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AT&T Plans to Offer Internet Over a \$500 Wireless Phone

By JOHN MARKOFF

Published: July 12, 1996

SAN FRANCISCO, July 11— Aiming to make it easier to connect wirelessly to the Internet, AT&T's cellular company said today that it planned to introduce a new cellular phone and a related service for sending and receiving data over existing cellular networks.

Using network software that the nation's other large cellular companies also plan to adopt, AT&T Wireless Services said the new service, to be introduced late this year, will require that customers obtain a new \$500 cellular telephone that will be able to integrate voice and Internet services.

The new service, which is to be called AT&T Pocketnet, will enable users to display data on the phone's small three-line, liquid-crystal display screen for sending and receiving E-mail and other information. Besides some standard Internet services, the AT&T service is to include interactive data applications that would permit, for example, a user to look up flight information and then automatically place a cellular phone call to complete a reservation.

AT&T is hoping that the new digital cellular service will finally permit wireless data applications to reach broader markets. Until now, cellular telephones using standard, or analog, technology have provided poor quality for data transmission.

AT&T Wireless executives said that the service would cost about \$30 a month above the cost of standard cellular voice service, plus additional charges for data beyond an initial number of minutes each month that the company has not yet determined.

"Right now it's too expensive to be a mass market product," said Alan Reiter, editor of Wireless Internet & Mobile Computing, an industry newsletter. "But there are 35 million people who are willing to carry a cellular phone, so this is no longer a technology question."

Two new cellular phones with special software are being developed for AT&T by Mitsubishi Electric America and by PCSI, a subsidiary of Cirrus Logic Inc., a Silicon Valley chip maker.

The software for the phones was created by Unwired Planet Inc., a start-up company based in Redwood Shores, Calif., which was founded by Alain Rossman, a longtime Silicon Valley executive.

cellular phone.

Mr. Rossman said that the new software, known as Up.link, was an extreme example of a class of new Internet-access computers that industry executives have come to refer to as "thin clients" because of their skimpy hardware and software requirements.

"We've heard a lot of discussion of thin clients," Mr. Rossman said. "Well, this is an example of an anorexic client."

While AT&T is the first to announce an Internet-savvy cellular telephone, a number of other major carriers have struck agreements with Unwired Planet, including Ameritech, Bell Atlantic, Nynex Mobile, Comcast Cellular Communications and GTE.

AT&T said it would make the phones available later this year to corporate buyers and beginning selling them commercially in the first quarter of 1997.

The new Pocketnet service takes advantage of a digital technology known as cellular digital packet data that permits data to be sent and received over standard cellular telephone networks. The technology is currently available from AT&T in 22 regions around the country, with the company's other local networks scheduled to receive it.



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