

International Roaming



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The terms, Atlantica, Atlantic Gateway, and Pacific Gateway are representative of a more structured method of moving goods and services globally. The infrastructure resulting from these trade corridors will provide huge opportunities for businesses, big and small, throughout Nova Scotia and the region.

These developments did not result from some economist day-dreaming in his office and shouting ‘Eureka’. They occurred from trade missions going around the globe exploring the potential markets. Even more, they resulted from ‘road warriors’ hitting the global trail on behalf of their companies and convincing customers in Europe, India, Australia and Argentina that they had something worthwhile to offer.

This has not occurred without considerable expense for companies with respect to how their globe-trotting heroes communicate with them. I am seeing more and more of my clients’ wireless costs spiral upwards because they need to communicate with their sales people in real time.

The days are over where a company rep goes back to her hotel room in Milan to call her company in Nova Scotia to get a price or relay a question to the boss. No, she makes the call on her wireless palm held device while she is in front of the customer. Her company responds with a price chart and other useful information that helps seal the deal on the spot.

This method of doing business can be very profitable but the usage charges of the device can eat into these profits quickly. It’s not uncommon for a company rep to travel to Europe for a week and return with charges of \$1,500 or \$2,000 on their wireless device. If a company has several of these folks in different spots internationally you can see how a company can have \$10,000 in wireless charges in a single month.

There are ways to cut down on these charges. One is to buy a smart phone when you travel to a foreign country and use their local service. There are still long distance charges but they aren’t as high. But then the user has to inform people trying to reach them that they have a different phone number and email address. Not a popular choice for the company rep when he gets off the plane in Frankfurt.

There are two types of wireless technology, Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) and Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM). The most common is GSM service which until now was only available with Rogers Wireless. Those roaming internationally are theoretically capable of removing the Subscriber Identity Module card or SIM card and replacing it with a SIM card from the country they are in. Again, you have to go through the pain of informing contacts of your new number. Also, in Canada, the SIM cards are locked and you have to find and pay someone to unlock

the unit before being able to replace the SIM card resulting in more pain for the user.

But do not despair. RIM is in the process of launching their new BlackBerry 8830 World Phone. This is a new toy that is much more than a pretty face. It is a CDMA BlackBerry that lets you roam globally on GSM networks. You can roam the world with full mobile and data coverage without having to change smartphones, phone numbers or email addresses. That pain is gone.

This little beauty has GPS. Combined with BlackBerry Maps you can paste in an address or click on an address in your address book and receive turn-by-turn directions wherever you are. This will be a huge feature for our international traveling friends.

International data charges have been a considerable expense. This unit will save expenses because it will download files without company logos and other graphics that are costly yet needless. It promises to be a lot faster than other smartphones and the user will be able to download Power Point and other large files quickly.

Other features such as instant messaging, tethered modem, voice-activated dialing, and trackball make this a very attractive new product. Bell/Aliant has announced their launch while Rogers and Telus launches are any day now.

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