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# Wireless wonderland

by Christine Wilson, California Computer News

**P**icture yourself driving – with only minutes to go – before your scheduled online meeting with that new client you’re hoping to land. It’s 6 a.m. – three hours earlier than the client’s time.

Finally, you reach your destination. Within seconds, you’re logged in and waiting for the client’s call. A half hour later, you log off. The meeting was a success. The client has agreed to close the deal.

As you turn off your laptop computer, the sun rises above the treetops. You’ll be able to start that backpack trip on time after all – nothing like combining work with pleasure.

If this story sounds like a fantasy, it’s not. This is just one example of what wireless Internet service technology can do.

## Data on the move

Ricochet could very well have been the service used in the scenario described above.

Ricochet is an always-on, high-speed, and secure online service that enables users to access information from outside the confines of an office.

Test-marketed for the last three years in select national airports and metropolitan areas, Ricochet has proven

it can successfully offer mobile wireless access to corporate networks and the Internet at speeds of 128 kbps and higher, with flat-rate pricing, always-on connections and full access to the Web.

The advantages of this service for telecommuters and other professionals who do a lot of their work on the road is obvious. With the mobile marketplace projected to reach over 50 million users by 2002, the potential for Ricochet’s success is great.

According to Ricochet developer Metricom Inc., this service will not be limited to high-income, high-technology markets only. Employees from all sectors can benefit from Ricochet’s remote-access capabilities.

Using the service is as easy as attaching a small wireless modem to a laptop. And soon, Ricochet modems will be even more advanced, thanks to National Semiconductor.

The company plans to use Ricochet technology to develop a chipset for wireless modems. By consolidating the technology onto a chipset, the modem will shrink, weighing less and, more importantly, costing less.

## Go national

With its track record in place, Ricochet broke into the

national market in July. Launched first in San Diego, then Atlanta, Ricochet has its sights set on bringing mobile access to users across the country.

“San Diego [was] the ideal place to kick off our national roll-out because it is among the most active markets in the wireless space and is home to a growing number of companies that are developing wireless products,” said Tim Dreisbach, chairman and CEO of Metricom.

Service will be available in most major U.S. cities via resellers. Delivering user speeds of 128 kbps and greater, Ricochet is currently expanding into 21 major markets across the country, and right-of-way efforts are underway in an additional 25 markets that will ultimately make Ricochet available to over 100 million people.

## The customer is right

“I’ve been delighted with the Ricochet modem,” said Greg Leveille, president of Terra Touch Network. “It was so easy to set up that I literally took it out of the box and used it to give a Web site demo 30 minutes later.”

“The wireless modem is working quite well – nothing but praise from this user,” said Rick Hudnall, partner of Small Northern Virginia Company. “In fact, I am sitting in the

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IRS building at New Carrollton using my Ricochet right now, tapped into our company's Exchange server and doing this e-mail through a browser interface to Exchange. Awesome capability. Great product."

"I took a four-week trip around the country and arranged to spend extra time in Washington, D.C., just because it was one of [Ricochet's] service areas," said Chip Chapin, director of engineering of Cygnus Solutions.

"It worked great. I sat in my motor home in a campground and connected to work here in Sunnyvale almost continuously for four days. I wouldn't have been able to take that much time off otherwise."

Harold Mann, president of Mann Consulting, an IT-support and Web-design outsourcing firm in San Francisco, says making the company's databases accessible on hand-helds is too complex. Ricochet is more convenient because its wireless modems connect directly to notebooks.

"We have about 30 employees," said Mann, "but half of them are always at client sites. Ricochet eliminates the need for them to come back to the office at the end of the day to access data."

While waiting for a travel visa, Stan Lim of Cisco Systems was pleasantly surprised that being on the ground floor of a building in San Francisco's business district didn't keep him from getting work done.

"I was very skeptical that the Ricochet modem would be able to transmit or receive because I was ... surrounded by the skyscrapers here," said Lim.

"Having nothing to lose, I tried to log on to work using my Ricochet modem," he continued. "I was extremely pleased to find the Ricochet modem working perfectly. Thanks to Ricochet, I was able to get some work done and not have a day wasted."

### **Earning industry recognition**

In May, Ricochet was named a finalist in the "Best Mobile Computing" category for *Network Computing's* 2000 Well-Connected Awards. According to Fritz Nelson, publisher of *Network Computing*, these awards are quite different from other IT publications' awards.

"They are not a measure of popularity," he said. "They are quality offerings tested over a networked enterprise first-hand by editors themselves. So we know that

Metricom's Ricochet network is truly an innovative solution."

One month later, Ricochet was awarded "Best Internet Service" at the PC Expo Best of Show Awards in New York, an event sponsored by CNET Networks.

Ricochet was selected from a group of competitors that included application service providers, Internet service providers, hosted Web applications and wireless content providers, Internet service providers, hosted Web applications and wireless content providers. Best of Show winners are based on their level of innovation.

Soon, it won't be only the IT industry singing the praises of Ricochet. In a very short time, you'll be seeing Ricochet everywhere: planes, cabs, donut shops, and maybe even backpack trips.

For more information on this new service, check out [www.ricochet.com](http://www.ricochet.com). For information on Metricom, visit [www.metricom.com](http://www.metricom.com).