

Making the *right* connection

We quiz PHILIP EDWARDS on why fibre optic cables have transformed the way we communicate and access data.

From which industries are you currently seeing the greatest demand for fibre optic cables?

Phil Edwards. Typically we see a lot of cable demand from the voice and data service providers such as France Telecom, Telefonica or Deutsche Telekom. In the US we're working with the large incumbents and in China we're heavily involved there in terms of rolling out the 3G network infrastructures. We see a great demand rising in fibre to the home projects. Looking to fibre to the home networks, in Europe frontrunners are Scandinavia, particularly Finland, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, France and surprisingly Slovenia. We're heavily involved in helping these fibre to the home deployments, either being the large incumbents or new entrances like utility companies in Scandinavia or the new operator Reggefiber in the Netherlands. Optical fibre technology is obviously the next generation from traditional telecom copper networks to provide high speed, low cost, reliable, integrated services to the consumers.

What are the main challenges associated with putting in fibre optic cables?

PE. The big advantage of optical fibre now is that it brings the high bandwidth requirements into the home environment. There's a genuine green theme about this because it's enabling people to have access to masses of data, which is enabling them to work from home or access diagnostic services online. The challenge is making a reliable, non-limited point-to-point connection between the home and the central office, where most of the information is captured and then, via a digital frame, is actually connected to the individual user. Using a fibre optic cable for this last mile is sensible, but it comes down to costs. So the issue is about having very smart network designs and very cost effective designs so the cost of ownership for the network provider is low both in terms of original capital injection and in the running cost of that network. We can design you a network that will be at the lowest cost of installation, which will be



“Optical fibre brings high bandwidth requirements into the home environment”

cabling the driver for bringing innovation into network solutions. This is also a low energy consumption solution, which makes it environmentally friendly and allows more people to work from home. This is where Draka can help.

What is the latest technology that is being developed to benefit companies?

PE. We now provide the latest generation of bend-insensitive fibres which means that you can handle fibre like copper, mechanically abuse it or if you like tie it in a knot without actually compromising the transmission characteristics of the fibre. This means that failure rate during the installation of the network becomes very low which is making it a lot cheaper. In addition, you can miniaturise the components in which you manage the fibre, so it's a smaller footprint. It requires less energy to support it and the connectivity is more reliable. Nobody wants to have the internet suddenly unplugged from their home or their office because we're so dependent on it. So building resilience in and miniaturising the solution addresses this challenge in a cost effective way. ■

Philip Edwards is the Group President of Draka Communications. He is an engineering graduate born and educated in Wales. He started his career with ITT and has since worked for Northern Telecom, Pirelli, Marconi and for the last seven years, Draka. During this time he has looked after the global optical fibre activities.

