

Networking: Laggards and 'freaks'

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Are you a laggard cubicle dweller? An early-adopting connectivity junkie? Or a PIM -- personal information management -- freak? Whatever the situation may be, developers of networks are increasingly stratifying their marketing as they target these mobile professionals, experts tell United Press International's Networking.

The objective: providing the right technology and solutions to the next 100 million global users who incorporate mobile networks into their work lives.

Research by the Boston-based consultancy, Strategy Analytics, released late last week, indicates that "significant untapped potential" exists in three key mobile worker segments, and understanding these mobile workers will dictate winners and losers in the market in the coming years. Wireless has become the glue that links off-site and on-site productivity, according to the report, "Mobile Professional Segmentation and the Importance of Optimized User Experiences."

Success in the future mobile business user market will be "closely linked to the ability of device manufacturers, software developers, mobile operators and other value chain players to collaborate like never before in orchestrating, and effectively selling, premium user experiences," said Cliff Raskind, a director in the global wireless practice of Strategy Analytics. "With strong spending patterns, high interest levels in a wide range of mobile services and priority attached to being contactable, PIM Freaks are the next segment beyond the corner office to target for a broad range of wireless e-mail and connected PIM tools."

The research, based on 45 million Western European wireless data business users, a market remarkably similar to the mobile marketplace in the United States, identifies several different types of mobile users, including Connectivity Junkies, Content Creators, Connected Responders, PIM Freaks and Cubicle Dwellers.

Each of these segments is mapped to critical user experience index attributes based on their need for attachments, satisfaction with displays and frustration levels with navigation on portable devices.

"A dramatically higher need for viewing and manipulating attachments is evident in the wireless e-mail needs of 'Connectivity Junkies' and 'Content Creators,'" said David Kerr, vice president of the global wireless practice at Strategy Analytics. "Both segments are perceptibly frustrated with the navigation features and overall usability of current generation devices. Nokia is the lead vendor in terms of embedded devices among mobile workers given their historic dominance of the European voice landscape, but SEMC and Samsung are rapidly gaining ground."

The research also showed other fascinating information about the minds of mobile users, including:

- nearly eight in 10 PIM Freaks and Content Creators select their own mobile devices, rather than let the office dictate what they should buy;

- PIM Freaks and Content Creators spend two-thirds of their time using the data functions on their devices in indoor domains, either at home or at work;

- more than 70 percent of PIM Freaks and Content Creators use a notebook computer;

-- PIM Freaks spend 13 percent more per month on wireless than the average business cellular user.

A survey of U.S. users released last month by Sprint found that with each new mobile-phone model the wireless phone seems to increasingly resemble a gadget found in a James Bond movie. The survey identified some "out of the box" product additions that may not turn users into secret agents working in Her Majesty's service, but could turn the mobile phone into an even more unusual multipurpose marvel. Twenty-seven percent of survey respondents want a printer/scanner/fax incorporated into their mobile phone. A thermometer was the next most popular future feature, generating 17 percent support, followed by a money/business-card holder and a credit card, which both received 15 percent support.

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