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New Mobile Communicators

by Bob Emmerson

Traffic on GSM networks is growing at a staggering rate of 580 percent per year, according to Mike Short, technical director of CellNet, one of the big GSM operators in the U.K. But only 5 percent of it is data traffic. However, a new type of hand-held device -- such as the Nokia 9000 and the HP OmniGo 700LX -- that smartly integrates GSM voice and data capabilities could result in data traffic increasing to about 30 percent by the year 2000.

Nokia's 9000 communicator combines a GSM phone and a complete PDA in a device weighing just 400 grams. It comes with Web-browsing as well as fax and e-mail capabilities and sells for around DM 3000.

Hewlett-Packard developed a personal communicator that docks into a Nokia GSM cellular phone. With the OmniGo 700LX you can send and receive e-mail, faxes, and short messages using GSM's Short Message Service (SMS). The address book seamlessly integrates with the fax and SMS applications. You can also phone out from the palmtop and store the number in the phone's memory. The price for the new OmniGo palmtop will be around DM 1800.