**Dressed for Success**

By Simson Garfinkel

After putting on his clothes, Doug Platt starts most days by fastening the snaps of his hip pouch, hanging a few bangers from his belt, and strapping a keyboard around his waist. Last to go on is his latest creation—"Private Eye"—a white, rectangular box the size of a gherkin that flips over on one side and gives Platt a crisp 25-line by 80-column display in vivid red glowing letters.

Platt, president of Select Tech Inc., is the inventor of the HIP-PC, a four-pound DOS computer built into a hip pack that he claims is far more suited to the needs of people-on-the-go than conventional laptop or palmtop computers. Platt imagines that they could be built into a car's steering wheel, taking up virtually no space at all. Possibilities really open up when the HIP-PC is combined with a wireless modem, says Platt. Since both the chord keyboard and the Private Eye are private and quiet, two "wirelessly networked computer wearers" can engage in "Virtual Telepathy"—discrete, silent communication unseen by anyone standing next to them. Platt imagines SWAT teams using HIP-PCs as they close in on a suspect, communicating silently with each other and using hand signals to convey tactical information. He envisions using a wireless modem to connect his computer to four banks on CD-ROM, thus mystifying people with his memory and command of current events. "This summer, he hopes to set up a nationwide network of users, who could have a virtual rendezvous in cyberspace every day, no matter where they are or what they're doing."

It's the thing of the future," says Marvin Minsky, a professor of computer science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who's thinking of participating in the network experiment. The future will have to wait for at least a few months, however. Since right now Platt's two HIP-PC prototypes are the only ones in existence.

But one day, in the not so distant future, you might be able to strap on Platt's contraption and head over to a HIP-PC Singles night at a local club. If you're standing by the bar and say something to someone who looks interesting, you could punch a few commands into your computer and tap into a personal information file they've chosen to make publicly available. If their occupation, interests, likes, and dislikes seem compatible with yours, then you could send your file to them—and if they respond positively, buy them a soda drink and start talking.

We've all heard about how computers are labor-saving devices, but who'd have thought they could cut down on hours of productive bar talk?

RoboEntrepreneur: Doug Platt and his HIP-PC

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