

Report: Use of Wireless Broadband to Leap Forward Over Next Five Years

A recently published report predicts that the use of wireless broadband will skyrocket over the next five years, but stops short of predicting which platform, WiMax, Wi-Fi, 3G wireless or Ultra-Wideband, will be the dominant platform. "Wireless Broadband: The Future Around the Corner" by eMarketer also predicts that the wireless high speed networks won't be limited to densely populated urban and suburban areas.

The report further notes that as more consumers gain greater access to broadband services, their time online will increase. This in turn will allow marketers to serve up more advanced ads and promotions to potential customers both in and out of the home.

"At this point it is impossible to predict the success of any particular wireless broadband technology," says eMarketer Senior Analyst Noah Elkin, the report's author, "because many of them have not even come to market yet." The communications industry itself is hedging, he says, noting that most of the major players are developing and promoting competing platforms.

But, more importantly than the underlying technologies themselves that are surfacing, Dr. Elkin says, "most consumers of technology don't care about how their products and services work; they simply expect them to function where, when and how they are supposed to. Technology companies and marketers alike should remember to emphasize what the technology can be used for, not what it is."

The report analyzes the current broadband wireless landscape today, how will it evolve over the next few years, and how the competing and sometimes-complementary technologies, including WiMax, Wi-Fi, 3G wireless and Ultra-Wideband, might shake out.

"This report is important to a wide mix of companies," said Dr. Elkin. "Knowing where the wireless broadband market is headed can make a pronounced impact on the plans of content providers, consumer packaged goods companies, and media/entertainment companies interested in the marketing potential on ubiquitous broadband networks. Others, like fixed-line telcos and cable companies, wireless operators and service providers, can also find valuable new market survey data and potential deal opportunities in the report."

Another State Retreats From VoIP Regulations

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), which first wanted to regulate VOIP on a statewide level, now appears to be yielding to Washington. Last week, the PUC voted to withdraw its appeal of a November Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ruling that barred states from imposing regulations on VOIP services.

The Commission had been a key stalwart against the pivotal FCC order, or “Vonage order,” as it has been called. To complete its about-face, the PUC will also file papers supporting the FCC’s rule, according to a report in the Los Angeles Times last week.

The decision passed three to one in a behind-closed-doors session, the Times report said. The issue was pushed to a vote last week by commissioner Susan P. Kennedy, who has proven to favor a hands-off approach toward regulating new communications technologies like VOIP.

The decision is a significant development, as California’s PUC is influential in national regulatory circles, and because the remaining opponents of the FCC order now number only three: Ohio, New York, and Minnesota.

Vonage Holdings Corp. was pleased with the development.

“We applaud the decision by the California Public Utilities Commission, and we appreciate Commissioner Kennedy’s efforts,” Vonage’s Brooke Shulz told Light Reading on Friday. “We also think it indicates the strength of the FCC’s decision and the reasoning behind the decision that it is an interstate service.”

The November 9 “Vonage order” preempted an order by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission to apply the state’s “telephone company” regulations to Vonage service. When Vonage sought protection from the FCC under Michael Powell, it was promptly granted.

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) quickly appealed the order, calling it “arbitrary, capricious, [and] an abuse of discretion and otherwise not in accordance with law.” At the time, California agreed and filed an appeal to the Ninth Circuit in San Francisco.

Consumer protection interests find the California PUC’s action troubling at best. “The California PUC is just saying ‘OK, never mind, we don’t have any role in protecting consumers who are being sold this service,’ ” says Consumers Union policy analyst Janee Briesemeister. “They are just ceding their authority to the FCC.” Briesemeister believes that the current FCC is neither inclined nor equipped to handle the job of protecting voice service consumers.

“The FCC is working under the assumption that there is so much competition that the market is working to protect consumers, which anyone in a cell phone contract knows is not true.”

Internet 2 Downloads Now Focus of Recording Industry (Motion Picture Industry Joining In)

The recording industry intends to sue hundreds of college students accused of illegally distributing music and movies across Internet 2, the superfast computer network connecting leading universities for researching the next generation of the Internet, according to a recent AP story.

The Washington, D.C.-based Recording Industry Association of America, the trade group for the largest labels, said it will file federal copyright lawsuits against 405 students at 18 colleges with access to the Internet 2 network, which boasts speeds hundreds of times faster than the Internet.

Researchers at Internet 2 once demonstrated they can download a DVD-quality copy of the popular movie "The Matrix" in 30 seconds over their network, a feat they said would take roughly 25 hours over the Internet.

Internet 2 is used by several million university students, researchers and professionals around the world but is generally inaccessible to the public.

"We don't condone or support illegal file sharing," said Internet 2's chief executive, Doug Van Houweling. "We've always understood that just like there is a lot of file sharing going on the public Internet, there's also some file sharing going on Internet 2."

The recording industry said some students were illegally sharing across Internet 2 as many as 13,600 music files - far more than most Internet users - and that the average number of songs offered illegally by the students was 2,300 each. It said it found evidence of more illegal file sharing at 140 more schools in 41 states and sent warning letters to university presidents.

"We cannot let this high-speed network become a zone of lawlessness where the normal rules don't apply," said Cary Sherman, president of the recording association.

The Motion Picture Association of America also was expected to file federal copyright lawsuits today against college students with access to Internet 2.

"The high performance of Internet 2 makes it attractive for a lot of applications, not just file sharing," Van Houweling said. He cautioned universities against filtering data to block illegal activity in ways that would slow the research network's performance.

"It's possible to attack this problem in ways that do compromise the performance," he said.

The lawsuits illustrate the aggressiveness of the entertainment industry to stifle piracy even on up-and-coming technologies, as it continues to individually sue thousands of computer users accused of sharing copyrighted songs and films over the public Internet.

The recording industry said the lawsuits also pierce the perception by Internet 2 researchers that they operated in a closed environment that entertainment groups couldn't monitor.

"We are putting students and administrators everywhere on notice that there are consequences for unlawful uses of this special network," Sherman said.

Verizon Invests \$1.2 Million to Better Serve Pittsburgh Area Customers

Verizon customers in portions of the Pittsburgh area now have improved communications as the result of a \$1.2 million investment the company made in its Oakland call-switching centers here. Verizon has installed new equipment, including advanced power systems that enable the company to provide critical telecommunications services in the event of a commercial power disruption.

This equipment also allows Verizon to more efficiently monitor power systems and diagnose potential network power problems, thus increasing reliability in the Verizon network, and will support advanced telecommunications technologies. The company completed the project earlier this month.

In addition to this investment, Verizon continues build its new fiber-to-the-premises network in portions of Pennsylvania and 13 other states. Verizon is currently rolling out its FiOS Internet service in a number of Pennsylvania communities.

"The Oakland project underlines Verizon's commitment to build and maintain a state-of-the-art telecommunications network throughout Pennsylvania," said James V. O'Rourke, president and CEO of Verizon Pennsylvania. "We continue to upgrade our infrastructure to provide rural, suburban and urban customers with better quality service, as well as the platform for high-speed access to the Internet, work-at-home capabilities and a host of other innovative services."

Verizon has invested more than \$8 billion in its telecommunications network across the commonwealth over the last 10 years.