

CeBIT Reflects Period of Evolution

VoIP (voice-over-IP), Internet telephony, wireless (from ZigBee via Bluetooth and WLAN (wireless LAN) up to 3G/UMTS) and IT Security were some of the buzzwords at CeBIT 2005, held March 10-16, 2005 in Hannover, Germany. Participation by exhibitors from Asia was higher than ever before; China, for instance, was represented by 310 companies (see Fig).

There were no revolutionary new products this year; the exhibition instead reflected a period of evolution. In the wireless area, for example, Bluetooth is now almost ubiquitous in the mobile phone and PDA sectors – which meant there was no explicit emphasis on Bluetooth.

WLAN, MIMO, SRX

WLAN was one of the hot topics. A wireless broadband router, the WRT54GX, and the Wireless-G notebook adapter, the WPC54GX, from the Cisco's subsidiary Linksys, with SRX, were typical examples of the WLAN products of interest. These devices combine smart antenna technology with standards-based Wireless-G (802.11g) networking. By overlaying the signals of two Wireless-G compatible radios, the multiple in, multiple out (MIMO)

technology effectively doubles its data rate.

Unlike ordinary wireless networking technologies that are confused by signal reflections, MIMO actually uses these reflections to increase its range and reduce "dead spots" in the wireless coverage area. The robust signal travels further and maintains wireless connection up to three times further than standard Wireless-G can. And the further away users are, the better the advantages become – the higher data rate and reflection-friendly technology can yield up to eight times more throughput than Wireless-G in some situations. The network avoids interference by dynamically switching to the clearest channel available.

According to Linksys, even standard Wireless-G and -B equipment will work better when communicating with SRX-enabled devices. Another company exhibiting MIMO-enabled devices was Belkin. Both companies' products use MIMO/OFDM ICs from Airgo Networks of the US.

IT Security

From an organizational point of view, IT security has gained in importance, with the relevant companies all located in hall 7, and with two special subshows – "Center for Information Security" and "Security Software Area" – which provided an overview of most aspects of data and systems security. One of the key themes was wireless network and PC or workstation security.

In the area of software security, the focus was not only on anti-virus and spam protection, but also on related topics like spyware and

"phishing". Important trends included the refinement of relevant algorithms as well as the faster updating of software and signatures and the easiest possible administration techniques for security packages.

Mobile phone security is also becoming a key issue. While walking several km through CeBIT's halls, the impression gained was that security concerns have now reached the vendors as well, and several products are already available; however, the big question is, Will consumers be willing to pay for it?

VoIP

Given the tremendous interest of CeBIT's visitors in VoIP, it is quite likely that this market segment will experience considerable market changes within the next three years.

AVM, Germany's number 1 supplier of VoIP devices, presented (in addition to its VoIP box for analog phones) a member of its Fritz! Box-Fon family, which allows the direct connection of ISDN terminals or an ISDN PaBX to the Internet. Incoming calls are mostly received via standard phone lines (POTS); however, outgoing calls can be routed according to a routing table via the Internet or via the traditional phone network.

PC Noise Reduction

The noise created by a PC has become a major topic in Europe – at least for PC users – and several manufacturers showed products for reducing this noise.

Previously, European companies like Papst, Verax and Silentmaxx almost enjoyed a monopoly on the production and distribution of extremely silent-running fans, but there are now more Asian companies presenting products in this sector. JSP-Tech of Taiwan, for example, showed its EZcool power supplies equipped with a 14cm no-noise fan made in Asia. ■

by Alfred Vollmer



China Pavilion