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Purpleless Wireless Jan. 15, 2002

Rosetta-Wireless is rolling out a wallet-sized wireless computer that uses cellular networks to connect to enterprise networks.

By Sandra Swanson

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Rosetta-Wireless Corp. wants road warriors to have easy access to files on corporate networks. To that end, the Chicago startup has created a "wireless intelligent personal server," or Wips--a wallet-sized wireless computer that talks to the corporate server via cellular networks. Using Wips, workers can use a single sign-on to access their network files with any device and any file format. "They can use a laptop or a Linux pocket PC," says president and co-founder Ed Bachner.

Because security is always a concern when it comes to corporate data, files are fully encrypted. If Wips is lost or stolen, the IT department can issue a command that erases the device. "It had to be simple to administer from an enterprise point of view, or no CIO would be interested in buying it," says Bachner, a former Motorola Inc. engineer. While at mobile-phone accessory company Double-Time Corp. in the late '90s, Bachner and several other co-workers developed the idea behind Wips and spun off the company in 2000. One notable contributor is John Major, chairman of Novatel Wireless and co-inventor on the Wips patent.

The company's go-to-market strategy, says Bachner, is license everyone, compete with no one. "That way, the existing enterprise software companies can modify their software to address the Wips personal servers, existing cellular carriers can sell airtime and send bills, existing device manufacturers can make Wips units, and CIOs can work with companies they know and trust." He expects to have a beta system up and running by September, and hopes to find a strategic partner to help fund it; so far, the company has been self-financed.

The device, which will sell for about \$500, has already generated government and commercial interest, says Bachner. "We have millions of dollars in proposals in for Homeland Security," he says, and the Department of Defense is scheduled to visit Wednesday for a product demo. On the commercial side, the company is working with a cellular carrier that received requests from large corporate customers needing to provide massive amounts of easily accessible, corporate data in the field. One market you won't see Rosetta pursuing, though, is consumers. Says Bachner, "We won't be introducing a purple model."

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