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WebPerfect seeks to bring intranet services to smaller firms

By Fayçal Benhassain

Many large companies have their own local area network (LAN) and wide area network (WAN), but the Yankee Group analysis firm estimates that there are 7.3 million small businesses without a LAN and 1.5 million with multi-locations that do not have a WAN. It's a void that is being addressed.

WebPerfect Solutions Inc. offers Web-based business productivity tools, including intranet services to small and medium size businesses. And the company has just added Palm.Net access to its wireless intranet services.

"Palm VII is a simple wireless device used by most people for scheduling," said Steven Zecola, the chairman and chief executive officer of the Vienna, Va.-based provider of Internet business services. "Now with this device, our customers can get access to their corporate intranet. They can use all information included in the intranet wherever they are — on the road or from a remote location — through the Palm VII."

Last January, WebPerfect introduced an intranet service designed for small and medium size businesses that included e-mail, file sharing, forms management, scheduling and project management, among others.

"Basically, it provides information within the company," Zecola said. "There is information of a different nature that you want to share with your employees. You can post that and make that available to them, even when they are away from their desk, through cellular phones and Palm Pilots."

Sherry Frazier, president of InHouse Inc., a Vienna, Va.-based public relations firm, said: "We have a staff of 15 people and some

of them work from home and other remote places. But we need to communicate all the time about projects we work on and project management. Now with WebPerfect Intranet services accessible through Palm VII and cellular phones, we are in constant contact. For us, it's a very useful tool."

Pricing ranges from $40 a month to $300, depending on a company's capacity needs; the number of users is unlimited. There is no extra charge to gain access to WebPerfect Intranet through Palm Pilots and Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) mobile phones. "The company can have 20 or 100 people, it doesn't matter," said Zecola. "With the first price, a company gets 50 megabytes of capacity. For our company, for example, where 20 people work, we needed 65 megabytes. So we took the next package, which costs $160 per month."

"It's well priced," Frazier added. "And the other quality is that it is very easy and fast to install. We saw a demonstration and we decided to purchase it. We didn't have any negative experience and we are glad to have it."

As an Internet business, WebPerfect Solutions offers other services, including Web hosting and e-commerce business-to-business solutions. The company has also introduced a free consumer Web site, sendabigfile.com, which helps senders file up to 50 megabytes' worth of data. When a file is transmitted, the sender will receive an e-mail notification of arrival.

WebPerfect Intranet will include a similar service for its customers, a multiple file transfer with compression and encryption capacities. Zecola said, "In business, some people have multiple jobs and multiple files to send quickly and with security. So they are compressed and encrypted and sent fast. We will offer this functionality as part of our package of services."

Zecola and Chris Getner, the chief technical officer, founded WebPerfect Solutions in February 1999. Financed mainly by Zecola, the company did an outside fundraiser this past February that raised around $2 million.

WebPerfect, which is not yet profitable, is seeking another round of investment that should close in the fourth quarter of this year. Zecola said he expects to raise between $5 million and $10 million.

"Basically, we are a technology company," said Zecola. "We want to offer services and products to our customers in a way that is intuitive for them. We want them to use our intranet, for instance, without any special training, even if the user is not a computer expert."