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:: Tech Files

Trend Spotting

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Chuck Hamby has been a public relations guy for Verizon Wireless for a dozen years, and seen a lot of change. Verizon Wireless, a joint venture of Verizon Communications and Vodafone, recently acquired Alltel for \$5.9-billion. So we thought we'd ask Hamby what the upcoming trends are in wireless communications.

Hamby says the backbone of wireless communications is – brace yourself – the network. Sound familiar? It should. "It's the Network" is the Verizon Wireless pitch.

Coming to the network is LTE, or 4G, what Hamby says is the fourth generation of digital technology.

"All of the carriers will shift to it, and we plan to do so this year. The 4G will allow for newer, cooler stuff. It is hard to believe that a couple years ago you couldn't sit in your car and send email. With 4G, for instance, you'll have more capacity for uploading and downloading at faster speeds and with more capacity," he says.

For users, that translates to more efficiency and a bottom line impact – it will allow businesses, and even soccer moms, to do more things wirelessly. When a workforce – or a soccer mom – is in the field and doesn't have to head back to the office to send out data to customers, that will equate to more efficiency, he says.

Targeted Wi-Fi

The folks over at Voda LLC see a growing opportunity in outdoor public Wi-Fi using their patented sensor technologies.

The company is a 2006 spin-off from The company is a 2006 spin-off from the University of South Florida's College of the University of South Florida's College of Marine Science. It developed and patented marine sensor technologies, and its eight or so patents are being applied to a number of different applications, including outdoor networks.

Indeed, says CEO David Fries, the emergence of outdoor networks positions the company for some new products and services he believes will be of interest to the public, government, research and industrial organizations.

"Using potential customers who have approached us, we are making strides in placing networks around the city and at events permitting us to develop new applications," he says. For example, the company placed a network at the St. Petersburg Bowl and in the parking lot for tailgaters.

COO Jim Wilson says the company's core technology is an underwater mass spectrometer, with the common factor being network sensors. He sees big opportunity in using those sensors in outdoor networks. To that end, the St. Petersburg company (www.vodallic.com) is selling public Wi-Fi networks where businesses can advertise.

"Businesses can benefit from being in the network by having users see their ad with a link to their Website, if they have one. Their ads can be changed, if needed, to take advantage of local events or special sales, coupons, etc.," Wilson says.

Software as Service

Brandon's TLA Technologies is a two-person company focusing on providing customers with Microsoft's relationship management software, Dynamics CRM. The company recently rolled out a hosted solution for small business customers.

TLA, a Microsoft Certified Partner, used to sell the physical product after programming it for customers' individual needs. Now, says co-founder and vice president Deborah Lassa, customers can access the software over the Internet without incurring the costs of hardware, installation and software maintenance.

Customers now can use it as a "Software as a Service", or SaaS, says Lassa. "This gives customers a low cost of entry. Small businesses can have CRM technology that was previously just available to large organizations, and at a reasonable price. Software-as-a-service providers are experiencing a bigger demand because they offer lower costs compared to traditional in-house software vendors."

TLA focuses on the small to mid-sized client, and someday Lassa says it hopes to "own the small business market" for CRM in the Southeast. In the meantime, she says, customers are taking longer to make decisions due to the economy. "We hope that because the software-as-a-service that we offer does not require extensive contract commitments, it will open up more opportunities for us," she says.

UNDERWATER TO OUTSIDE: Voda's underwater mass spectrometer has outdoor applications.

<http://www.maddux.com/2009/March/technology.asp>

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Founded in 2006, Lassa says TLA (www.tlatechnologies.com) has between 15 and 20 customers and posted a profit in 2007, though she isn't yet sure about 2008. "We have been growing every year, and we doubled 2006 to 2007. Our target was to double again. I don't think we made that, but we definitely grew," she says.

Webinars Save Money

Tampa's ISPE, the International Society for Pharmaceutical Engineering founded in 1980, says it's rolled out new online learning opportunities for its 25,000 members. These include live webinars for events such as Process Validation, Good Manufacturing Practices and Certified Pharmaceutical Industry Professional (CPIP) preparation.

ISPE has long provided online learning to members. But company officials say the increasing constraints placed on travel combined with the increasing demand for training meant a real push to get information to members in the most convenient and cost-effective method possible.

"We used to offer recorded seminars, but we realized we needed more than that," says Marni Schribman, ISPE communications manager.

"We feel that the recent success of our live Process Validation webinar, for instance, speaks to the continued demand for information in an online format. Our recent webinar with Grace McNally of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration drew 365 participants."

ISPE (www.ispe.org) also joined with INTERPHEX, a global pharmaceutical event company, to launch INTERPHEX365.com, an online resource the organizations say will offer on-demand insights, news, product information, a comprehensive global supplier directory, education, networking, community and career opportunities.

Tech FYI

Robert E. Gelinus was named VP of Sales for SoftServe, Inc., (www.softserve.com) a global software development and consulting company with its U.S. headquarters in Fort Myers ... The Advanced Infrastructure Solutions Division of Clearwater's Tech Data Corporation (www.techdata.com) joined forces with DataCore Software (www.datacore.com) to help resellers deploy the latest storage virtualization solutions ... Oldsmar's Fortress Technologies (www.fortresstech.com), a secure wireless solutions provider, launched a certified training program to help organizations establish and manage secure wireless networks.

Send tips, information and news releases related to technology to Melissa Wells at MADDUX BUSINESS REPORT, P.O. Box 202, St. Petersburg, FL 33731. Or by email: mwells@maddux.com

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