

Wi-Fi still problematic for the mobile workforce

While there is an increasing buzz around Wi-Fi hotspots globally, there are two main issues which ensure Wi-Fi still remains a problematic means of connectivity for the mobile workforce.

Craig Lowe, founder of execMobile, says security and productivity should be of concern to all corporate executives who use public Wi-Fi for connectivity when travelling.

"While there are over a million Wi-Fi hotspots globally today, Informa Telecoms and Media predicts there will be 5.8 million hotspots in 2015," Lowe says.

Security advancement of wireless technology towards the Wi-Fi 2.0 standard, whereby devices will be able to automatically authenticate to a Wi-Fi hotspot through SIM-based authentication will however require significant time to implement.

Wi-fi 2.0 still faces challenges in becoming a standard that would then need to be implemented ubiquitously across devices. It however faces an even bigger challenge from Wi-Fi hotspots or Internet Service Providers who will need to adopt and implement the technology and then sign agreements with Mobile Network Operators to successfully bill the mobile subscriber.

Still problematic

Although the number of hotspots is increasing worldwide, the access medium is still problematic in meeting the demands of an increasingly mobile workforce.

Lowe says the iPass Q2 2013 Mobile Workforce Report shows that 75% of mobile workers work more than 45 hours a week and 66% spend between one and three days out of the office each week.

"85% of travellers assuming Wi-Fi will be available, while 71% of business traveller's research Wi-Fi availability before embarking on a trip" he says.

However, these locations are generally not conducive for productivity with more than 70% of mobile workers describing themselves as "less productive" in public places, according to the report.

Furthermore, only 14% of mobile workers have never paid for Wi-Fi access and more than 24% have paid US\$30 or more for one-time access to Wi-Fi, notably in hotels or airports where business travellers are a captive audience.

However, despite the current security concerns from spoofing or hacking and the lack of productivity due to poor

connectivity speeds and lack of privacy, these are all endured by the mobile workforce when travelling internationally because of the prohibitive price of data when roaming.

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