

## BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY

# Doing More on the Go

## *Mobile Workers Tie In With Hand-Helds*

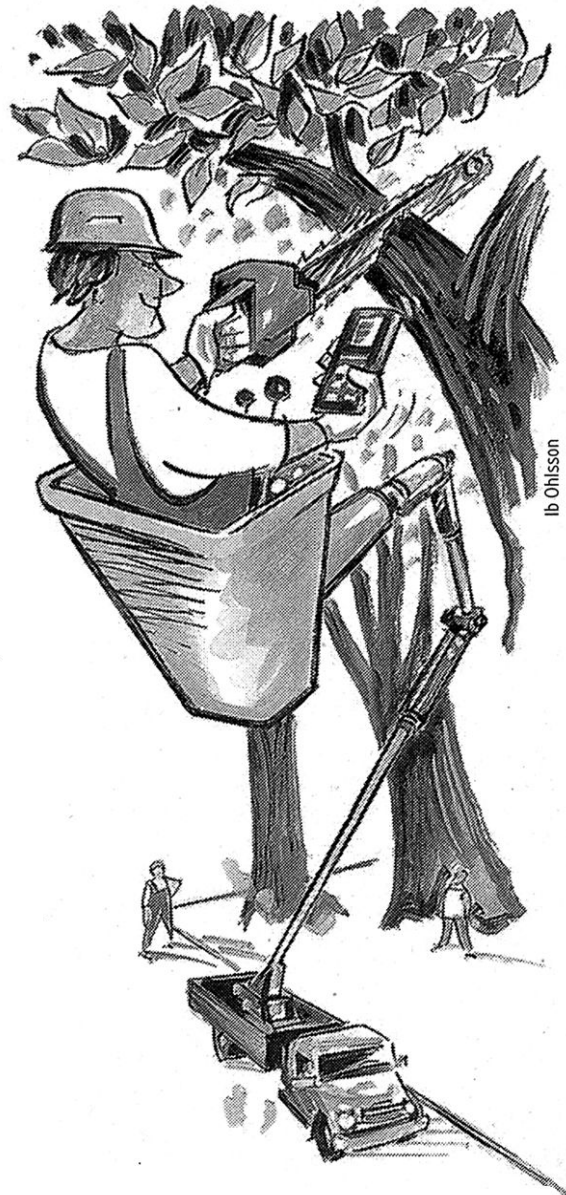
By SAMAR SRIVASTAVA

Three months ago, an urban university campus run jointly by Indiana University and Purdue University issued Motorola smart phones to its maintenance workers. But they weren't just for phone calls or email.

Using technology developed by start-up [JumpStart Wireless Corp.](#), Delray Beach, Fla., the hand-held devices also enabled workers on the Indianapolis campus, called IUPUI, to press a few buttons to connect to their department's central computer system. Once hooked in, they could find out their next task, update a job's status or fill out time sheets.

The school is one of numerous employers taking advantage of new software that can upgrade hand-held devices like BlackBerrys and Palm Treos so employees can perform a wide range of work-related chores outside their offices. The technology is enabling sales teams to use their hand-held devices to do such things as check and update client lists. Medical personnel are using them to access patient records. Warehouse workers are monitoring inventory.

There are an estimated 50 million "mobile" workers in the U.S., those who have no desk or spend more than 25% of their time outside the office, according to Frost & Sullivan, a business-research and consultancy firm. Until now, many of them have used laptop computers to stay connected to their office computer networks. But increasingly they are using hand-held devices for access to the same



information as they have in the office. Many businesses, ranging from start-ups to giants like [Microsoft Corp.](#), Redmond, Wash., and [Research In Motion Ltd.](#), Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, are developing and marketing such work-related features for mobile devices. The Yankee Group estimates that about \$5.9 billion of this software will be sold in 2009, up from \$4 billion in 2006. If the costs of the devices, data plans and service contacts are included, the value of the market will be \$28 billion in 2009, compared with \$17 billion in 2006.

[AT&T Inc.](#) hopes to use technology purchased from Antenna Software, Jersey City, N.J., to make its 1,500-member national sales force more productive on the road. Starting next month, AT&T employees will use their BlackBerrys, Palm and pocket-PC devices to view and create customer accounts and review contracts. The sales force will be able to do such things as give customers instant discounts by looking up their purchasing history.

The U.S. government also plans to connect its mobile workers to central databases through hand-held devices. Last year, the Census Bureau spent \$600 million to buy 500,000 hand-held devices, equipped with technology provided by Microsoft and [Harris Corp.](#) Census employees will use the devices instead of paper forms to record data. Census officials hope this will result in more accurate information.

For several years, demand for this type of technology was less than expected as companies focused on getting their employees connected to corporate email networks. But now demand is picking up, analysts said. "Now that more and more employees have BlackBerry-type devices, CEOs are asking, 'What more can we do?'" said Sheryl Kingstone, director of enterprise applications at Yankee Group.

Some employers also believe they can use the technology to cut costs. JumpStart Wireless charges IUPUI a monthly fee of \$35 per employee for its service. But [IUPUI estimates it saves \\$18 a day per employee through increased efficiency, said Russ](#)

[Woodard, IUPUI's manager of maintenance services.](#)

Other technology companies that have gotten into the business of linking corporate databases with hand-held devices include [Maximus Inc.](#), Vetro Corp. and Apresta Inc. Many of them are cutting deals with companies like Microsoft, RIM and [Palm Inc.](#), which build the operating systems that power these devices. Some of the deals are co-marketing arrangements. Designers or operating systems also are making them compatible with the software that gives devices the ability to hook into corporate computer systems.

Wireless carriers like Verizon Wireless and [Sprint Nextel Corp.](#) have gotten into the act in their efforts to sell business services. Some also have formed ventures with software companies. AT&T's wireless unit plans to sell a service it developed with Antenna Software. Customers want their employees to have access to more than just email when they are outside the office, said Laura Johnson, senior director for industry solutions at AT&T.

Wireless carriers and technology companies developing new mobile services for businesses are focusing some of their efforts on small and midsized companies that don't have their own information-technology departments. Besides buying technology, these smaller companies are more likely to buy services to keep it functioning properly.

For now, most technology companies have focused on the corporate market. But some also are exploring applications in the consumer market. JumpStart Wireless is working on software that would allow customers to hook into a business's computer system to do something like order a pizza. Menus loaded with the various pizza selections would be displayed on a user's screen along with payment options, said Jeff Bonar, president and CEO of JumpStart Wireless. The company hopes to begin selling this software soon.

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