

How to Capitalize on the Wireless Revolution

Sponsored by SMA, this round-table event was hosted by the American Marketing Association, Toronto Chapter, November 22, 2000.

The Panel

Kelly Dixon, Director, Wireless Internet Development, Bell Mobility

David Langdon, National Manager, Internet Wireless, Sympatico/Lycos Inc.

Rob McVicar, Director, Business Development & Sales, Mytec Technologies

Marlise Nishikihama, Director of Marketing, canada.com

Alistair Rennie, Sr. Vice President, Marketing and Product Line Management, 724 Solutions Inc.

Monica C. Schmid, Vice President, Marketing & Planning Wireless, Bank of Montreal

The discussion was moderated by Nancy Helstab, Partner, BrandEdge

Discussion Summary

How big is the wireless market now?

- Carrier market is in the early stages of development; there are few competitors
- Bank of Montreal growth has been exponential since mid summer: 6,000 customers use wireless banking services now; expect 25,000 by January 2001

Who's signing up for wireless?

- Right now the techno-savvy people; soon, it will be the masses. Different pricing plans will attract all
- Services are of high value to CFOs, transactions can be made in a safe, secure manner

Which market is farthest ahead?

- Europe uses a lot of location-based applications
- Asia has 60% penetration of cell phones and high use of entertainment applications
- N.A. is mainly business people using wireless devices; need more apps for business

What kind of apps do you see coming?

- Local content such as restaurant info, airline and hotel reservations
- Banking transactions: stock trades and watch lists are big right now
- Horoscopes, weather and marketplace apps e.g. buying books online
- Anything that's highly personal and relevant to the user; e.g. your phone alerts you when your bank balance goes below \$1,000; reminders for birthdays and anniversaries
- Apps that keep keystrokes to a minimum
- Applications must be able to be user defined

How far away are we from these kinds of applications?

- For some financial applications, like the phone alerts, 6 to 12 months. Working on scalability

What kind of B to B activity do you foresee?

- Apps for “road warriors.” Sales reps checking inventory, shipping status remotely
- Business applications are more complicated e.g. corporate e-mail goes through secure firewall access
- New devices will need to be more robust

Do you think other devices will become more popular than the phone?

- Consumers will be “device promiscuous”. Huge variety to suit all
- Standards for wireless devices are becoming more diverse
- Predicting which devices will become the most popular is impossible. Consumer will choose
- Content must be compatible with all devices and all carriers; also need voice activation

Where is the money? In business or consumers?

- Many different models E.g. a wireless device alerts user to nearby Gap store and user buys with credit card; Gap, carrier and bank all make money
- About 350 million devices will be sold, with turnover less than 2 years
- Invest in the market today. Don't wait for all the answers

What is the next step for deeper customer relationships?

- Have to go beyond the basic alert to biometrics and location-based capabilities
- Voice articulated applications
- Being able to receive info from different sources simultaneously
- Being able to receive location specific info. i.e. which hotels are offering best rates in Ottawa
- New phones will know where you are without calling and be able to give you directions immediately
- Improvements in mapping capabilities i.e. house-hunting or deliveries
- Good search capabilities
- Marketing of wireless sites, scaled for use on hand-held devices