802.11 Day: Reflecting on the Importance of Connectivity

More than 14 years ago, the IEEE adopted the first WLAN standard, which would go on to serve as the foundation for all further developments in creating today's Wi-Fi networks. Today, August 2, 2011 is the perfect day to consider the importance and growing uses for connectivity.

It is inspiring to consider what 802.11 has meant for people throughout the world and even here in Silicon Valley. Not only has it propelled business here because of the significant opportunities it has brought, but also consumers everywhere have been irrevocably affected due to the connectivity it enables. Beyond this, Wi-Fi has an ingrained convenience factor—we can all get to the information or entertainment we want virtually anywhere, any time of the day or night.

The adoption of 802.11 fueled a new wave of technology in Silicon Valley. The ability to create WLAN infrastructures unleashed a slew of economic growth and technology innovation, speeding up connect-ability and productivity.

• Wi-Fi is now used regularly by more than 700 million people globally and is helping bring the full power of computing and connectivity to an expanding range of products, from tablet computers to gaming consoles and kitchen appliances to factory equipment.

• Wi-Fi connected devices are one of the fastest growing sectors of the technology industry. ABI Research estimates more than two billion Wi-Fi devices will be shipped globally in 2015, an increase of more than 162 percent over the 761 million devices shipped in 2010.

• The demand for always-on connectivity has led to an explosion of businesses offering public Wi-Fi access points (there are more than 200,000 in the U.S. alone with estimates of 400,000 by the end of 2012) and transportation providers like major airlines and commuter trains offering an Internet connection on the go.

• Wireless is fueling new business growth, with a CTIA study projecting productivity gains from wireless services and devices potentially generating an additional $860 billion in U.S. GDP by 2016

(http://files.ctia.org/pdf/Final_OvumEconomicImpact_Report_5_21_08.pdf [1] on page 4).

• Emerging economies are building out wireless communication infrastructures through using cellular and Wi-Fi technologies, enabling countries to get more citizens connected to the Internet at significantly lower costs.

• Educators are introducing new instructional methods that incorporate connectivity and foster collaboration.

The ongoing progress of Wi-Fi shows no sign of slowing. Venture capital continues to flow into mobile technologies that will build upon the power of Wi-Fi. In the coming year, the market will continue its shift to use of the 5 GHz spectrum, and Wi-Fi will enable greater bandwidth to meet consumer demand for HD video, real-time, multi-player gaming, and more. By next year, you will see multi-Gigabit Wi-Fi with new variants of 802.11 (802.11ac and ad) to bolster multiple streams of data, voice, HD video, music, gaming, and of course, home controls for everything from your washing machine to your refrigerator.

As we connect with our own networks today on 8.02.11, we can be grateful about where we are and genuinely excited about what still is yet to come in our ever-changing wireless world.

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