

InformationWeek

Business Innovation Powered By Technology

March 14, 2005

News

WIRELESS

GAINING CONTROL OVER THE WIRELESS EXPLOSION

InnerWireless system lets customers manage a wide variety of applications

AS WIRELESS COMMUNICATION becomes a bigger part of everyday business, the challenge of managing a wide variety of wireless signals—cell phones, pagers, two-way radios, wireless data, security cameras, and even wireless thermostats—becomes increasingly difficult. Few establishments face a greater challenge than the Time Warner Center, a new 2.8 million-square-foot complex in Manhattan that features shops, restaurants, a hotel, condos, a jazz center, and broadcast studios for CNN.

To ensure that its guests, customers, residents, and commercial tenants can receive wireless signals wherever they are in the center's 55 floors, the building's management team tapped InnerWireless Inc. and its "wireless utility" technology, which is designed to distribute signals for as many as 13 wireless applications that use radio frequencies ranging from 400 MHz to 2.5 GHz.

"We were excited about not needing to set up various different networks," says David Heckaman, former regional director of IT for the center's Mandarin Oriental Hotel who's now an independent consultant. The system uses coaxial cable snaking throughout the building to carry and radiate the wireless signals, as well as access points on each floor. All of the center's communications, including messaging, paging, two-way radios, police and fire communications, and Wi-Fi data access, are plugged into the system.

The Mandarin Oriental Hotel, which uses the top 20 floors of one of the center's two towers, faces additional challenges. Its height makes it more difficult to receive strong cellular signals, Heckaman says. But all of the major cellular carriers are linked with the InnerWireless system through cables connected to base stations in the

basement, so visitors and guests can get a signal in any part of the building. "This particular aspect is very attractive to our hotel visitors and condo residents," he says.

"What makes InnerWireless different is that it doesn't tie [companies] to a single technology like a wireless LAN and doesn't force them to set up several different systems," says Iain Gillott, president of iGillott Research. "This gives the building owner more control over what networks they offer in the building."



The Time Warner Center wants to make sure that visitors and tenants can receive wireless signals wherever they roam.

The University of Chicago Hospitals deployed an InnerWireless system in a children's hospital it opened last month. CIO Eric Yablonka chose the technology because "it's a single wireless-distribution system for all of our applications," from pagers to patient monitors. "Since paging is a heavily used application in hospitals, it's important to have all paging systems tied into this single utility," he says. The hospital also has integrated patient monitors with the nurse call system, enabling a faster response from nurses who are connected to the system via wireless IP telephones. There are more than 100 such telephones in the hospital.

Since the hospital also rolled out Wi-Fi and cellular services, patients' families can use notebook computers to access the Internet or E-mail and receive and make cell calls anywhere in the hospital, Yablonka says. The system has proven to be so successful that the University of Chicago Hospitals has decided to retrofit its adult hospital with the same technology.

Cost for the InnerWireless system ranges from \$1 to \$2 per square foot of coverage.

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