

Outdoor Wireless at MIT

Status Report 2
3/31/2005

Team Wireless
Janice Lin, Jessica So, Ashvini Thammaiah, Harel Williams

Our project is still on schedule despite some roadblocks (mainly because we planned for them). Project status is still Green.

I. Accomplishments

The accomplishments we have experienced thus far include compiling a full list of universities we would like to contact. On this list we have also included key contact information and have space for other data we will collect. This list will be essential to ensure that both team members working on this portion will be asking for consistent information and will know exactly who the other person has already interviewed. We are in the process of scheduling interviews at universities that have responded to our initial contact. In addition we are compiling a consistent list of questions to ask the universities.

The following is a list of universities we contacted and the number of outdoor locations (moderately sized) for which they currently provide wireless.

<i>University</i>	<i># of Outdoor Wireless Locations</i>
Carnegie Mellon University (CMU)	Few
Central Washington University (CWU)	2
Bowling Green State University (BGSU)	3
University of South Carolina (USC)	Few
Columbia University	Few
University of Pennsylvania	1
University of Virginia	2

We have contacted 5 vendors to conduct phone interviews, some of which were moderately successful. The vendors are:

- Avaya
- SmartBridges
- D-Link
- InPath Devices
- National Datacomm Corporation

After some research into how IS&T manages their wireless access points, we are fairly confident that the hardware provided by the vendors above would integrate with the current remote management system in place on campus. This is preliminary, however, and we hope to guarantee this by next week.

We have also identified a number of wireless ISPs to contact concerning their implementation of wireless over extensive outdoor areas:

- Speednet Services, Inc.
- CommSpeed
- Prairie Inet
- AMA TechTel Communications
- Mesa Networks

All these ISPs have over 3,000 subscribers each. However, similarly to the vendors, it has proven difficult to talk to anyone beyond sales representatives, but we are waiting on a number of returned phone calls and emails.

Like all teams, we presented the status of our project to the class and received much helpful feedback.

II. Issues

In one conversation we had with a representative from a university, she warned that our questions may not be answered by the right people. She said we had a “50/50” chance of getting the information we wanted. We had anticipated this kind of risk (refer to exhibit IV of our project plan) and we intend to question even more schools or refer to our champion for some IS&T personal contacts at other universities.

On a similar note, when trying to reach people who can answer our questions concerning technical and implementation issues at the vendors, we were unable to speak to those individuals who could rightfully answer our questions; they were usually “out of the office” or “unavailable.”

It has also become clear that we need to clarify a number of points about the scope of our project in the context of IS&T with our champion, Ms. Regan.

III. Actions to be taken

Currently, we are on track according to our timeline and there haven’t been any new issues that require any revisions to our original schedule. We will continue to contact universities and obtain as much information as possible regarding outdoor wireless at other campuses.

As far as vendor and wireless ISP contact is concerned, we will try to identify additional vendors and ISPs beyond the ones we currently have, and follow up with the current list to communicate with those individuals who can rightfully answer our questions.

It is also very important that we clarify the scope of our project with Ms. Regan as soon as possible. A meeting will be scheduled for the coming week.

IV. Reflections and Learning

As our project progresses, we are learning a number of lessons about practical project management. We are actually starting to encounter many issues that we have seen in past case studies. For example, uncertainties such as being unable to obtain all information as originally planned, has been a slight barrier. Also, we also learned that streamlining communication is extremely important as we see this show up in our communication with our project champion.

The project review session on March 29 was extremely useful. Through feedback from the class, we learned of many additional areas on which we should spend more time planning and considering. For example, a classmate pointed out that it seemed like our project was carrying out two parallel processes instead of ending up with one main recommendation. This was an interesting point because we were asked to carry out the two separate research paths, but perhaps we can speak with our champion to see if there is anyway for us to consolidate what we are looking for and be able to make one single strong recommendation at the end.