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Wireless Hotspot Locator: Pinpointing the gates to the virtual world

Wireless access to the Internet requires wireless hotspots - the gates to the virtual world. Learn more about the technology and the new service easily locating the nearest hotspots.

Mobile users wish to access the Internet at any time from anywhere – at work, at home and on the road. It would be nice to quickly read the e-mails or the online newspaper while waiting for the next train or flight. Even mobile offices at the beach could become reality due to the fact that wireless access to the Internet provides the user with individual working conditions. Users just have to know where the hotspots are located. The new hotspot locator developed by PTV now assists the mobile worker in finding the nearest hotspot throughout Europe.

Hotspots are based on W-LAN technology providing wireless access to the Internet. W-LAN means Wireless Local Area Network which is based on radio communication. Wireless local networks are playing an increasingly important role in today's business world. Low-cost installation is only one of the many remarkable features. Even notebooks and PCs can be integrated into the entire corporate network. The maximum distance from the end device to the next access point is about 100 metres.

Wireless Hotspots: The winning strategy

The rising public interest in wireless hotspots was stimulated by the auction of UMTS licences in Summer 2001. The press described W-LAN as a low-cost alternative to the expensive mobile communication standard. Huge amounts of money were spent in the UMTS poker game.

Until the middle of 2002 there were less than 100 hotspots all over Germany. One year later, the user can access more than 1,200 hotspots and the number is rising. Experts like the market researchers Frost & Sullivan forecast that the number of hotspots in Europe will double within the next six years. Apart from free hotspots, users can also register with a local service provider offering further access points. More and more customers are provided with access to hot spots in different networks through roaming agreements which are frequently established in the field of mobile communication. "roaming" describes a mobile customer's ability to use his or her mobile telephone outside the "home" service area of the operator with which the customer established mobile service. In general, the access requires user authentication by entering, for example, the user name and a password. The hotspot provider can then invoice the use of the access point.

The mobile office becomes reality

According to Detecon's hotspot report most of the mobile customers use the hotspots to send e-mails, to access the company's Intranet or to browse through the Web. Reading online newspapers or listening to the Web radio are also very popular. However, security issues are quite seldom. Only a few experts report about the use of VPN software (Virtual Private Network) securely connecting employees to the corporate network.

In the future, private users will probably be provided with hotspots for both notebooks and PDAs. For the time being, notebooks will be the most important wireless tools regarding mobile office applications.

Brand-new: The hotspot locator

PTV's brand-new hotspot locator is a ready-to-use solution for network operators and WiFi providers. It shows users where to quickly find the next W-LAN hotspot – on the Internet or as LBS (Location Based Service) on all kinds of mobile end devices. Additionally, the solution provides a variety of maintenance and up-date features for hotspot data. Map visualisation and navigation routing are helpful extra search tools. The simple, but efficient solution for hotspot data up-dates, maintenance and geocoding is based on the ptv mobility platform. This technology platform also supports other location-based services provided by o2 and t-info, for instance.

Firstly, the user simply enters his current address. Secondly, the information is geo-coded and the coordinates are displayed on a digital map. The hotspot locator then pinpoints the hotspots in the surrounding area of the location entered. The new service is available via the Internet as well as on mobile end devices.

It is currently covering the whole of Germany. The service will be available throughout Europe as soon as the data on European hotspots are entered.