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Going the Distance

Rural Banks Get Enabled with Wireless ATMs

More ATMs in the countryside? Coming sooner than you think. When ENCASH and PLDT joined forces to deploy the very first wireless ATMs in the Philippines, foundations were laid for a new and revolutionary banking system. Thanks to PLDT SWUP or ShopWork Unplugged, banks can now use GPRS/EDGE technology to wirelessly deploy ATMs and manage transactions over a secure, Virtual Private Network (VPN), making it easier and faster to deploy SWUP-powered ATMs and more difficult to hack than those operating on a wired connection. It's no wonder that so many banks are eager to jump on the wireless bandwagon.

Now PLDT Business Solutions, partnered with ENCASH, is taking SWUP technology to the countryside, making it possible for rural banks to maintain their own ATM network. A recent contract signing with 1st Valley Bank, GM Bank, Bangko Kabayan and the Bank of Florida marked a milestone in Philippine microfinance, enabling far-flung regions in the country with accessible ATMs. Banking customers in the province no longer have to worry about commuting to the nearest city to deposit or withdraw money. The convenience of having an ATM in their hometown also eliminates the need for cardholders to withdraw and carry around large amounts of cash. Clearly, when it comes to rural banking, wireless is the way to go.

"Rural Banks have to resolve many technological hurdles when planning for ATM deployment," says Eric J. Severino, President of ENCASH Network Services, "Data communication, or the lack of it, is one. A wireless ATM allows rapid deployment and immediate redirection when the bank decides that the location of the terminal is not suitable."

PLDT and ENCASH will be providing the 4 rural banks with SWUP-enabled ATMs that will be deployed in remote locations such as Arayat, Cuenca, Palyan City and Zaragoza. SWUP technology allows these ATMs to operate within the coverage of over 6,000 cell sites that serve 99.3% of the country's population. This unmatched wireless coverage will enable the 1st Valley Bank, GM Bank, Bangko Kabayan and the Bank of Florida to deploy their ATMs wherever their branches may be, creating more revenue opportunities for rural banks and enterprises alike and bringing state of the art banking convenience to rural clientele.

Enabled With A New Banking System

In the long run, deploying wireless ATMs is about more than creating convenience for rural banking customers. It's about enabling the countryside with the means for sustainable growth. As more and more rural banks opt to SWUP it, it's clear that wireless technology is more than just a trend. It's the catalyst for a change that is long overdue.

"What we're doing today represents something very revolutionary to the banking industry," says Severino. "SWUP brings many real, immediately realizable advantages to the market. It will also introduce change, possibly disrupting the status quo. This is the first banking system of its kind in the country... it will be a great enabler for commerce."

"This new system will transform the banking culture in the countryside," said Eric R. Alberto, PLDT SVP and Head of Corporate Business Group. "There's also a social aspect to it; if we enable this spectrum of the market with first world services, then our economy will move at a faster pace and will soon mimic the more developed economies."

“ This new system will transform the banking culture in the countryside... ”

1st Valley Bank President Nickolas Lim

Bank of Florida President Teresa David-Carlos

Bangko Kabayan Atty. Francis Ganzon

GM Bank President Mitch Gomez

Thanks to PLDT SWUP technology and ENCASH Network Services' infrastructure, rural banks can now deploy wireless ATMs nationwide, regardless of their location.

ENCASH President Eric Severino and SWUP Product Manager Jun Dejesus explain how ENCASH ATMs use SWUP technology to accommodate wireless transactions.

PLDT SVP & Head of Corporate Business Group, Eric Alberto, demonstrates the capabilities of a SWUP enabled wireless ATM to Ives Nisco, Bang-ay Bank President.

Standing from L-R: PLDT Corporate Business Group Business Head, Luigi Lopez, 1st Valley Bank President, Nickolas Lim, PLDT FVP and Head of Corporate Business Solutions, Nerissa Ramos, PLDT FVP and CEO, Cesar Enriquez, Bank of Florida President, Teresa David-Carlos, Bangko Kabayan President, Atty. Francis Ganzon, ENCASH Director Mike Mapa, PLDT SVP and Head of Corporate Business Group, Eric Alberto, ENCASH President Eric Severino, ENCASH Director Raymond Co, and GM Bank President, Mitch Gomez.

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Courtesy of Philippine Star Business Section (March 18, 2007)