

Our World Is About to Change...Again!

Introducing a New Wireless Technology Called WiMAX

By Nick Nicholaou

We've seen it before, and we'll see it again: technology is changing our world! Technologies like the automobile, telephone, radio and television, personal computers and the Internet have dramatically changed our lives. Now get ready for WiMAX!

What exactly is WiMAX and how will it affect our lives and ministries?

A New Wireless Technology

WiMAX is a new wireless technology soon to sweep across our land. Our current wireless connectivity options are cellular, Bluetooth (used to connect devices to each other—like cell phones with earpieces, or computers with mice—within 30 feet), and WiFi (used to connect computers to each other or to networks and/or the Internet within 300 feet). WiFi's current maximum connection speed is 54mbps (megabits per second). WiMAX's maximum connection speed is 75mbps, but its range is up to 30 miles!

Philadelphia and San Francisco are the first two major cities to announce they'll be offering free WiMAX throughout their communities in 2005, and many more are certain to follow.

According to Intel, specifications will be ready for indoor implementation by the end of 2005.

If you have a WiMAX-enabled PDA (like a Palm Pilot or Pocket PC), palmtop (a very small notebook computer) or laptop, you'll be able to connect to the Internet almost anywhere you go, if the city you're in offers WiMAX. With a constant connection to email and research tools, the possibilities are endless.

Email and Instant Messenger (IM) will soon become the communication tools of preference. The challenge for us will be to disconnect often enough to maintain our sanity and face-to-face relationships.

Planning Can Make a Difference!

One aspect of planning for this revolution is talking with your website host to ensure your website automatically resizes for smaller PDA monitors. WiFi-enabled PDAs can already connect, and many websites (e.g., www.google.com) already detect PDA screen sizes and modify the layout accordingly.

According to Intel, WiMAX-enabled PDAs, palmtops and laptops will be

available in 2006, so we'll need to consider this in future hardware purchases.

In addition to PDAs, palmtops and laptops, this may also impact your cell phone! Cell phones are being re-engineered to recognize a WiFi connection so they can connect via VoIP (Voice over IP), saving phone owners minutes on their calling plans. It remains to be seen how this new technology will impact wired and cellular phone companies. It may mean cell phone users will be able to call anywhere they want with a VoIP connection when they're in a WiMAX area.

WiMAX is certainly introducing another technological revolution. Like Dorothy said, "...we're not in Kansas anymore."

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Nick B. Nicholaou is president of Ministry Business Services, Inc. (www.mbsinc.com), Huntington Beach, Calif. He's also CMA's Section Leader for Information Technology and a faculty member for CMA Long Beach 2005. You may email him at nick@mbsinc.com.

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Two Things to Do

Computers have become strategic ministry tools. Here are two things you can do that will help your computer system(s) serve your ministry well.

1 Review your list of all your ministry's computers and connected devices (printers, scanners, PDAs, etc.). Update it by adding new systems purchased and removing those systems that have been retired.

2 Test your backup system to ensure it's creating the system security you'll depend on if the system needs to be rebuilt because of a disaster, theft, system crash, etc. Do this by restoring a complete folder structure from the backup media and checking the folders' contents for accuracy. (Ideally, this should be done monthly.)

—Nick B. Nicholaou