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Tech Monday

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John Flannery with son Peter, uses GeoVector as a follow-up to the laptop part of his mission to "show that you can take everything you need on the road with you."

GEOVECTOR | Technology helps you find the nearest Starbucks or a lost child

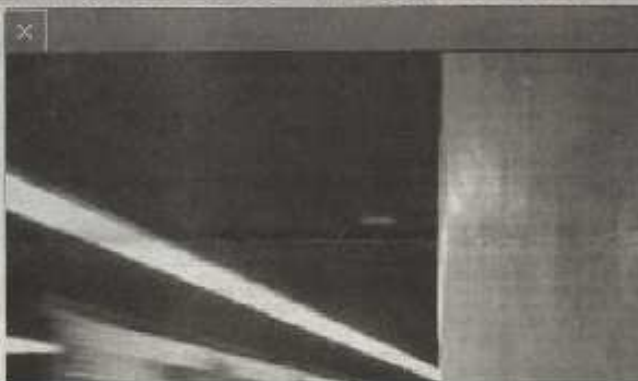
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Those sound like big issues, but it's difficult to dismiss Flannery. After all, he founded Grid Systems in 1979, the company that produced the first laptop computer and gave birth to a billion-dollar industry. Legend has it that he brought a briefcase into the lab and demanded that his engineers fit a computer in half of it.

That was after he left his job as a scientist at Palo Alto's Xerox Palo Alto Research Center. Later, he and a team working with the National Security Agency and the White House to create the president's mobile communications system. He also co-founded Agave, a pioneering company in wireless networking.

Joining him at his latest start-up are his two sons, Peter and Thomas. Flannery sees GeoVector as a natural follow-up to the laptop part of his mission to "show that you can take everything you need on the road with you."

Small scale



Point at the Bay Bridge and your PDA will identify it, and give you background information.

Destination known

NEED TO FIND A STARBUCKS OR THE CLOSEST HOSPITAL? JUST POINT YOUR CELL PHONE.

By Matt Meisell
Mercury News

Ever wish you could use your cell phone as a navigator? That is, point it in the direction you're walking and have it guide you to the nearest Starbucks, or in an emergency, the nearest hospital.

San Francisco's GeoVector plans to let you do just that, as well as play outside adventure games and locate friends and family. It will launch its service with a cell phone company in Asia early next year and soon follow in the U.S. market, according to founder John Flannery.

Here's how it works: A cellular carrier uses global-positioning-system technology to identify a mobile phone's location. The phone contains a tiny electronic compass sensor from GeoVector that determines the direction it is pointing in.

The carrier then takes all of that information and relays it to a GeoVector search engine. GeoVector matches the directional data with the locations of restaurants, hotels, retail stores or other places of interest in databases produced by companies such as Cybertmaps Japan and Microsoft MapPoint.

The technology will let you point your cell phone at a building and have it tell you, for instance, that there's a half-dressing salon on the third floor. The salon might list its phone number, which you can then click on and make an appointment. The salon might even send an ad to your phone giving you a discount. Or if you're touring San Francisco and are unsure of which bridge spans out to Treasure Island, GeoVector will tell you it's the Bay Bridge.

See GEOVECTOR, Page 3E

GEOVECTOR | Technology helps you find the nearest Starbucks or a lost child

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These sound like big ideas, but it's difficult to dismiss Ellenby. After all, he founded Grid Systems in 1979, the company that produced the first laptop computer and gave birth to a billion-dollar industry. Legend has it that he brought a briefcase into the lab and demanded that his engineers fit a computer in half of it.

That was after he left his job as a scientist at Palo Alto's Xerox Palo Alto Research Center. Later, he led a team working with the National Security Agency and the White House to create the president's mobile communications system. He also co-founded Agilis, a pioneering company in wireless networking.

Joining him at his latest start-up are his two sons, Peter and Thomas. Ellenby sees GeoVector as a natural follow-up to the laptop, part of his mission to "show that you can take everything you need on the road with you."

Small scale

He practices what he preaches, taking his laptop around with him on his many trips to Asia and to a favorite secret hide-out at a San Mateo coast creekbed. "I like watching the salmon struggling up the stream," he says.

The trio has worked on GeoVector for about 12 years. Their team of about 15 employees has built a portfolio of more than two dozen patents on pointing and positioning technology.

Meanwhile, several trends have converged to help bring GeoVector to market next year. Mobile phones have become ubiquitous, particularly in Asia where tourists tote camera phones and increasingly use them to buy products and services.

GeoVector's lengthy and delicate negotiations with slow-moving phone manufacturers and carriers also have paid off. By 2006, Ellenby predicts 6 million phones will carry the tiny compass sensor enabling GeoVector's service. He says he's not aware of any competitors.

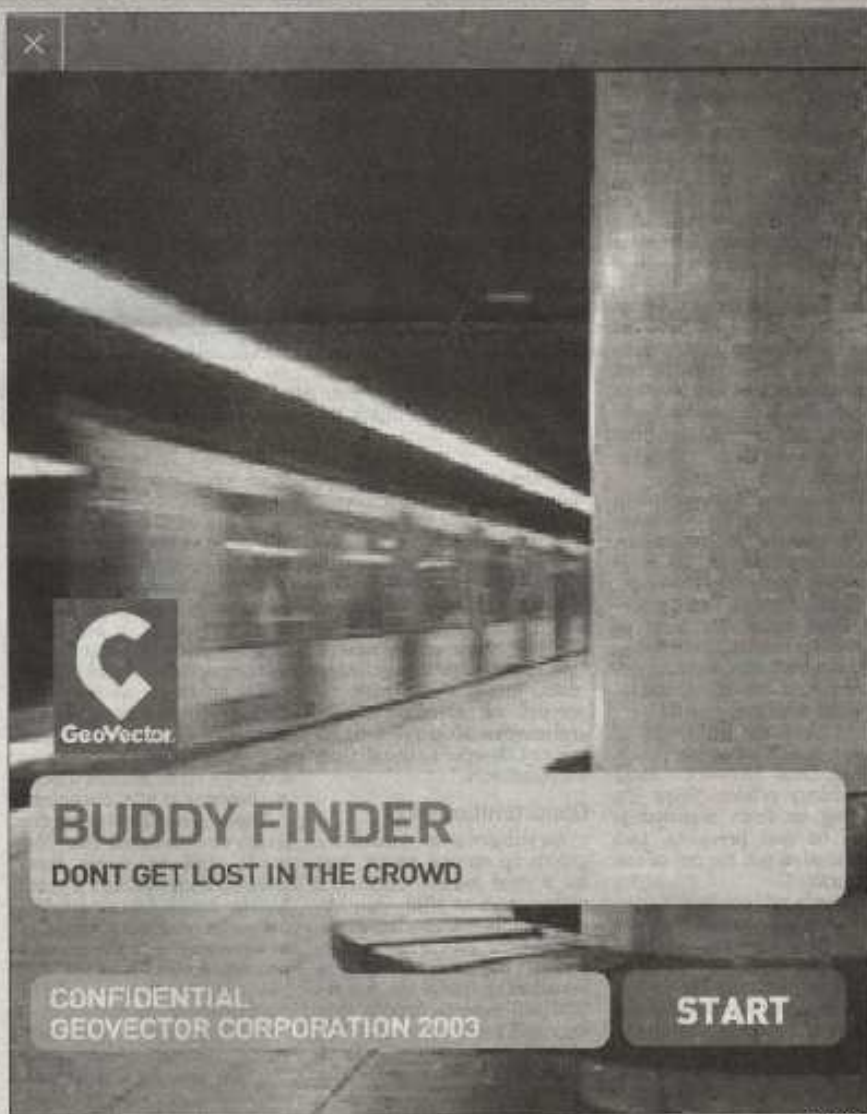
Pointing at the Bay Bridge

John and Peter Ellenby recently demonstrated the technology in San Francisco. They used a simulated version of the service on an iPaq handheld computer because GeoVector does not yet have a partnership with a U.S. phone company.

Standing near the Embarcadero, Peter pointed the iPaq toward the Bay Bridge and it told him the name of the structure. The iPaq also pulled in information from a 10-degree arc around his indicated direction, listing, for example, Boulevard, the restaurant hidden behind a construction site to his right. Turning to his left, several more listings appeared. One was for the Golden Gateway Tennis and Swim Club, under which was a phone number that he could click on and call.

John Ellenby pledges GeoVector will soon let you play adventure games, or hide-and-seek.

Equip your buddies with a phone, and you can play a real-life version of the computer



GeoVector's Buddy Finder enables you to keep track of the exact location of family members while you're traveling. If everyone carries phones, GeoVector can provide directions to find anyone who gets lost.

game "Doom," chasing each other down alleys, targeting your nemesis in your phone screen and shooting fake bullets. GeoVector will tell if your line of fire results in a hit.

Or there's the treasure hunt. You leave a message on a marked spot, say under a tree, and when the other player arrives at the spot, GeoVector sends a message with more directions.

You can take photos of your kids in front of the Bay Bridge and have the bridge's name superimposed on the photo.

Ellenby said GeoVector also can help you keep track of the exact location of family members while you're traveling. If everyone carries phones, GeoVector can provide directions to find anyone who gets lost.

And keeping track of his sons, of course, might make Ellenby's life easier. "Quite rarely do I see Peter anymore," he says, bemoaning his continual trips to Asia.

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