

ABSTRACT

Our Wireless Future: Has Reality Caught Up With the Hype

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When the cellular telephone industry was created 30 years ago, the vision was a personal, portable telephone service that unshackled all people from the wires that tied them to their desks, their homes and their work places. Wireless technology had the capability of delivering high quality speech, at low cost, with good reliability to *everyone*. Further, cellular technology would allow us to do all of this in a finite amount of spectrum.

Despite the enormous strides made by the industry, the cellular vision remains incomplete today. Some segments of the population are served effectively, others, not at all. Data over cellular pales in comparison with data over wire line. Despite the obvious convenience of wireless service, that service costs too much and is not as reliable as wired service. The wireless industry has become consumed with technology for the sake of technology and much of the original vision has been lost in a sea of hyperbole, exaggeration, and marketing obfuscation.

Much of the reason for the present circumstance lies in the monopoly heritage of the telecommunications industry but there is hope! The Internet industry, a relatively young upstart, is establishing a model for a new way of conducting business in the wireless industry. Because the Internet is an open platform, it provides the freedom to focus on real problems, to create and search out markets, and then to make those markets work. But there will not be a real internet for people until the internet can be delivered untethered – without wires.

Although the wireless industry is focused upon third generation cellular systems as being a “universal” solution to the wireless needs of consumers, the telecommunications industry has grown sufficiently to support many solutions, with each solution targeted to a specialized market segment with devices, services and content that are optimized for that market segment. There is no need to burden every single market segment with features and capabilities that will never be used by many members of the constituency serve by that segment.

The new wireless vision is a dynamic, exploding industry based upon competition, free enterprise, and facilitated by an open platform that offers solutions for all constituencies.