

# Healthcare **IT** News

## Healthcare ahead of the pack with wireless technology

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In an unusual bit of role reversal, healthcare finds itself in front of the pack when it comes to adopting wireless technologies.

“Healthcare is a strong vertical for us,” notes Heather Howland, senior marketing manager for Redwood City, Calif.-based Ascendent Systems. “We’ve seen a tremendous amount of growth in the past year as people learn that our technology can help them.”

Ascendent has created a [Voice Mobility](#) Suite application that integrates into a health system’s existing telephone infrastructure to consolidate wireless channels into a single voice identity.

“Medical staff are commonly dealing with multiple phone numbers – we’ve given them a definitive phone number,” [Howland](#) said. “Having one number to call makes it much easier for people to be reached. So if a nurse is out on the floor and needs to consult a physician, there is a direct line to call. It saves critical minutes when lives are in the balance.”

[Jeff Kunst](#), vice president of marketing for Vienna, Va. -based MobileAccess, believes healthcare is leading the way in adopting wireless solutions because provider organizations don’t have to be convinced that they need it.

“They’re telling us that we don’t have to prove anything to them – they just want our bid,” he said. “It has become a mainstream world of turning the crank and getting the solutions installed.”

MobileAccess’ primary mission now is to “harmonize and demystify” an organization’s different frequencies, such as nurse call and data applications over the wireless band.

“It’s quite appropos when considering the disparate nature of wireless devices,” he said. “The biggest change is with WiMAX in the 2.5 gigahertz band, which is not only challenging in getting it into the macro network, but inside a building.”

Another new band – 700 megahertz – is being auctioned off in January, inviting non-traditional players such as [Google](#) to enter the bidding, [Kunst](#) said.

Healthcare's widespread acceptance of wireless applications has led to a plethora of products designed for specific purposes.

Among them:

- Reston, Va. -based [Ekahau](#) has introduced a Wi-Fi Real Time Location System that uses existing phone networks to pinpoint the locations of clinical assets, including people. "The magic is in the core capability of our system to operate over any Wi Fi network," said Tuomo Rutanen, vice president of business development. "Sophisticated location algorithms allow us to locate the assets without the need to put readers at every doorway."
- Bellevue, Wash. -based Formotus offers software that works with Windows "to create rich data applications and make it a powerful tool," said [CEO Joseph Verschueren](#). "It's built for regular people, not developers. It's drag and drop for Web services so that instead of having proprietary languages, a single application talks to multiple databases. It allows for the conversion and deployment of all mobile devices."
- Newark, Calif. -based [Socket Mobile](#) focuses on "unifying disparate devices into a cohesive management structure that goes all the way down to the peripherals," said [Bob Zink](#), senior vice president of worldwide sales and marketing. "What we're seeing is the physicians, nurses and various workers making individual purchase decisions or small group decisions regarding the type of devices they want. It's a mixed bag of devices with varying functions and prices. We manage the disparate fleet of devices and unify the environment from a functionality and device perspective."