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## Real estate agents flock to PocketSurfer for wireless Web

By *Martin Desmarais*

Published: Sunday, May 1, 2005

MONTREAL, Canada - DataWind Net Access Corp. has been steadily permeating the consumer market with its wireless Web access devices and services, since it was founded four years ago. However, the company has received a great boost from the use of its products in the real estate industry.

The Montreal-based DataWind, which was founded by brothers Suneet and Raja Tuli in 2001, sells a handheld device called The PocketSurfer Web viewer.

PocketSurfer is a checkbook sized handheld - it measures 6 inches by 2.75 inches by .58 inches - that boasts an Internet viewing experience like that of a desktop computer. What this means is that viewers see the Web in the same way they would on a desktop monitor and without the "scrunching" of content through reformatting or clipping, according to DataWind.

PocketSurfer's color screen is 640 pixels wide by 240 pixels high, compared to the typical width of 320 pixels on PDAs or 120 pixels on cellphones. It also has a thumb keyboard and uses a lithium ion rechargeable battery that last for four to six hours.

Suneet Tuli said that PocketSurfer was built specifically for Internet viewing, something that cannot be said for most other wireless devices that also have Web access. The larger screen and better pixels are a direct result of this.



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"The Internet was not made for phones and Blackberries," he said, which is why Web page content has to be altered for viewing on such devices - a problem he believes will eventually come to haunt makers of the standard handheld devices.

"None of the solutions out there give you the real Web," he said.

"You have to be able to deliver the Web exactly as you see it," he added.



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Another factor that hurts how the typical handheld device offers the Internet is the speed in which they can download data. Typical cellphones and other PDAs often take minutes to download data from the Web.

DataWind has overcome this problem with PocketSurfer. According to Tuli, PocketSurfer is 10 to 30 times faster than other handheld devices. "We can deliver (Web pages) in five to seven seconds," he said.

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He believes this speed sets PocketSurfer apart from other options out there.

"A couple of minutes a page, to be frank, is useless," he said. "Nobody wants two minutes a page on their desktop."

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The biggest challenge affecting the speed at which handheld devices can download Internet data is the bandwidth offered by wireless Internet service providers. Most wireless networks don't have enough bandwidth to allow handheld devices to increase download speeds.

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PocketSurfer has overcome this problem with its own technology that accelerates the deliver of data over the bandwidth available through standard Internet service providers. Tuli describes this process as "reduction of data." Datawind has applied for 23 patents for this technology and already has seven.

Datawind markets its PocketSurfer through cellular dealers and cellphone stores at a cost of \$200, with a \$9.99 monthly service fee.

However, PocketSurfer really took off last fall when the company debuted it to the real estate industry at the National Association of Realtors annual trade show.

"In a lot of real estate markets, new listings are very important. And new listings go up all day. If a realtor is in the field, he can't usually check up on them," Tuli said. DataWind believes PocketSurfer is the answer.

PocketSurfer is attractive to realtors because it gives them mobile access to the Multiple Listing Service, which provides them with mortgage information, financial calculators, house listings, property photos, maps and directions, according to DataWind.

"Realtors need property listing and they are all online," Tuli said. "[With PocketSurfer] they can find them quicker."

"They can get all the information any time," he added.

Tuli is very excited about the prospects of PocketSurfer in the real estate industry, with 1.5 million realtors, calling it the company's "biggest vertical."

"We've gotten a huge response from real estate agents," he said.

DataWind is now marketing directly to realtors and pitching its products and services to realtor organizations and boards.

DataWind has also received a good response from other industries that have surprised Tuli, such as the trucking industry.

"Today truckers have become sophisticated," Tuli said. "Truckers are now on the Web bidding for cargo and selling space on their trucks."

DataWind is pitching PocketSurfer to truckers, and groups like the American Truckers Association, as a product that allows drivers to access the Web and bid for jobs while on the road in their trucks.

Tuli believes that the uncovering of a variety of applications for PocketSurfer is a sign of good things to come.

"The great thing about the Internet is it is such a global phenomenon," he said. "We don't get limited by territory. It gives us a broader base of customers."

DataWind is already marketing its products in the United States and Canada, recently launched in Tanzania, and plans to launch in Turkey, Latin America and Southeast Asia.

The privately backed company has 28 employees, two-thirds of which are research and development engineers.

Suneet and Raja Tuli grew up in Northern Alberta, Canada. Suneet is a civil engineer, who graduated from the University of Toronto. Raja is a computer engineer, who graduated from the University of Alberta.

Suneet is DataWind's chief executive officer and handles sales and marketing. Raja developed PocketSurfer and is in charge of technology and product development.

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