

Dead Trees

A PUBLICATION OF
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COMMUNICATIONS

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Anxiously awaiting Corel Ventura (part 1)

Corel will begin shipping a new version of Ventura Publisher sometime this fall and beta testers, while prohibited from talking about specific issues, are unanimous in saying that the new version (Ventura 10) is rock solid.

In part, this is because Corel has run an unprecedented beta program. In contrast to the “2 betas and ship it” philosophy of the past, this version has already gone through 10 beta releases and will probably see at least one more – followed by one or two “release candidates” before the “gold code” is released to manufacturing.

Stability, stability, & stability

Adding to the product’s stability is the fact that it runs only on Windows 2000 or Windows XP – not on the older Windows 9x platform. Summit organizer Rick Altman says that originally he thought the decision to eliminate support for Windows 9x was a bad one. Altman produced thousands of pages every year with Ventura 8 under Windows 98 and felt his operation was “state of the art”.

The Ventura 10 beta program forced him to upgrade to Windows XP. Altman now says that he fully supports Corel’s decision. “If the price of stability is upgrading to a new operating system,” he says, “it’s a bargain!”

Oh say can you 3G?

On a recent trip to New York City, I tried downloading mail using a Windows CE device that was connected to my Sprint PCS phone. The system attained the blazing speed of about 19.2Kbps. That’s less than half the speed of a standard dial-up modem and a tiny fraction of the speed that I’m used to with a cable modem at home and multiple T1 lines at the office.

Messages that usually download in 15 seconds took 6 minutes. You might think I’d be disappointed by this, but I’m not. I find it encouraging.

Later this summer Sprint PCS will have rolled out its nationwide 3G service. The company has 19,000 cell towers and is building more at the rate of 160 per month. When the appropriate 3G circuitry is in place everywhere, Sprint will roll out the new service nationally.


Some of the other national providers have G3 services running in selected markets, but telecommunications consultant Iain Gillot says that the providers who opted to use “code division multiple access” (CDMA) technology are in a better position to implement third generation (3G) services with higher

Stability is a key goal

Ventura 10 (beta 10) was shown publicly for the first time at Altman’s Ventura Summit in Kansas City. Beta software is supposed to be buggy. Beta software is supposed to crash. That wasn’t the case. After a 3-day conference and more than 20 instructional sessions, there had been no more than 5 crashes and most of those were the result of “operator errors”.

Have I mentioned stability?

Instructor Bob van Duuren of The Netherlands amazed attendees with a demonstration of how he uses Ventura’s built-in power tools to format complete 250-page books in less than one day, Canadian presenter Allan Shearer illustrated the capabilities of Ventura’s built-in database publisher, and Eric Webber introduced Ventura’s new ability to automate formatting by means of XML import.

Corel has announced that the new version of Ventura will sell for \$699 (retail) and \$249 (upgrade from previous version). There is currently no competitive upgrade. Availability is expected in late September or early October. 

Newsletters, leaflets, books, newspapers ...

They’re ALL a **SNAP** with Ventura Publisher.

data throughput than are those who chose to use “time division multiple access” (TDMA) technology.

The problem is that the path to G3 from TDMA is a complex one that requires a “forklift” approach: The provider must replace all equipment at its cell sites and the new network will not be compatible with phones built for the earlier network. CDMA requires only the installation of some additional circuits at each cell site. This is no small task for a company with 19,000 sites, but it’s certainly easier than replacing each of the site.

What the heck is this?

Dead Trees is the William Blinn Communications newsletter. It’s published whenever I feel like it, although I generally feel like it when I’m preparing the month’s invoices. If you didn’t receive an invoice with this newsletter, kindly contact me and we’ll rectify that situation. Please note that despite the name, of the publication, I bear no particular animosity toward trees. The name is simply an acknowledgment that paper is made from, well, dead trees.

What's all this "G" stuff?

- G1 refers to the first generation of mobile phones. These are analog devices.
- G2 refers to the second generation of mobile phones, the first digital models. G2 phones digitize users' voices, but they don't transmit data.
- G2.5 ("G two and a half") refers to G2 systems with a "packet data overlay". These phones can handle data, but only at slow rates because of the limited bandwidth dedicated to data. You may also hear about "G2.7" "G2.8" – marginally better than G2, but not quite G3.
- G3 third-generation technology will increase both voice and data capacity – by definition at least 144Kbps, but there are plans afoot to increase that to 1000Kbps. (There's a catch: This is the stated network speed, shared by all users in a cell. If the cell has only a few users, throughput will be fast; if you're in an airport, data will still crawl.)
- G4 will be the fourth generation, but not soon.

The rest of the alphabet soup

Sprint, Ericsson, and Qualcomm selected CDMA (2G) and they have moved forward to CDMA/IS95B (2.5G). The next step will be CDMA2000 with two early flavors of 3G (one is data only) and then 1xEV/DV. Gillet accuses Qualcomm of having a vice president of acronym development.

CDMA2000 should be implemented by fall, but 1xEV/DV won't be available until sometime in 2004.

Everybody else picked TDMA (2G), which offers two development paths – one to GSM (still 2G) and then to GPS (2.5G) and then to EDGE and WCDMA (both 3G); the other skips 2.5G development; it goes from TDMA to EDGE and then to WCDMA.

GSM/GPRS was implemented in some markets as early as 2001, but it won't be available nationwide until sometime in 2003 according to Gillet. EDGE will appear starting in 2003, with completion expected in 2004. Gillet won't even guess when WCDMA might be available. "There's not enough spectrum," he says. If the spectrum becomes available, the auction process is expected to take at least a year and then thousands of cell sites will need to be modified, retrofitted, or rebuilt.

CDMA2000 is the CDMA version of the IMT-2000 standard developed by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

1xEV/DV is the enhanced data and voice version of CDMA2000.

GSM is the *global system for mobile* communication. It uses a variation of time division multiple access (TDMA) and is the most widely used of the technologies.

EDGE is an acronym for *enhanced data GSM environment*, a faster version of the GSM wireless service.

WCDMA means *wideband code-division multiple access*, an ITU standard derived from CDMA.

How it works


Analog phones give every connection a small piece of spectrum. The spectrum is in use for the duration of the connection whether anyone is speaking or not. This is not an efficient way to use spectrum.

TDMA is a multiplexing technology that divides the available spectrum into time segments. While much more efficient than analog, TDMA reserves time in each cycle for each connection.

CDMA is more like a standard data network. Voice information is packetized and each voice (or data) packet has an address header that is used to route the packet. CDMA is generally considered to be more efficient than TDMA.

The bottom line

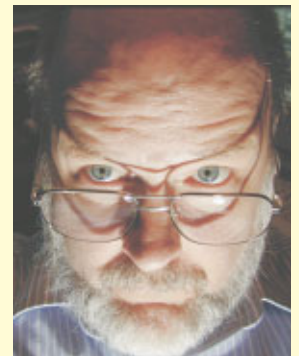
These new technologies will revolutionize the way you use your phone. Virtually any device will be able to house the circuits needed to provide that device with connectivity because the circuits currently are about the size of two quarters, stacked.

We're already seeing personal information organizers with integrated phones. It's difficult to get a clear idea where this road is leading, but it should be an interesting ride. 

A new way to save your data

External disk drives aren't new.

In fact, the first disk drive I bought was external. It was in a metal box large enough to hold a pair of boots. It cost something like \$1200. And the disk inside was as slow as the floppy disks on my computer. It also held a remarkable 16 megabytes. These days you can stick a highlighter-size device in your pocket and carry 256 megabytes. Disk drives smaller than about 30 gigabytes are hard to find.



But still we run out of space. My desktop system has more than 40GB of disk space, but with the prospect of tinkering with video editing software (a challenge that's lurking around the corner) I can see the need for more space soon.

And what about backup? There's a problem with the backup program I use in that it can't see my system's tape drive. That'll be fixed "any day now" they tell me, but I need to do backups now. As a temporary measure, I've started doing backups on CD. But a couple of external hard drives would make backup incredibly fast and easy.

The good thing is that lots of manufacturers are now making external disk drives that connect to your computer by USB2 (or 1.1 if you don't mind slow disk drives). Some also can connect via Firewire (or IEEE1394 or iLink, depending on what your computer's manufacturer calls it).

How much? Figure 40GB for about \$300. You'll also find 80 and 120GB drives on the market. Both USB and Firewire and Plug'n'Play on Windows 98 (maybe) and above – definitely with Windows 2000 and Windows XP – and the Mac.

That's another plus. Because these drives work on both PC and Mac computers, they're a good way to move files between the platforms. Apples can read DOS/Windows disks, but you might need a utility to let your Windows machine read a Mac disk. 