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Guide to Wireless Technology
Connect your phone, computer or entire workplace with wireless technology
By Erin Brereton

If your office is a tangled, trip-inducing mess of wires, extension cords and power strips, it may be time to unplug and consider wireless technology.

A number of wireless service options exist that allow you to connect to the Internet, make phone calls, link office devices and computers without plugging them into a phone jack -- or each other.

Wireless technology, often called WiFi, also allows you to be extremely mobile. WiFi can give laptops online access in locations that offer the service; enable cell phones to provide real-time geographical information and directions and even create a wireless network that will allow you to print a photo from a computer from across the room.

Wireless technology options include:
1. Wireless Internet services.
2. Cell phones with wireless service.
3. A Bluetooth wireless network.
4. Wireless technology routers.

Action Steps
The best contacts and resources to help you get it done

✅ **Connect to the Internet using wireless technology or WiFi**
Offering faster browsing and more mobility than dial-up, WiFi Internet connections allow you to get online without plugging your computer directly into a phone outlet. Instead, a WiFi router is connected to your phone line, providing a signal your wireless Internet accessible computer will pick up. Many public places, including restaurants, coffee shops and other businesses, also offer wireless Internet access to their customers for free or for a small fee. Wireless service can be obtained from phone service, cable, satellite and local and national Internet service providers, which build a wireless network for a city/region or large pool of users, respectively.

I recommend: Frequent travelers and business owners hoping to work outside their office may want to purchase an annual subscription to a wireless service like T-Mobile HotSpot, which offers wireless Internet connectivity in many airports, hotels and Starbucks for about $30 a month. Learn where HotSpots are and register on T-Mobile's site. Boingo is another WiFi provider, with global service and day-only rates; it's wireless rates are as low as $21.95 a month.

✅ **Make calls with a wireless technology cell phone**
Cell phones now provide more than just free long distance. Phones with GPS receivers can instantly provide maps and driving directions via a GPS navigation wireless service subscription or a software package. Prepaid cell phones may require you to buy a phone, but will offer infrequent users the option to pay as they go for wireless service, as opposed to paying a set monthly fee. Smart phones can also offer employees one-stop tech shopping, providing a cell phone, e-mail capabilities and more. An e-mail and smart phone wireless service designed specifically for small business owners costs about $30 to $40 per month.

I recommend: Choose a phone that can also wirelessly exchange information with your computer, like the BlackBerry Pearl. AccuTracking GPS software works on Motorola iDEN cell phones or RIM BlackBerry phones carried by Nextel and Boost Mobile. Nextel also offers GPS wireless service for BlackBerry and Sprint phones that give directions and tracks asset, inventory, job and event data. For prepaid cell phones, view the list of wireless service providers at Business.com.

✅ **Use Bluetooth wireless telecommunications**
Bluetooth technology allows you to securely connect PDAs, computers, cameras and phones by creating a wireless network with a low-power radio spectrum. It's similar to WiFi, and can interact with a wireless network, but Bluetooth functions on a shorter, three to 30 foot range. Bluetooth can increase mobility by connecting headsets and cell phones and computer calendars and contact lists into a wireless network.

I recommend: To check and see if your current phone, computer or other device features Bluetooth wireless network capabilities, check out the company's product directory. Bluetooth also allows you to select specific tasks and design solutions using its Assembler feature.

✅ **Use a wireless technology router**
Most notebook computers now come with WiFi capability. However, a wireless technology router may be needed to help non-wireless desktop computers connect wirelessly to the Internet. Wireless routers use radio signals or Ethernet cables to connect computers -- and to connect them to the Internet. Most give about 100 feet of coverage, making a wireless network work well in a home office. A mobile router also can help employees on the road quickly connect multiple devices to the Internet using a cell phone signal in their car, hotel or elsewhere. Some companies use mobile

routers in branch offices where employees only need limited wireless Internet access.

I recommend: PC Magazine picked the Kyocera KR1 as the top mobile router in a recent comparison because of its easy set-up and ability to share Alltel, Sprint or Verizon service. With a data-capable cell phone connected to a USB port on the device, the KR1 will give several computers high-speed wireless service.

Tips & Tactics
Helpful advice for making the most of this Guide

- Encrypting or setting routers to require a password in order to use wireless technology will prevent them from being accessible to all computers within range.
- Note that when connecting more than one desktop computer via a wireless Internet router, you'll likely need more than one connection device.
- If you're hoping to set up your office as a wireless network using Bluetooth wireless technology, confirm that any computers, phones and other tech items are Bluetooth compatible before buying them.
- GPS software may be more helpful than a GPS service in remote areas because it doesn't require a wireless service signal.

Featured Vendors

The Complete Source for Wireless Network Hardware

Wireless Networking

GlobalSpec.com: Wireless Networking Devices

Wireless Telecommunications IT Solutions

AT&T Enterprise Business Solutions

Comcast Business Class

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