



Get Ready to Grab the mHealth Wave

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What do you think about when you think of AT&T, Verizon and Sprint? Probably wireless and telephone and Internet and television -- but not healthcare. Yet they will play an important role in the development of the new mHealth industry segment. These companies understand they will play an important part in this new revolution, but today they simply don't have a clue what that means exactly.

Suddenly, mHealth is very visible in the wireless industry. At the [CTIA](#) show a few weeks ago in Orlando, there were many companies up and down the aisles from every corner of the industry. They were trying to capture the attention of the attendees, who were mesmerized by all the bright lights and cool things to see. Mixed in with all this craziness, the newly planted seeds of the wireless health space were starting to take root.

[Qualcomm](#) (Nasdaq: QCOM) looks like one of the leaders in this new wireless health space. At the show, it had its own huge booth as usual, but it also sponsored a separate area, the [Wireless Health Pavilion](#), which gave space to many small companies with big ideas.

I met with representatives of several of these companies, and they have very interesting and exciting ideas. New companies like [Diversinet](#), which enables secure, mobile communications among healthcare professionals, hospitals and the entire healthcare ecosystem. [Independa](#) is another; it will announce a tablet-based service that remotely monitors homebound patient health and reminds them of their medications, appointments and other important things, so off-site caregivers can view trends and spot problems before they become crises.

There were others, like [Magellan](#), [Zinwave](#), [Mobi Health News](#), [CellTrak Technologies](#), [AnyDATA](#), [Telcare](#), [OptimizeMe](#) and many more.

There were so many new and really cool ideas, I could see how exciting the next decade will be watching new opportunities develop.

Transformation and Renewal

I talked with Don Jones, VP of business development for Wireless Health at Qualcomm. In every revolution, there are a few key people and companies that help to drive things in the right direction. Don and Qualcomm are part of that small group with a large voice helping to drive mHealth.

I had coffee with Rob McCray who is president and CEO of the [Wireless-Life Sciences Alliance](#), also at Qualcomm's Wireless Health Pavilion. Rob has a strong desire to bring wireless health to reality, and this global trade organization is bringing CEOs from wireless health companies together with business leaders and researchers in healthcare and technology.

There are other companies just as active in this space, large and small, and I am getting to know them all as they get in touch with me.

The fun part is watching an old and established wireless industry transform itself. What, you don't think wireless is old and established? Well, compare it to the new mHealth space, and you will see what I mean.

I am starting to meet some very interesting people who are driving this young and exciting industry segment. The blending of healthcare and wireless has been growing in recent years.

I think 2011, this year, will be the breakout year when it takes on a life of its own.

With that said, the leaders of today may or may not be the leaders of tomorrow. Remember what we saw with the Internet. While [eBay](#) (Nasdaq: EBAY) and [Amazon.com](#) (Nasdaq: AMZN) are still doing well, where are other previous leaders -- like Prodigy and Netscape? They were important, but they are no longer.

So who will still be here, who will disappear, and who will appear during the next five years? Who will capture the imagination of the marketplace, investors and the media?

Wireless health is one of the newest -- and is going to be one of the hottest -- growth areas going forward. The more I look into this new space the more interesting it gets, and the more questions I have.

This is exciting from an investors' point of view, although it is like a minefield. Some companies are going to grow, and some won't. Picking the winners to invest in is always the challenge.

I have talked with many executives from large companies, and from smaller companies with great ideas looking for venture capital. Angel investors. How they find each other remains one of the big challenges.

Chief marketing officers for this new sector have a big opportunity and a bigger challenge. How do you get the word out on such a new area? Ten years from now it won't be a problem, but today most people have never heard of wireless healthcare.

Wide-Open Frontier

Three companies here in the United States that will play a role in this space are [AT&T](#) (NYSE: T), [Verizon](#) and [Sprint](#) (NYSE: S). There are plenty of other companies in other countries. These are the companies that have the networks to connect patients and the entire medical community, both wireless and wireline.

What do you think about when you think of AT&T, Verizon and Sprint? Probably wireless and telephone and Internet and television -- but not healthcare. Yet they will play an important role in the development of this new industry segment.

I have talked with each of these companies, and so have many others from the wireless health industry, and I think we all have found the same thing. These companies understand they will play an important part in this new revolution, but today they simply don't have a clue what that means exactly.

Trying to get AT&T, Verizon and Sprint to think like a healthcare company is like trying to fit a round peg into a square hole. Yet it's a hurdle we have to get over to make all this come true.

[Google](#) (Nasdaq: GOOG) and [Yahoo](#) (Nasdaq: YHOO) also have search engines for this sector. We have to encourage these companies to continue rapidly moving in this direction. This is an amazing opportunity.

Does that mean these wireless companies need to hire healthcare executives, or does that mean the healthcare companies need to hire wireless execs? Too bad there are so few executives who really understand the coming opportunity from all sides. Perhaps that is an opportunity to explore.

Barry Green, owner and innovator with Consultants At Large, says he sees a big opportunity here in this space and doesn't realize why carriers are not there yet. He says someone has to build the bridges to connect wireless and healthcare.

As I see it, you can either lead or follow in this new space. There are no long-standing rules yet. I believe it is up to the CEO of every company to decide which role to take. How do you build this bridge? Companies think they are moving in the right direction, but this is more like the wild wild West.

I am a relative newcomer to this space. I have been a wireless and telecom industry analyst for 25 years. The business sectors and the companies I follow have expanded over that time to include many in the cellular and wireless, telephone, Internet, cable television and IPTV space.

Now I am following this brand new mHealth and eHealth industry as it cracks open the eggshell and hatches in the beautiful sunshine of a warm, spring morning. Let's continue to learn about this exciting and challenging new segment together.

There are loads of opportunities and risks for investors, venture capitalists, workers, executives, partners, customers -- and of course, the patients and doctors. This new playground means we'll have some fun, make some money, find new careers, and change the world of wireless healthcare forever.

Remember, change only takes a moment. Then everyone has to rush to catch up. 