

USING WIRELESS APPLICATIONS IN YOUR EVERY DAY ACTIVITIES

Jerry Nelson

One of the most common issues that is lacking within our community is the knowledge about wireless applications. Because the wireless industry is so new, this means that there is not a lot of knowledge around. Wireless is our future. I would like to take time to talk about new applications, and I have asked panelists to be with us to share their experiences with wireless applications.

Let's take a moment to think about what's in the pipeline regarding wireless technology. This is a two-way pager. It has several capabilities; it can be used as a PDA, or personal digital assistant. Plus it can also be used as a cell phone. It has everything incorporated into this one piece of equipment. It is brand new and will be coming out on the market soon.

There is also a laptop with a wireless modem. You can actually travel with it anywhere.

Most of you know about the palm pilot, and then there is also a WAP-enhanced cell phone, which is very popular in Europe, although its capabilities are not used as much here in the states. Its buttons are used to type an alphanumeric message. For example, you hit one button, one or two times to get a particular letter, and that can be used to type out a short text message. It takes a lot of typing to do that. But, it's very popular in Europe. There is also in the pipeline from Nokia, the 9100 Series Communicator which runs off of a network that is not actually widely available in the united states as yet, This is a device sized like a large cell phone that functions like a computer, has a keyboard when it opens up, there is a video monitor. Keep your eye on this, because this is new technology that's in the pipeline.

Now our panelists will discuss how they use these devices in their daily lives:

Ken Acia: I actually use two different wireless devices. The first one is the PDA, which stands for personal data assistant. There are different manufacturers out there on the market. The one I specifically use is the Handspring Visor. The system is almost the same as the system that's run by palm pilot. Mine is actually, has two specific things. It keeps track of all my appointments day by day and it is also connected with my home base computer So that I can exchange information between the two devices. And it allows me to keep track of all my appointments over a long period of time. I feed them into one of the devices and it's up linked to my computer. I am also able to take notes on it and later down load those notes into my computer. I can print them out if I would like. I don't use the wireless modem attachment as it is quite expensive for the technology. It's available, but there have also been difficulties with it. It's actually only available in limited geographic areas and so oftentimes you wouldn't have access to the web or internet; so, I prefer not to use that element of it. I can also use this to play games if I am on the transit system, so that too is a feature that is important to me.

The second device I use is my Wyndtell. I have used that device for almost three years now. And it's one of the best. I use it to send messages back and forth to friends for work purposes, also as well, probably in the last three to four months, I have added a geo web, which means that I can access the web on my Wyndtell. So, I get information, if I want to search for information or if I want to meet other deaf friends for, say a movie, a captioned movie and I'm not sure exactly what time that is, I can look up that information on the web and find out where the movie is and then and contact my friends. So, the web, for me, the internet and the access to that has been very important.

Which device would I chose if I could only have one? Well, some of them are very expensive and I can't actually afford them. But I have looked at some of the devices and I look at the potential for the ability to have things added on to that device. I actually have two pagers with me right now. That way if I am in an area where there are some weak signal areas for one device I can use the other. Mostly though, I use my Wyndtell. Be aware of size though. Some consumers prefer to have larger keypads, some ladies have longer nails, and it might be easier for them with a larger device.

Laptops with wireless modems are available and I have tried them and like them. However, at this time they can be used only in a very limited geographic area. So, it wasn't worth it for me to try to travel and be trying to find an area where it would work. If it were available all over, that would be fine, I think I would use it a lot. I prefer to use any device that allows me to have access yesterday. Motorola has a pager with a cell phone unit inside and it also allows you to send digital messages, typed messages. I like that feature. It also has the potential for VCO, which is great, but unfortunately that feature has not actually come out on the market yet.

I encourage everyone to try one of these devices if possible. They have the potential to will change your world. It's a wonderful way in allowing deaf people to be able to facilitate their lives on an equal basis with hearing individuals.

TOM DRISCOLL: I took a big step back into the hearing world a little while ago and needed to be able to communicate more easily with people. One device I use is called the pocket talker. I never used VCO until last year, but if I am going to work in the hearing world, I have to use it, because it's quicker for the person on the other end as by using my own voice I can speak directly to them. This can be used with the cell phone. It can also be used with a regular telephone. You simply click it on; it's run by batteries and transmits text. But it is not perfect, for as you know and if you use cell phones sometimes you are breaking up. If you are a hearing person and you are breaking up, they still know what you are saying. But if it's text breaking up, there's letters missing and you are seeing jumble. I used this for a short time, got frustrated and stopped.

What I would like to see with something like this is the ability to try it; I want to be able to try this before I buy it. I think everybody needs the ability to know where you can find something like this and have a 30-day trial without having to pay the money. and worry about getting your money back later. That's a problem with all of it would be a good idea for the companies themselves to think about trying to set up satellite offices here and there, a lending library perhaps.

My other device is of course the Wyndtell. I have used Wyndtell for about two years. And the pluses and minuses are severe when you are in Massachusetts. It's really nice to have, but if you

drive somewhere and there is no coverage from the signal, it can be problematic. For a whole year in my office, I had no use for this because of that factor. I almost gave it up, and just stopped using it. Then we moved the office and now I'm back. It's good, but a lot like a cell phone, I want live, I want something to work now.

The most important thing about Wyndtell for me is not so much e-mail. For me it's the ability to cross the bridge to the hearing world and contact my family When I want to. It gives me the ability to have a phone on my hip for me. If I go somewhere there is still that ability to be contacted by my family. I don't have to give a phone number and go to the TTY, forget it, too much hassle. You need to ask questions before you buy because what works for one person might not work for another. It's like a hearing aid.

NANCY: Speaking after two Wyndtell users, for me, the Wyndtell was a liberator because I travel all over the world. It doesn't work overseas unfortunately. In all of over the last several years, there have been two or three areas where there was actually no coverage at all. So this is giving me a lot of freedom, a lot of satisfaction and a lot of opportunity. When I travel, it was so aggravating because often my compact TTY was useless. I couldn't find a place to it in, I had to carry enough batteries with me to make sure that I had power and wondered if I was going to last long enough to make a regular phone call. It was pain in the neck. I hated asking for TTY's in a hotel room. I mean, I didn't want to bring my own either, because of all the apparatuses I would have to carry. When I got my own Wyndtell, I was free. I was the happiest person in the world with my Wyndtell.

I use the text to voice feature quite a bit. If I need to leave a message and I don't have an interpreter available for me or no way to have a TTY, then I can use the text to voice feature and leave a message or they can leave a message for me. I can also send a fax, which is a great feature. The TTY feature, I really don't use too much. I know a lot of people who do. But personally, I don't use it. That's not an important feature for me.

One of the biggest factors for me in considering this was the d and the r, identification features. For those of you who don't know what that means is that when I send a message to another Wyndtell user, I can tell when the message was delivered, because on my screen, I get a d for that message which means it's delivered. When that consumer opens that message and reads it, my unit indicates that message with an r, which means I know the message has been read. But that is only available between fellow Wyndtell users. Key people in my office have Wyndtell, and this way I can make sure in my office that everybody has the same information.

What meets or exceeds my expectations? Well, I think it meets my needs, it doesn't exceed it. There are the wireless units Ken and Tom talked about. I have actually seen it and it's fabulous. We need that in this country. Wow, that's what I want. Words of wisdom: don't knock it until you have tried it. Don't wait until there is a situation where you finally get the fact that you need it. Get it now. Borrow or use a friend's, try it and see how it works for you. And then you can see why it is so helpful. Especially for life threatening situations.

JERRY NELSON: I need to mention the European system standard versus what we have here. There are less wireless consumers in the United States when compared with Europe, which has greater coverage. The Europeans are way ahead of us in this regard. The Nokia device that Nancy and some of the others talked about has voice capabilities, laptop features, wireless data and video capabilities. When I saw the Nokia device, which is popular in Europe, I was drooling. The problem is that because American companies are so egotistical, they differ from the rest of the world and as a result there is no one worldwide standard. Trying to achieve a universal standard requires a lot of work. The Americans are fighting for their preferred standard, and the rest of the world is fighting for their preferred standard. And once we have one standard, certainly, it would be a worldwide system, then any wireless equipment would work anywhere in the world which would be phenomenal. If we were able to have this standard in place, world wide, it would make a lot of our headaches and problems go away.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If you want Wyndtell. And live, say in Alaska; is there anything that connects that part of the world to this part of the United States?

NANCY: We need to explain about the different networks. There are several different paging networks or pager networks, so, it's important to remember three things: first of all, the hardware is one element, the software is a second, and the third is the network. So, you need to find out what network Provider, which covers your specific geographic area. Then you can find the compatible hardware to that network. And then you can choose the software that you prefer. So, you have to ask around what you really need to do is start out by learning more about what other people are using in what specific area. When you go home, find out what people in your areas are using. That will help you to find the best match for you in your home area.

TOM: For access the network is important. The network means where those towers are located and placed, if there are no towers, that means you can't get access in that area, it is a dead zone, no sending or receiving.

JERRY: I want to add one more comment. Some companies actually offer pagers through satellite instead of towers. But it cost two to three thousand dollars for the device, plus you would pay about \$3 per minute to use satellite services to carry your message. So, it's way too expensive for the average consumer to be using satellite-based wireless paging services.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Wyndtell has two types of pager, the blackberry and the T 900; I understand there is a difference in the ability of the two systems as far as their coverage and ability to penetrate buildings?

KEN: Yes, certainly, that's why I have two pagers now. And I know one will work throughout a certain area and it will also work through certain structures. You need to check out which network is the best fit for you. My two pagers are both from Wyndtell but they are two different pagers, with two different networking systems. And again, it depends on what your preference is. It depends on what your needs are. This decision is very needs specific. If you want to chat a lot, or go on the web then you choose one device. If you want a smaller, cheaper unit with a better coverage area, then the t 900 is better, they vary on

features, you have to decide which one you want. There isn't one that is best in general, there's one that's going to be best for you.

Tom: Talking about structures, being inside of a building, and having v tell signals penetrating a building, in Virginia a couple of years ago, I had to go up to the windows and find a spot in the building where it would work. It was hysterical. So, it can weaken the signal.

NANCY: When deciding what to get I ask people: "How much do you want to use it? Do you use it a little bit? On average?" Then the t 900 is fine for that; the low to medium range user. If you are a high level user, such as myself: 500 to 900 thousand characters a month, which is called a power user, as defined by one hundred thousand characters a month, the t 900 really doesn't work as you are paying by the use. What I have with Wyndtell is an unlimited amount. This is a power user plan. And it's a certain amount per month. And so I can go over a specific number of characters. With t 900, you have a range. So, as a consumer you have to think about how much you are going to use a pager.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I understand on the rim 950, that instant messaging is coming and that it is to be available on the rim 950 and not on the t 900? And, in regard to Motorola: somebody said there is a device coming out which will combine a telephone and a pager?

KEN: This is a device that you have an earpiece for with a wire attached to the device that you plug in. It has a small microphone a battery with a microphone attached, and you see people walking around talking using this. It has PDA features like games, which are important to me, and scheduling and calendars and it has the ability to instant message as well. I recently saw a handspring, it's neat, it opens up like a lap top phone and also a PDA involved and it's a pager all in one, all in one unit. A few more are coming. You have to think about price, what features are included and what's the coverage area, so, it's going to vary, what's going to be best for you.

JERRY: Coverage is the biggest issue for wireless service; coverage, coverage, coverage. You may have noticed that the panel hit on it again and again and again. So, coverage is probably the number one item. Your device is worthless if you do not have coverage in the area where you work or live.

NANCY: People have asked me why they should sign up for services when they don't know how much they are going to use it. My standard advice is that it is like the cell phone, you don't know until you use it. Sign up for the lowest plan, the cheapest plan that they have available. And then you can test it. Most contracts have so many days within which you can cancel after, usually within 30 days or 60 days. So, you sign up for it and try.

JERRY: Most wireless devices offer 30-day satisfaction guaranteed return policy. So, in other words, you have 30 days and if you are not satisfied you could send it back.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: When I send a message to my own ISP everything goes fine, but when I send a message to someone on another service provider's network, the message may arrive hours later. Why is that?

TOM: I have had the same experience. When it happens I complain to the company, and I say, "stop." If it takes four or six hours that is pretty bad and you need to complain.

QUDIENCE MEMBER: Hand Spring is with a new model next spring, that's going to be a personal digital assistant; a mini computer which folds open and becomes a cell phone and has a keyboard on it for sending messages. The one coming out in the spring is black and white, and they are quoting a price of \$399. Then the next summer they are coming out with a color version and that would be sold for about \$599. But, right now, you can get the Wyndtell t 900 for about \$99, so you want to be careful if you are thinking you are going to wait for the latest and greatest technology, you may be a lot more for something that may not do anything more for you. If you don't like to play games or need a cell phone the extra expense would hardly be worth it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: What's the character count, when you actually forward a message, and you get a lot of sort of garbage in that message and then finally you get the message at the end, does that garbage count our character count? And if so, I mean, people may not know that they are going over their monthly amounts and is that a possibility?

NANCY: I do get a lot of e-mails with that kind of junk on it, on my pager. And that's why I have the unlimited plan. I don't get charged for all that garbage that comes before or after my message. When I was on a lesser plan, I had to worry about my character count and I had to sort of clean up all of that stuff before I actually forwarded it. But when you have a limited plan, the counts of characters or the message block size is something that you have to keep your eye on. I don't know about other companies but Wyndtell allows you to check your usage level, both current and for the previous month.

There is a learning curve involved. But the more you learn, the more questions you can ask your friends, and the more information you can find out, the better off you will be in terms of the benefit you will receive.

NANCY: Remember there are three things that you need to know with pagers, the hardware, the software, and the network. But you also need to keep in mind that pager coverage is has many of the same problems that exist in cell phones. Cell phones don't have coverage everywhere either. You see hearing people who have to go outside the building to use their cell phone; it's the same thing with pagers. So, when you think cell phones are getting better coverage than your pager, they are not. They have the same problems and difficulties, they may be different, but they are similar. All the devices are not the same as our landline telephones. It's a different animal; you have to keep that in mind.

KEN: I think I would like to emphasize to all of you that each person is a very, has very One size does not fit all. There are so many different kinds of wireless technologies. Do your research before buying, check it out first, ask friends and colleagues, look on-line, and compare what exists. There is a lot of information out there. Talk with different people and

TOM: Using my Wyndtell, I often don't need to use relay with this. I can send it, they can read it and send it back to me before I can actually accomplish a relay call. Also my Wyndtell, doesn't have a scheduler on it, but, if I'm, say, driving along and I remember, I've got an appointment

tomorrow that I can't forget, I e mail myself at home, then I get home and I have got my reminders about my 9:00 meeting and I'm always on time.

I have a lot of contact certainly with the hearing world, and the ability to get a voice message to me using an 800 number is important. They call that number give them my name and number and the message they give is then sent to me. And it doesn't matter how the message is, it can go on and on. So this is of great benefit to me as it allows me to keep in touch with hearing friends and co-workers.

Jerry Nelson is the Vice President, Strategic Solutions of Wynd communications. He is responsible for overseeing the operations of Wynd's Eastern seaboard office in Washington, DC. Mr. Nelson brings 25+ years of experience in management, consultation and advocacy with the corporate, private and non-profit sectors.
JNelson@wynd.com