

## Editorial

# Nextel and Sprint: A Good Marriage?

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Nextel is faced with a decision: spend some \$3 billion to transfer its FCC approved frequency from the 800 MHz bandwidth to 1.2 GHz or thereabouts, or seek a marriage with Sprint Wireless. Nextel wisely chose the later.

Prompted by Nextel users' complaints about interference, dropped calls and walkie-talkie communiques that don't connect, as well as complaints from police and emergency agencies about business users interfering with their communications, Nextel faced a long and expensive frequency change process. Police, EMT and other first responders have operated on segments of the 800 MHz bandwidth for years, and it's obvious that for safety's sake there should be no interference at all from commercial traffic on these frequencies. So it's Nextel and its business customers who must change frequencies.

Because Sprint has long sought the wireless business user, a commodity that Nextel virtually owns, and Nextel has sought more data and multimedia ability, this seems to be a very good fit. Over the next year and a half, we'll see a merging of technologies, as the new company attempts to reconcile starkly diverse technologies. Nextel/Sprint, the new company's name, will feature both Nextel's convenient 2-way walkie talkie feature with Sprint's high-tech data and multimedia capabilities.

For Nextel users, the transition should be relatively innocuous. Nextel is already adding some 40 towers to the Orlando market, and plans are to add more towers statewide, increasing reliability to Nextel's existing business users.

Of course, this merger must pass muster and gain approval from the FCC, but I see no impediment to the deal going forward. It is in everyone's best interests to see it through.

I have long felt that the next generation of mobile technology must include internet, data and multimedia transference and telephony, and users will demand that this technology be available instantly through displays on a single, hand held instrument. Soon subscribers will be able to send and receive email and attached files, place a call, access Internet databases, and send

and receive graphic images - all through one simple hand held device. In an obvious example of life imitating art, Dick Tracey's clever little 2-way watch will be a reality - and then some.

While I'm certainly no fan of Sprint, I welcome this merger as being the first step in reaching that goal, as well as containing - and probably even lowering - current wireless consumer prices.

So I will continue to stay with Nextel because I believe that when this all gets sorted out, Nextel/Sprint will have, hands down, the best and most technologically advanced service in the industry. And by gambling \$35 billion on this good marriage of convenience, both Nextel and Sprint agree with me.

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