



PRINTER FRIENDLY

[\[Print\]](#) [\[Close\]](#)

World Wide Technology looks to make hospitals healthier

By ***Rachel Melcer***

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Friday, Nov. 23 2007

World Wide Technology Inc., which specializes in providing individualized and often complex prescriptions for clients' information technology ills, is offering its first over-the-counter solution.

The company, based in Maryland Heights, hopes to equip hospitals across the country with its Unified Communications at the Point of Care system. It combines technologies from Cisco Systems, AeroScout Inc. and Motion Computing Inc. in a package that can enable electronic health records, voice over Internet communications, high-speed Internet access and wireless tracking of personnel and equipment.

"Our focus on health care is strategic to the future growth of our business," said James Kavanaugh, World Wide's co-founder and chief executive.

The Point of Care system is a new type of offering for World Wide, a 17-year-old IT integrator that has grown by consulting and meeting the needs of clients one by one — though with a focus on specific markets including governments and telecommunications firms.

Adding a one-size-fits-all approach "is World Wide evolving as a company," said Bob Olwig, vice president of corporate business development. "Now that we have critical mass in certain industries, we're developing some core expertise in them."

World Wide soon will launch a similarly packaged IT solution for data centers, he said.

The company expects to report a record of nearly \$2.5 billion in 2007 revenue, with \$800 million of that comprised of sales of Cisco Systems equipment, Olwig said. World Wide also is a member of Cisco's Industry Solutions Partner Network, which encourages companies that utilize Cisco equipment to work together in creating product and service offerings tailored for particular industries.

Health care sales account for about \$100 million of World Wide's revenue this year. Most of that involves installing Cisco's wireless computer network and software, which form the backbone for a host of other technology offerings. Once a hospital decides to invest in a Cisco network, relatively modest additional investments can bring a lot of new capabilities, Olwig said.

Hospitals can use technology to improve the quality of service and patient care, which is important in an increasingly competitive industry.

World Wide's system can, for example, allow a doctor or nurse to pick up and log on to a compact and wireless tablet-sized computer before entering a patient's room. The device recognizes the user and automatically loads her preferred settings and security clearance.

At the patient's bedside, that computer allows the caregiver to check test results, enter orders, consult with a colleague, or receive calls automatically routed from his office or work station. If the hospital also has a radio frequency identification system in place, the tablet can call up information on

the exact location of an RFID-tagged staff member or piece of equipment and plot it on a floor plan of the building.

About a half-dozen of World Wide's existing health care customers are evaluating the total system, which costs "hundreds of thousands of dollars," Olwig said.

"They're the early adopters," he said. While electronic medical records are catching on, "wireless and asset-tracking technology in hospitals is relatively new. ... It's more the innovative and forward-thinking hospitals that are implementing them today."

St. Louis-based SSM Health Care, one of the largest Catholic systems in the country, certainly wants to be counted in that category. It is rolling out electronic medical records across its St. Louis facilities, and is aiming for state-of-the-art systems at SSM St. Clare Health Center that is being built near Fenton with a March 2009 target for opening.

Mike Paasch, vice president and regional chief information officer for SSM Health Care-St. Louis, said specific technologies for St. Clare still are being evaluated. But SSM does a lot of work with World Wide as well as with Cisco, he said.

St. Clare will have a high-speed wireless Cisco network to enable an electronic health records system with access at patients' bedsides, said Kevin Cross, administrative director of IT operations.

SSM anticipates at some point adding on an RFID system "to help us streamline business and clinical processes and free up staff time by assisting in the location of key assets that are critical to patient care," he said.

Hospitals are more willing to make the leap to advanced technologies these days than even a few years ago, because costs have come down, Paasch said. In addition, technology vendors have become more sophisticated in understanding the industry's specialized needs.

That's what happened at World Wide, Olwig said.

The Point of Care system was created "because we were really listening to our customers and recognized the potential," he said.

rmelcer@post-dispatch.com | 314-340-8394

If you enjoy reading about interesting news, you might like the 3 O'Clock Stir from STLtoday.com. Sign up and you'll receive an email with unique stories of the day, every Monday-Friday, at no charge. Sign up at <http://newsletters.stltoday.com>
