

Two More Views On Wireless

Jerry Keough, a Connecticut-based national sales manager for a security systems company, has spent close to three decades on the road working with system installers and customers. In years past, his communication advice to anyone who would listen was to “make sure you’ve got a bag full of change to deposit in the telephone” as you travel the highways and byways of the U.S. For years he resisted the lure of the car phone/cell phone, but now he’s fully positioned in the world of cell phones and wireless networking.

Today, a typical sales/customer call by Keough will find him fully armed with his cell phone and laptop computer enabling him to stay in constant touch with his entire customer base and home office.

“For years I was a firm believer that all you really needed was access to pay phones,” he explains. “I — like the times — have changed, however. With all the tasks you’re charged with performing and the pressing need to communicate with all your business constituencies, you can hardly hit the road these days without the tools of the trade — and that includes the ability to communicate wirelessly.”

While not as fully “armed” as many others cited in this article, Keough finds that the cell phone and laptop provide him all he needs to get the job done. “Cell phones have become so common and affordable that you really can’t do the job without them. As for wireless laptops, I’ve found they

also have their role, although I’m not sure they’re as needed as others might maintain.”

Ease of Access

As far as the laptop goes, Keough uses it primarily on the road to access the Internet, download and send job specifications, and manage his constant stream of e-mails. “I’ve been pleasantly surprised at the level of wireless access. For instance, recently I traveled to South Bend, Indiana, and the off-brand hotel I stayed at offered it in my room at no charge. I’ve also found how easy it is to access the Internet in airports across the country — not to mention other public places such as coffee shops.”

Unlike Keough, Jim Gallagher would have to consider himself completely savvy in the world of communication technology. Gallagher, located in North Carolina, is an office products team leader for one of the country’s leading software providers. In his business and professional life, he exhibits an interest and a passion for anything wireless, and he makes it his mission to stay on top of the latest developments and newest products. For instance, spend a couple of days with him on the road and you’ll see he’s constantly accessing a handheld personal computer that accompanies him everywhere. The device, which is probably nothing new to those up on such things, allows him to wirelessly access the

Internet, keep track of and respond to e-mails, download and play movies and CDs, and more. The “more” was experienced last fall as he tracked via computer his wife’s progress over the course of a marathon in Washington, D.C.

Gallagher, like Keough, notes the ease and benefits of Internet access virtually anyplace in the country. “Most of your major hotels offer Internet access for free or at a very affordable price. The same can be said for airports and various ‘hot spots’ that you’ll find in most cities.”

A word of caution develops when Gallagher speaks about use of wireless communication in public places. “If I had any warning for an independent rep when it comes to using their wireless PC or laptop in an airport, coffee shop or other public place, it might be that you’ve got to remember that wireless communication is a radio transmission. As such, if you’re working with sensitive information, someone located near you might be able to gain access. Since anyone can be a receiver, that’s something you’ve got to be careful with.” He adds that some companies solve this potential problem by establishing virtual private networks (VPNs) that guarantee strengthened security.

Aside from that concern, however, Gallagher shows himself to be a real true advocate of the effectiveness and affordability of wireless communication and urges that reps take a close look to determine how it can work for them.

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