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A D V E R T I S E M E N T

Wheels In Motion for Wi-Fi technology maker

New West company aims to turn ambulances and other vehicles into wireless network hubs

Curt Cherewayko

Picture your home or office computer network.

An ethernet router sends signals – usually wireless – that allow your computer to communicate with the Internet, your printer and other computers and devices on a network.

It's a ubiquitous if novel technology, but it hasn't been widely adopted outside of the home, office or other static environments.

Now, a New Westminster company is taking the local area network (LAN) on the road.

Targeting first responders, transit services and commercial fleets, In Motion Technology Inc. has developed a mobile gateway that functions much like a Wi-Fi hotspot on wheels.

For example, the emergency medical-services providers that are among In Motion's 225 customers use the mobile gateway technology to wirelessly connect not only the ambulance to the emergency room, but also all information and communication devices on board to each other and to central command.

From, say, the side of the road at the scene of a car accident, paramedics equipped with heart monitors and other devices can wirelessly send information about an accident victim's injuries to the emergency room.

Beyond that, through wireless devices installed on any given part of an ambulance or its engine, mechanics back at the garage can monitor the ambulance fleet's mechanical performance as it's out on call.

With In Motion's technology, transit authorities could eventually manage the dispatch, fare payment, advertising, security cameras and all communication devices for an entire bus fleet on one wireless system.

While In Motion isn't disclosing revenue, CEO Leonard Hordyk said it has not lost any of its 225 customers and its sales have grown 40% in 2009.

He joined the company last September after eight years at the reins of TIR Systems Ltd., a Burnaby-based advanced lighting maker that Royal Philips Electronics (NYSE:PHG; AEX:PHI) acquired in 2007 for \$74 million.

TIR has since been fully integrated into Philips (its B.C. location closed this fall), and Hordyk has fulfilled a two-year retention clause that was included in the acquisition.

Hordyk's hiring at In Motion last September coincided with the completion of a \$4.5 million round of financing that brought the company's venture capital and grants total to \$11 million since it was founded in 2002.

Having been a senior manager of Motorola's mobile-data group for 10 years, Hordyk is no stranger to the wireless sector.

"I felt that In Motion was extremely well-positioned with their mobile hot-spot," he said.

Hordyk was introduced to In Motion by Vancouver-based fund manager Discovery Capital, an In Motion investor and a former TIR investor.

According to Hordyk, In Motion is the first company to deliver such a robust on-board mobile gateway to the market.

It has been awarded a U.S. patent for its vehicle area network (VAN) and has other patents pending.

In most on-road communication systems, which are primarily satellite-enabled, each application or device needs its own dedicated modem and does not communicate with other devices on board.

In Motion emphasizes the ease of integration of its system: virtually any communication or information device, be it video, audio, VoIP or cellular could be hooked into a VAN.

Among the company's oldest customers is Emergency Medical Care Inc. (EMCI), which operates Nova Scotia's ambulance fleet for the provincial government.

The company has had In Motion gateways in its 160 ambulance for two years, allowing paramedics to communicate to hospitals and to a command centre on a

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wireless tablet. The tablet holds patient records, a geographical-mapping system and, as of last month, a database of medical information from MedicAlert Canada. Paramedics can carry the tablet into residences of patients without losing a wireless connection with the gateway on the ambulance.

"[Paramedics] are better prepared to either go to the scene or to get information at the scene that allows them to better care for that patient clinically," said Tim Coolen, EMCI's vice-president of planning and technologies.

Excluding fees for a browser-based system for managing the entire network and depending on the configuration and number of devices enabled, an In Motion gateway for a single vehicle costs between \$1,800 and \$2,000. •

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This article from Business in Vancouver December 15-21, 2009; issue 1051

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