



## **More people dumping traditional phones for cellular service**

*By: BRADLEY J. FIKES - Staff Writer*

August 14, 2004

Telecom executive Julia Wilson likes being free from telemarketing calls. Student Cyndi Headley didn't want to change her number after moving. Eric O'Connor, a chef, likes the ability to take care of business any time of the day or night. Keva Dine, a job recruiter, just wants all her messages and phone calls in one place.

These four North County residents are part of the new telecommunications mainstream: They primarily use a cell phone instead of a traditional land-line phone. Wilson, Headley and O'Connor no longer have a land-line phone. Dine dropped her personal land-line phone, but kept one for her business.

An estimated 14 percent of U.S. consumers use a cell phone as their main phone, according to a February study by In-Stat/MDR, a research firm based in Scottsdale, Ariz. The Yankee Group, a research firm based in Boston, estimates that 4 percent to 5 percent of consumers have cut the cord entirely and do not have a land line, even as a backup.

"Wireless substitution," as it's called, reached a milestone in 2001, when the number of business and residential land lines fell for the first time since the 1930s. The trend got a big boost in November, when new regulations gave customers the right to keep their phone number when switching carriers, including land line-to-wireless switches.

Young and single people are most likely to go totally wireless, said Andrew Seybold, head of the Andrew Seybold Group LLC, a wireless consulting firm in Felton. They grew up with cell phones and may have relied on one exclusively during college. For such people, having a cell phone is normal; a land line is secondary.

"This is getting to be a real hot issue," Seybold said. By some analyst estimates, he said, the percentage of those going totally wireless could reach 40 percent.

For the cellular industry and companies such as San Diego's Qualcomm Inc., this is obviously good news. It's not good for the "Baby Bells" such as SBC and Verizon, which have long had a near monopoly on voice communications.

### **Wireless whiz**

Wilson, a Carmel Valley resident, has a technologically advanced wireless setup that befits her role as head of the San Diego Telecom Council. Her cell phone, a Kyocera 7135 that works over the Verizon Wireless network, handles voice and e-mail.

"I just moved, and it's so nice not to have to switch a phone number," Wilson said. "It's one less thing to worry about."

Wilson said she dropped the land line about a year ago, in part because she was constantly being bothered with telemarketing calls. Since then, she has been nearly free of that annoyance. Federal law forbids telemarketers from calling cell-phone numbers unless there is a previous business relationship.

For Internet access, Wilson subscribes to Verizon Wireless' high-speed service, which she uses in a laptop equipped with a PC card. The laptop is small enough to fit in her purse, so Wilson takes her Internet access anywhere there is a Verizon signal.

Wilson said she took part in a trial test of the wireless Internet service last year and was impressed with its speed ---- far faster than dial-up. So instead of having to look for a reason to subscribe to the service, Wilson asked herself why she needed a land line.

"It was so easy, and after having my card for several months and never using dial-up, away went AT&T," Wilson said.

Wilson's total bill is about \$180 a month for voice and Internet.

### **Business anywhere**

O'Connor, a chef at the Calypso restaurant in Leucadia, said he uses his cell phone to handle business needs when away from the restaurant.

A Carlsbad resident, O'Connor orders food for the Calypso and relies on his Samsung X427 phone to make sure the orders have been placed, wherever he may be.

"You've always got the phone right there in your pocket. The biggest worry is having it charged," O'Connor said. His cell-phone bill from Cingular is about \$100 a month.

Although he has no telephone land line, O'Connor depends on a different wire for Internet access: that of Cox Communications' cable modem service.

Dine operates her own recruitment agency from a home office in Encinitas. She canceled her personal land line about 18 months ago. She has a land-line telephone through Cox Communications, which also provides her Internet access.

Dine uses her Palm Treo 600 on the Cingular network when away from the office. Her cell-phone bill ranges from \$100 to \$200 a month.

"I'm on the phone all the time, e-mailing all the time, and have to be constantly connected and reachable," Dine said. "I even have my cell phone pick up my e-mail when I'm out of the office. I maintain my calendar on it as well, so if someone needs to change their appointment, I can plug that in there. I can get online and pay bills at the grocery store if I wanted to."

### **Taking it with you**

Headley, an Encinitas resident, got rid of her land line about two years ago when she moved.

Unsure about where she would wind up, Headley gave out her cell-phone number to those who wished to contact her. She decided to keep it that way after moving, to avoid the hassle of notifying her friends of a new number. Headley spends about \$45 a month with Cingular for her service on a Motorola phone.

Having just a cell phone and no land line saves money, thanks to included long-distance minutes, said Headley, a former Oceanside High School teacher who plans to attend Cal State San Marcos this fall.

"I'm even keeping in better touch with my mother since I started using the cell phone without the land line," Headley said.

## **Drawbacks**

Going totally wireless has disadvantages. For O'Connor, it's the "horrible" reception at his home.

"I can only put my phone down in certain parts of the house," he said.

Dine said she lost a "really cool number" when she canceled the personal land line.

There is a more serious concern ---- safety, said Seybold, the wireless industry consultant. One concern is that emergency operators can't automatically locate a cell-phone caller in the same way they know where a land line is located. Also, guests at a home with no land line may not have a phone to use if the owner is away and there is an emergency.

Seybold's solution is to sign up for a family plan that provides a second phone at a small additional charge and shares the minutes between them. Take one phone and keep the other one charged up in the home.

Contact staff writer Bradley J. Fikes at (760) 739-6641 or [bfikes@nctimes.com](mailto:bfikes@nctimes.com).