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Coyote enters the UK right on time as speed offence rules change

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Q: What makes a €199 radar detector packaged with a €12/month subscription sell like hot cakes in a country not really famous for its uptake of telematics services?

A: The UK government's proposed penalty-point system for speeding that effectively means "two strikes and you're out".

Coyote's CEO Jean Marc van Laethem is bullish about his company's product and very clear about its 'unique selling point', saying that people are tired of getting caught by automatic radars because they drove a fraction over the speed limit.

"We used to sell the first version (now called Coyote Classic) to fast drivers in big cars. Right now the Coyote Mini is sold mostly to drivers who never speed but are just stressed by the possibility of missing one of the speed limit signs."

Coyote is telematics without a screen or the Internet. It caters for the large but often forgotten non-techie for whom the Internet is not an obvious source of information and updating maps on a PND is a foreign concept.

Coyote is also extremely addictive. Once in the car, people become accustomed to the peace of mind and control their speed naturally to the sound of the device. After-sales services have had to introduce a swap policy because customers were suffering from "severe withdrawal syndrome".

The main difference between Coyote and other radar alert systems is the connectivity. After dealing with Best Buy and Dash in the US, Canadian MVNO Jasper Wireless saw a great market in Europe and set up a deal with Coyote Europe-wide.

The Jasper-Coyote partnership revolves around the mini-Coyote, the world's first GPS-based alert system that informs drivers in real-time the location of fixed and mobile speed cameras.

Jasper Wireless' M2M service platform enables Coyote Systems to remotely monitor individual devices in all the countries where it operates, while using one Global SIM to make each user a member of its growing international community.

Mini-Coyote alerts users one mile in advance of the presence of mobile speed cameras, informing them of the remaining distance between the vehicle and the mobile speed camera. By connecting its devices with Jasper Wireless, Coyote Systems is not only able to push information to its users in real-time, but also to use alerts from them to update its database, which is a substantial advantage over existing solutions that request regular manual downloads using a local PC connection.

This is really the key, and with an average of 5,000 vehicle locations per minute in France, Coyote has reached the threshold allowing the company to exchange data back to Tele Atlas or their traffic partners, Info Traffic.

Coyote launched its device in France less than two years ago, and it's also available in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and will be launched in Benelux later in the year, with Spain, Italy and Portugal launching in the first quarter of 2009.

Coyote has sold about 70,000 units in France - where the tracking of individuals is extremely controlled and where there are 1,200 fixed cameras and 5,000 mobile radars on the road.

The alert system was launched in France in February, and the Coyote community comprises more than 40,000 users.

Coyote has now launched in the UK - a country with 6,000 road cameras and 20,000 mobile units.

Despite having one of the best road safety records in the world, there were 247,780 road accident casualties in Great Britain last year: 217,060 minor injuries, 27,774 serious injuries and 2,946 deaths.

With the aim of reducing the number of road deaths or serious injuries by at least 40% by 2010, the UK government has targeted 'speeding' as one of the major causes of road accidents, and proposes to introduce a graduated fixed penalty of six penalty points for drivers who exceed the speed limit by a large margin - 20 mph in most speed limits. Drivers are automatically disqualified if they reach twelve penalty points.



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Coyote plans to launch in the rest of Europe and the US next year.

Ultimately, the service will be found in phones. Van Laethem says the company is working to get Coyote on the iPhone next year, but before that, it's working on a trial with French operator SFR on a GPS-equipped Sony Ericsson.

"We're testing the water here; we're not going to go all out until the market tells us there is a need," says van Laethem. "The iPhone is a completely different proposition; on that platform we have already a lot of competitors, most of them providing the solution for free - but without a live database or a community."

Besides the phone deal, Coyote is looking at licensing the server and the technology.

First step is the project in partnership with Mobile Devices to create a commercial vehicle PND that brings together basic fleet management applications like tracking, routing and job attribution and traffic/ speed radar.

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