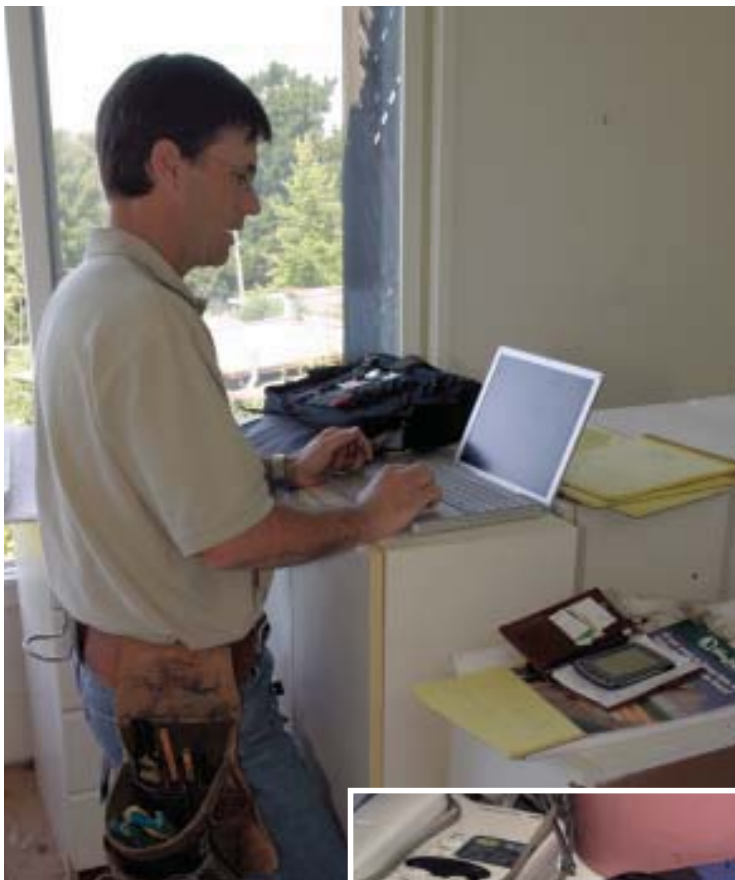


On the Job

Working Wireless

by David Grubb

There are two routers on my current remodeling job: One spins carbide bits and the other provides a WiFi network so I can connect wirelessly to the Internet. The latter came about because the clients used a wireless router to access their broadband connection, and when they moved out they said we could use it.



Wireless is great on a remodeling job, because setting up a permanent site office is rarely practical. As soon as you set up in one room, you get chased out when the crew and subs need to work there.

With the wireless network, I can take my laptop anywhere in the building to do e-mail or access the Internet. In the past, this stuff had to wait until I could get back to my office — usually at the end of the day. Now, when I have questions for the owner, architect, or engineer, I can send e-mail messages straight from the job. I still use my cellphone, of course, but I actually prefer e-mail because it leaves a paper trail for documenting decisions.

The architect on this particular job has been e-mailing drawings as PDF files, a format that just about any computer can read. He'll send a section drawing for a television cabinet, for instance, and I'll forward it to the cabinetmaker and the audio installer at the same time. It's easier and more reliable than sending a fax.

I use a digital camera to document the job, and there are times I want to access those photos on site. In the past, they'd sit on my office computer because there was no point bringing a laptop to the job when I couldn't connect to anything. These days, if we run into an unexpected condition, I can immediately e-mail a photo to the architect or engineer, and there's a good chance I'll get an answer the same day.

Most of my clients have broadband access, but if the next one doesn't have a wireless router, I'll bring my own. The routers cost less than \$100, and unless your computer is really old, the connection is easy to set up.

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