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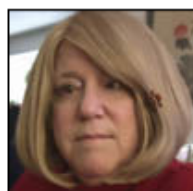


[Interview] Part 3: Barb Bowman - Top 5 Challenges with Wireless Technology

This is the next blog in the [continuing series](#) of interviews with leading professionals. In this series of blogs, I have an exclusive interview with Barb Bowman. Barb is an internationally acknowledged home networking and device authority; Microsoft Most Valuable Professional (MVP) - Windows Networking and Windows XP Media Center.

Enjoy!

Stephen Ibaraki, [FCIPS](#), [I.S.P.](#), [MVP](#)



Stephen: Describe your five top challenges and their solutions.

Barb:

1. *Moving consumers off existing wireless home networks that use old WEP only technology or no security at all to WPA or WPA2.*

Residential users are networking two or more computers at a rapid pace. Consumers are not replacing older routers or updating firmware to provide the security they need. Educating consumers through articles, webcasts, newsgroups and all available forums is one avenue to meet this challenge.

2. *Educating everyone on the real risks of public wireless networks.*

I've detailed solutions above in best practices, but additionally convincing providers of public networks to post similar advice will do much to educate wireless users. Similarly, financial institutions and online commerce web sites need to post warnings.

3. *Old hardware and technology that does not support WPA including old operating systems.*

It's a fact of life that old computers are passed down to kids and there are first and second generation devices on home networks that support only WEP. At the same time, the head of household has a state of the art computer online with sensitive personal data in shared folders with incredibly weak passwords like 1234.

Obvious hardware solutions (attaching a wireless gaming adapter to the wired Ethernet port on a device that isn't upgradeable) require money that the home user isn't willing to spend.

The solution is to educate home users on security.

4. *Residential home networking wireless routers (usually the entry level gear that is heavily discounted) that ship with no wireless security and allow configuration over a wireless interface coupled with a default known username and password for admin access.*

Vendors need to modify their defaults and at the same time, a really universal and transparent way for anyone to setup a new wireless network needs to be universally adopted. Microsoft has made huge steps in this area with Windows Rally technologies, but these need to be widely adopted by all vendors and consumer electronics manufacturers and Microsoft needs to backport them completely to older supported operating systems. Other OS's need to include compatible technology.

5. *ISP's who insist on deploying their old lagging edge wireless routers with weak security as part of a standard install.*

Some of the equipment the DSL providers and even some cable providers are installing are appallingly behind the curve in security and functionality. It's a real problem to replace or update the firmware in many of these. There's no easy solution here other than to implement an evergreen contract replacement policy



John Osley Director Community Evangelism
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that will cost both the consumer and the provider.

**Look for more with Barb in the next blog.
I encourage you to share your thoughts here on these interviews or send me an e-mail at sibaraki@cips.ca.**

Posted: Thursday, June 21, 2007 8:00 AM by [cdnitmgr](#)
Filed under: [Stephen Ibaraki](#), [Interviews](#), [Wireless Technology](#)

Comments

Graham Jones said:

Barb,

This is much to my ears I have long criticized the home router vendors for not making the wireless component secure out of the box by default (WPA or WPA2). It isn't a critical difficulty for the setup process to be automated by answering a few questions via a wizard. Most people these days are used to the idea of sticking in a CD and following some bad instructions. Wireless is plugged so hard now in the consumer space because of its convenience but the average person is so totally unaware of the implications and the sales people are not sufficiently educated. The other side of the coin is that some people hear all kinds of bad stories that they are frightened off completely, which is a pity.

Since I teach the desktop I interact with the general public quite often. I often get asked about wireless and I try to give some advice. I also teach a whole day class where we build a computer from scratch, install XP Pro, setup a LAN and connect to the internet I am trying to persuade the place where I teach to make its wireless LAN so that I can demonstrate the setup. If you have access to any teaching materials suitable for the general public I would be very interested.

Cheers

Graham J.

June 21, 2007 7:05 PM

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re: [Interview] Part 3: Barb Bowman - Top 5 Challenges with Wireless Technol

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