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Wireless biz aims to link road warriors to office

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Out-of-town access: Edward F. Bachner III's firm has developed a wallet-sized wireless computer that will enable workers to bring all of a company's data files on the road. Photo: John R. Boehm

January 14, 2002
By [Sandra Jones](#)

Have you ever wished you could carry your file cabinet around with you?

That's a question a group of telecommunications engineers are posing as they throw their latest idea into the crowded wireless ring.

West Chicago-based startup Rosetta-Wireless Corp. has invented a wallet-sized wireless computer that will enable workers to bring all of a company's computer files and latest e-mails with them on the road.

The \$300 device, called a "wireless intelligent personal server" (Wips), would talk to the corporate server all day long, keeping files up-to-date, revising schedules and downloading

e-mails and attachments — all over existing cellular networks. At the same time, Wips would update, wirelessly, any laptop, personal digital assistant or other mobile device the worker is carrying.



When workers get ready to begin their tasks, they have the latest information across all devices, just as they do at the office.

"Our goal is to let people see the exact same files, whatever device they use, and to always have them be up-to-date," says Edward F. Bachner III, president and co-founder of Rosetta and a former Motorola Inc. engineer.

Mr. Bachner predicts that the Wips device is going to be popular among a select group of mobile workers who need massive amounts of

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data that either don't fit on a portable computer or must be updated constantly. Two examples: traveling sales people who share inventory data-bases and insurance industry workers who require hefty documents that differ by state.

The technology may even prove useful to the military for everything from moving around supplies to intelligence-gathering, Mr. Bachner says. Rosetta is scheduled to demonstrate the product to the U.S. Department of Defense this week, and is in talks with carriers to start a pilot test in Chicago later this year.

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Cellular operators may like the idea because the constant wireless transmissions mean more minutes, and, in turn, more revenue.

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But skeptics question whether consumers, already weighed down by their cell phones, personal digital assistants and laptops, will want to carry yet another mobile device.

"It's unclear what the problems are that they're really solving," says Jane Zweig, CEO of Shosteck Group, a Wheaton, Md.-based telecom research group. "It may be another layer that encumbers rather than helps."

Rosetta, which has not posted any revenues yet, has been self-funded so far. It also is getting marketing and product development support from the Technology, Research, Education and Commercialization Center — an organization formed through a joint grant from the Office of Naval Research and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and located at the DuPage Airport Research Park in West Chicago. Battelle Memorial Institute, an Ohio-based tech research firm with operations at the DuPage park, is also lending a hand.

Mr. Bachner acknowledges that potential customers have had many questions about security and are initially uncomfortable with the notion that all the company files could be left behind on a plane or in a coffee shop.

Not to worry, says Mr. Bachner. The wireless server is merely a "mirror" of the corporate server. Users receive only those files and e-mails that they would be able to receive at the office. Data are protected as they travel over the airwaves.

And, if for some reason the personal server gets left behind, the tech support office back home can erase the entire server with a remote command.

Rosetta got its start in 2000 after Mr. Bachner and several colleagues spun it off from Double-Time Corp., an Elmhurst-based cell phone accessories maker, now called PowerClip Co. LLC, which Mr. Bachner co-founded in 1995.

If all goes as planned, Rosetta will begin licensing its Wips product to carriers and network equipment makers by the end of this year. The company expects most of its revenue to come from royalties on airtime. Business plans call for Rosetta to become cash flow-positive by the fourth quarter of this year.

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