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Faster Wi-Fi up and running

Vendors are set to unleash access points and cards based on the new 802.11g networking standard, which will bring with it a dramatic increase in speed – some five times faster than the current Wi-Fi standard, 802.11b. What's more, the price premium on kit supporting 802.11g is barely 20 percent more than its slower, older sibling.

Belkin, for example, is flogging an access point for £99.99 and a notebook network card for £54.99. The network vendor has teamed up with high-street chains PC World and Dixons for in-store promotion of the benefits of the faster standard, especially when combined with a broadband connection.

The down side? This latest version of Wi-Fi hasn't officially been ratified yet, so there's no guarantee that you'll be able to mix and match your home networking hardware with other vendors' devices.

As such, Belkin's archival, US Robotics, is warning punters not to buy until the standard

is officially approved – a move which is expected at the end of June.

Not entirely coincidentally, US Robotics has chosen the month of July to unveil its own 802.11g range of wireless products which, because of their launch date, are guaranteed to be 100 percent compliant.

What's more, the modem veteran is claiming maximum network speeds of 100Mbps (megabits per second) – theoretically twice the speed offered by other vendors of 802.11g-based products and equivalent to fast ethernet. USR access points will start at £99.99 and a notebook card will set you back £59.99.

The up side of buying now? Belkin is guaranteeing customers that if there are compliance issues with its products goods will be replaced free of charge.

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Kazaa touts cash for access

Fileswapping software giant Kazaa is steps closer to music-business legitimacy with its latest software upgrade. Users can win prizes and earn points that they can then use to buy multimedia content.



When you upgrade to Kazaa Media Desktop 2.5 you automatically download the new Altnet program, Peer Points Manager, which lets you trade hard drive space and bandwidth for points. You can use these points to enter sweepstakes for cash and prizes, or you can use them to purchase Kazaa's premium content, says Kevin Bermeister, Altnet's chief executive officer.

"We are trying to solve the riddle of how to turn a profit on peer-to-peer fileswapping and to entice illegal fileswappers to actually buy content," Bermeister says.

To read more about the record industry's uphill battle against fileswapping see *Music to my peers* on page 126.

MyZones splits the cost of broadband

Wireless broadband company MyZones has launched what it calls the 'world's first integrated Wi-Fi broadband service'. This lets users share their connection with a friend or neighbour, allowing them to split the heavy cost of broadband subscriptions.

"MyZones enables consumers to deploy secure managed Wi-Fi broadband home zones, shared zones and public zones. Consumers can deploy secure home Wi-Fi networks, operate as public access hotspot providers and share broadband costs with their neighbours," says the company's press statement.

But the act of sharing a connection itself is nothing new, despite the company's insistence that the service is revolutionary. Anyone with a broadband connection and a wireless modem could easily start sub-letting broadband to neighbours living within a 50m range – as long as they have a suitable PC and compatible card.

MyZones claims once the access point is installed the service is fully secure, developed as it is around the latest industry-approved WPA (Wi-Fi Protected Access) security standard. Unlike other services, it also allows the main subscriber to authorise who uses the connection, for how long and when.

MyZones costs £9.99 per month, payable on top of existing broadband subscription fees.

