

Wi-fi buyout unites Boingo, Concourse

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Boingo Wireless Inc. is acquiring Concourse Communications Group LLC, a Chicago telecom company that provides Wi-Fi service at O'Hare International Airport and Midway Airport.

Deal terms were not announced. Joe Beatty, CEO of Concourse, says he intends to step down after the merger while the remainder of his firm's 25 employees will join Boingo, which has about 100 employees and is based in Santa Monica, Calif.

The deal unites Concourse, a leading provider of Wi-Fi to airports, with Boingo, one of the largest Wi-Fi aggregators, whose network includes 45,000 public hotspots and agreements with more than 130 Wi-Fi operators. Boingo also sells software that allows cell-phone manufacturers to transmit calls over its hot spots – which beam high-speed Internet connections over small areas.

The two companies decided to pursue a merger after working together to wire Los Angeles International Airport, Mr. Beatty says.

"We were fairly airport-focused," says Mr. Beatty, of Concourse, which provides Wi-Fi service to 12 airports in North America. Merging with Boingo "takes our team and allows us to blossom and get into other venues. Together we can do a lot more."

Mr. Beatty co-founded Chicago's Focal Communications and left the competitive local phone exchange carrier in February 2001, shortly before the telecom market collapsed. He joined Concourse as CEO in June 2003, when Cardinal Growth, a Chicago-based private-equity fund, bought the company and moved it to Chicago.