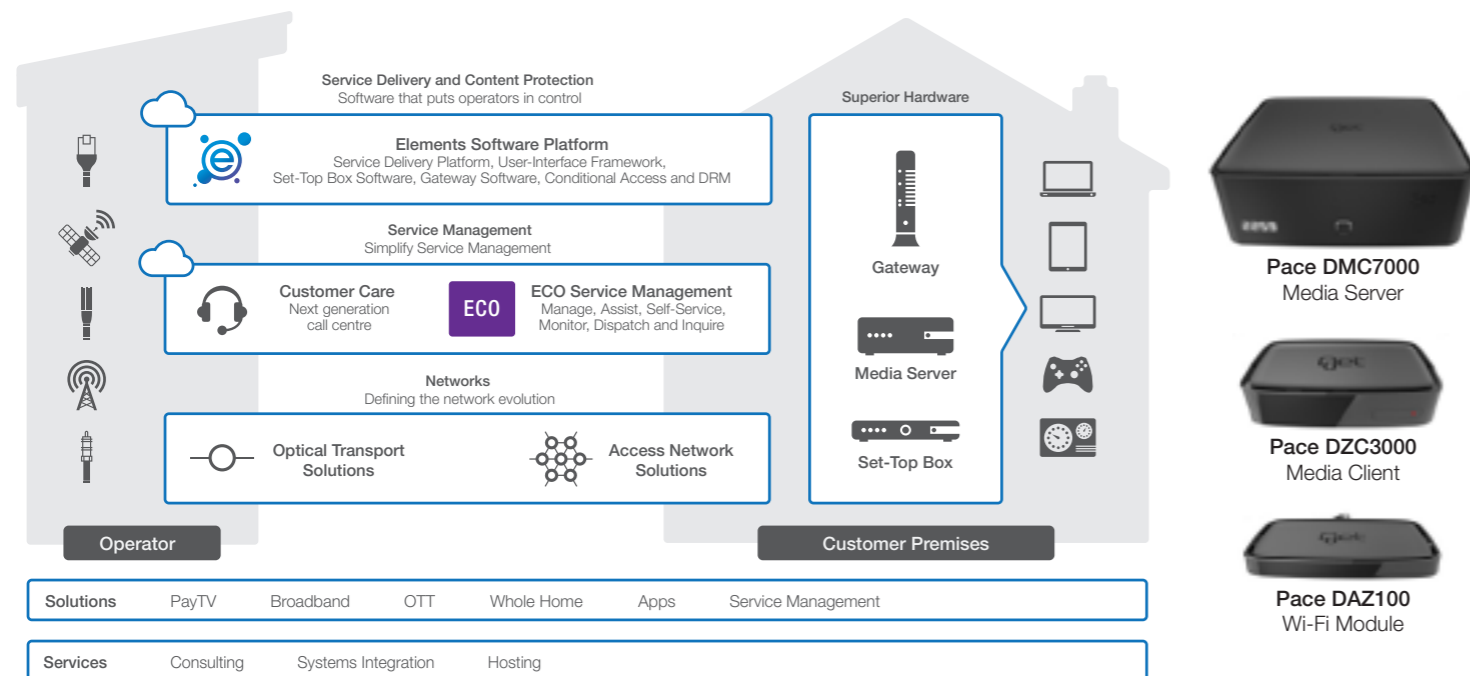
- Gunnar Evensen

I know where we're heading and I know what we need to do to get there. It's about how we work together and the culture that we're creating, which is a very innovative and forward-leaning culture. We innovate on a number of aspects of the business, so not just products and services and the user interface, but also how we're handling customers and what type of systems we're using in the field to give a better experience to the customer. There's a wide range of things that we're innovating as we drive the company to the next level.

We have been growing in double digits since the first day that I started at the company and it's our ambition to continue to do that. ●

Publisher's note: Since the time of interview, leading Danish telecommunications company TDC purchased Get from GS Capital Partners and Quadrangle Capital Partners at a price of NOK 13.8 billion, in mid-October 2014. With this acquisition, Get and TDC become the leading communications and home entertainment company in the region. Gunnar has been appointed to lead the integration of Get and TDC in Norway.

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