

Inside TOWERS

Growing Tower Companies Turn To Outsourcing

By Sally Ruth Bourrie

As wireless operators divest themselves of their towers, tower companies are growing, concentrating on their core businesses and turning to outside consultants for help.

Outsourcing is the rage. In response, firms such as LCC International of McLean, Va., and Wireless Facilities Inc. in San Diego are eagerly supplying advice on tower projects.

"We can help them understand the components of the tower ownership business and whether it makes sense for them," says Mike McNelly, LCC's senior vice president of Americas operations.

Tower companies don't need big, internal engineering teams, says Dominic Villecco, president of V-Comm LLC, in Cranbury, N.J., which specializes in sophisticated radio fre-

quency and network engineering problems. "They just need a handful of experts that can give them the answer and they can get on track."

Two increasingly outsourced tasks are monitoring and maintenance. McNelly points out that understanding FCC requirements, such as tower lighting, are critical areas

Often the most time consuming matter is finding the real estate and getting approvals from a municipality, says Francesca Mabarak, senior analyst at the Yankee Group. Engineering consultants who testify before zoning boards can demonstrate a potential tower's viability as well as explain how multiple operators can use

lice radios aren't knocked out, or a power company system and three-user PCS-ESMR tower don't interfere with each other. Behr recently added a product to enable collocating cellular, PCS and SMR antennas on AM broadcast towers.

Solutions such as LCC's database of tower companies' sites helps tower firms optimize their properties and reveals existing locations that will work for operators. "If there isn't a facility in the place where you need it, there's probably a reason," from zoning obstacles to inadequate demand, McNelly says.

V-Comm has developed an RF tool that helps design spec corridors to show tower companies and their clients how to build a network for the best coverage. Tower consulting services like these will undoubtedly continue to grow as the multibillion-dollar tower industry expands. 

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that can give them answers.*

that maintenance firms understand and keep on top of.

But maintenance isn't the only area in which tower companies may need direction – consultants offer advice in everything from site acquisition and assessment to how to work with local zoning boards.

one existing facility, which can ease community concerns.

Lawrence Behr's business, LBA Group Inc. in Greenville, N.C., has seen a lot of growth in the need to ensure that collocated services are good neighbors. Proper engineering is required so that adjacent po-