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Verizon-MCI merger leaves only four in telecom market

BY BRUCE MEYERSON
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Verizon Communications Inc.'s \$6.7 billion takeover of long-distance provider MCI Inc. is the latest example of how regulatory changes in Washington are continuing to transform the telephone industry.

A court ruling nearly a year ago and subsequent decisions by the Federal Communications Commission were key catalysts for Monday's deal as well as last month's \$16 billion takeover of AT&T Corp. by SBC Communications Inc. Those findings effectively forced long-distance providers on the auction block by boosting their operating costs, compounding a multiyear

slide in customers and revenues.

While consumer advocates expressed worry, it's not clear the loss of AT&T and MCI as rivals will free their acquirers to boost prices for long-distance phone calls. That's because many consumers and businesses are already taking advantage of money-saving alternatives — especially cell phones and Internet-based phone services from cable TV companies and others.

"If you're willing to change the way you purchase services, there's a lot of competition out there" beyond the local providers, said David Willis, an industry analyst for the Meta Group Inc. in Stamford, Conn. He noted that AT&T and MCI had already stopped competing for new


residential customers.

The recent spate of telecom mergers, including December's deal by Sprint Corp. to acquire Nextel Communications Inc. for \$35 billion, will reduce the industry to four dominant telephone companies: Verizon, SBC, BellSouth Corp. and Sprint Nextel. It also leaves Qwest Communications International Inc., a Denver-based Baby Bell whose higher stock-based bid was rejected by MCI, isolated in a highly competitive market.

Verizon, the country's largest regional phone company, declined to say what will become of the MCI brand. It is a storied name due in part to its role as the first major rival to AT&T's national long-distance monopoly.


Telecom's major players scramble to partner-up

A look at three recently announced mergers in the telecommunications industry:




\$6.75 billion deal was announced Monday

verizon MCI



\$16 billion deal was announced Jan. 31

SBC AT&T



\$35 billion deal was announced Dec. 15

Sprint NEXTEL

▶ Verizon Communications agreed to buy MCI, the nation's second largest long-distance provider

▶ The deal could result in about 7,000 job cuts from the combined Verizon-MCI work force of about 250,000 employees

▶ SBC Communications agreed to buy AT&T in a merger that would create one of the world's largest telecom companies

▶ Expected elimination of 13,000 jobs, many through attrition, on top of existing plans at the two companies to eliminate at least 12,000 jobs before the merger is finalized more than a year from now

▶ Sprint agreed to acquire Nextel Communications in a \$35 billion deal, mostly in stock, combining the nation's third and fifth largest cell phone carriers

▶ Officials declined to discuss layoff prospects


SOURCE: The companies

AP

Life OF THE MIND

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UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

UO professors of history, literature, religion, and philosophy will lead discussions on topics related to "Peace and War" on Saturday mornings over coffee in the elegant Autzen Stadium Club Room. These affordable college-level classes for the community are available at \$75 each. A "season ticket" for all six seminars saves \$75. Books are available through the UO Bookstore. Register at 346-3475 or visit uoinight.uoregon.edu.

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February 26, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

A one-day seminar designed to resuscitate the reading and thinking habits of adults. Based on David Denby's book, *Great Books*, about going back to college as an adult. A great introduction to the other seminars. **\$35**

THE RAGE OF ACHILLES
March 5, 12, 19, 26, 9:30 a.m.-noon

The first and still the greatest book about war is Homer's *Iliad*, the epic of warrior culture. You will love it as an adult, even if you didn't as a student. As hair-raising and relevant as the daily news, this is the foundation of the West's thinking about war. **\$75**

CULTURE OF TOLERANCE
April 2, 9, 16, 23, 9:30 a.m.-noon

Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain was a surprise bestseller in 2002. What is more timely to learn about than Islam, and tolerance? A highly enjoyable book about the history and literature of Jews and Muslims in medieval Spain. **\$75**

BAND OF BROTHERS
June 4, 11, 18, 25, 9:30 a.m.-noon

Shakespeare's *Henry V* presents the Hundred Years War. Olivier's stirring 1945 film version rallied wartime England, but Branagh's 1989 film is anti-war. Shakespeare: pro- and anti-war at the same time? Read the play and watch the films. **\$75**

VIKINGS
April 30, May 7, 14, 21, 9:30 a.m.-noon

Njal's Saga is the epic story of Iceland's greatest lawyer, a man of peace in a culture of violence—an authentic and absorbing portrait of Viking life written in the 13th century. How do you break the vicious cycle of revenge, when it is the law? **\$75**

WAR AND PEACE
July 9, 16, 23, 30, 9:30 a.m.-noon

It is time—at last—to read Tolstoy's great novel *War and Peace*, or read it again. A novel so good you need to talk about it with other readers. Tolstoy has great characters and stories, but is also exploring the nature and meaning of history and war. **\$75**

MAHATMA GANDHI
August 6, 13, 20, 27, 9:30 a.m.-noon

Martin Luther King Jr. learned about non-violence from Gandhi. Read Gandhi's autobiography and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. What is nonviolence? What did King learn from Gandhi? How to confront a violent world with a vision of peace. **\$75**

PROMOTING PROTECTION



NICOLE BARKER | PHOTOGRAPHER

Ashley Birch handed out free dental dams, condoms and lubricant on Monday to promote National Condom Day on behalf of the HIV Alliance. The organization's new campaign, called "Wrap It Up," was developed by Allen Hall Public Relations.