

COMPUTER SHOPPER

There was a lot of underground buzz at CES 2007 about Wireless USB, an emerging technology that allegedly could do anything from wirelessly connect your printer and PC to high-tech stunts like over-the-airwaves transmission of HD video content. Belkin launched a starter product, a wireless USB hub, that quickly fizzled. In fact, the entire category has gone exactly nowhere in the past year.

According to Serdar Yurdakul, director of business development and marketing for Wisair, a company that makes the chips for Wireless USB devices, that's about to change. He says Wisair has just announced a single-chip solution for wireless USB devices that will shave costs and make the technology affordable in devices like printers, cameras, and hubs.

While the new single-chip technology costs half as much as previous two-chip solutions, expect to wait a while before this technology gains broad acceptance. Yurdakul says that the top laptop vendors in the United States (he couldn't name them) are considering integrated Wireless USB by year's end. The first peripherals to integrate the technology will be hubs, printers, and external hard drives. Next up will be consumer electronics devices such as cameras, camcorders, and portable media players.

A primary advantage to Wireless USB technology, which is built upon the UltraWideband technology, is that it's more secure than Wi-Fi because it automatically establishes device-to-device link. It's not a network, and you own both ends of the process, unlike Wi-Fi.

Another advantage is that Wireless USB consumes very little power, an important consideration for handheld devices. And Yurdakul says Wireless USB has a throughput of more than 100Mbps, which is way faster than that of Bluetooth (the range is the same, however).

If this all pans out, expect to see more Wireless USB announcements at CES 2008. Let's just hope we see some shipping products, too.

