

# The Boston Globe

MONDAY, JULY 11, 2011

THE BOSTON GLOBE

## Business

Science & Innovation

# Where present, future network

Verizon Wireless to unveil its new facility in Waltham

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WALTHAM — A digital jukebox with instant wireless access to 3 million songs. A device that extends cellphone coverage to the back of large grocery stores. And a suitcase that's wirelessly connected to your social network and can tell you when you've forgotten to bring it along.

Which product is market-ready, which will be available soon, and which is a vision for future wireless technology?

At the Verizon Technology Innovation Center in Waltham, which will celebrate its grand opening tomorrow, it can be difficult to tell the present from the future.

The center is a showcase for Verizon, a place for its corporate customers and development partners to come and be wowed. Visitors pass through a pair of stone-façade doors that slide apart, allowing entry into a narrow enclosure with colorful lights that pulsate softly, mimicking a heartbeat. The passage leads to an expansive showroom space with demonstration kiosks, wall-sized touchscreens, and a coffee bar. The building also includes a private reception area and a 30-seat movie theater.

Christine Berberich, regional president for Verizon Wireless in New England, said the exhibits are meant to show off the capabilities of the company's new high-speed 4G LTE cellular network, as well as showcase specific products.

"It's not just about the devices and the phones," Berberich



The Verizon Technology Innovation Center.

said. "[Customers] want the connections."

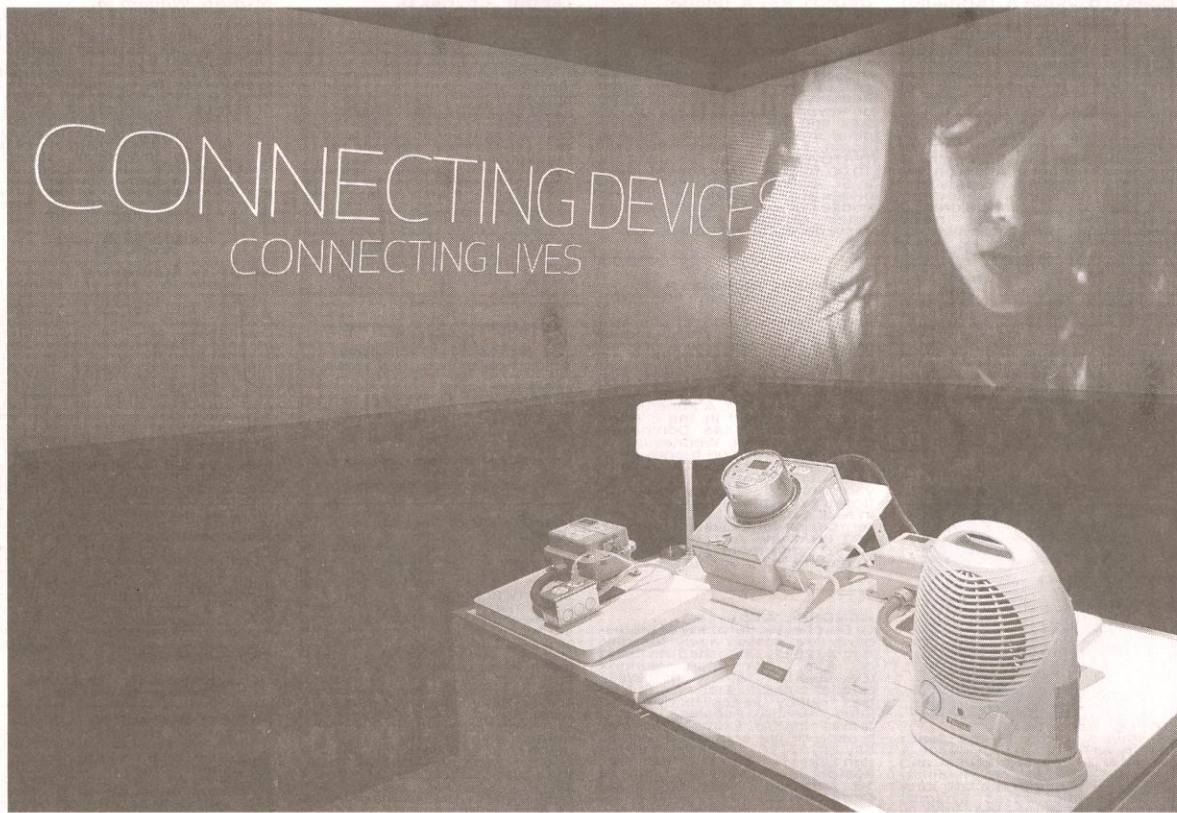
On display are both current and future technology. That wireless jukebox? It's called TouchTunes, and it's already in bars and restaurants across the country. The device that brings life to wireless dead spots in large stores? It will hit the marketplace soon.

And the wireless suitcase that tells you where you've put it? Well, that's just a pipe dream, at least for now. Other gee-whiz future technologies on display include a car that captures images and alerts drivers if the vehicle is hit while parked.

Brian Higgins, Verizon's executive director for LTE ecosystem development, said such exhibits are meant to "inspire companies to think about what's possible" on the new network. "Things that you don't typically see in a Verizon store, that's what we spend the majority of our time demonstrating," Higgins said.

The center, on Verizon's Waltham campus, includes a new structure with 20,000 square feet of showroom space and 40,000 square feet of offices on two floors. It also incorporates 135,000 square feet of lab space in buildings that were renovated beginning in 2009 and were built to foster cooperation between Verizon and its partners.

For example, if a company wanted to create a camera that connects to Verizon's network, that company could work here



BILL GREENE/GLOBE STAFF

Verizon's new facility offered a consumer lab, pictured here. Officials said the center's focus will be business collaboration.

## New center mingles present, future

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with Verizon engineers to build the product and bring it to market.

"The whole facility is really all about collaboration," Higgins said. "We don't usually focus on things like smartphones and tablets in that facility. We're generally more focused on the more complicated solutions, and trying to get them connected."

Boston was one of two test markets (Seattle was the other) for Verizon's high-speed 4G LTE

network, and the company has the largest market share of all wireless companies in Greater Boston. Verizon launched the network, marketed as "lightning fast," in 39 metropolitan areas in December.

AT&T is launching its 4G LTE network this year, with other major carriers expected to follow.

Ken Hyers, senior analyst with Technology Business Research Inc. in Hampton, N.H., said network speed is never fast enough to handle customer demand.

"Given the way all of us like to use data, it will simply never be enough," Hyers said. "As you introduce more bandwidth and faster speeds, people discover new ways to use the technology."

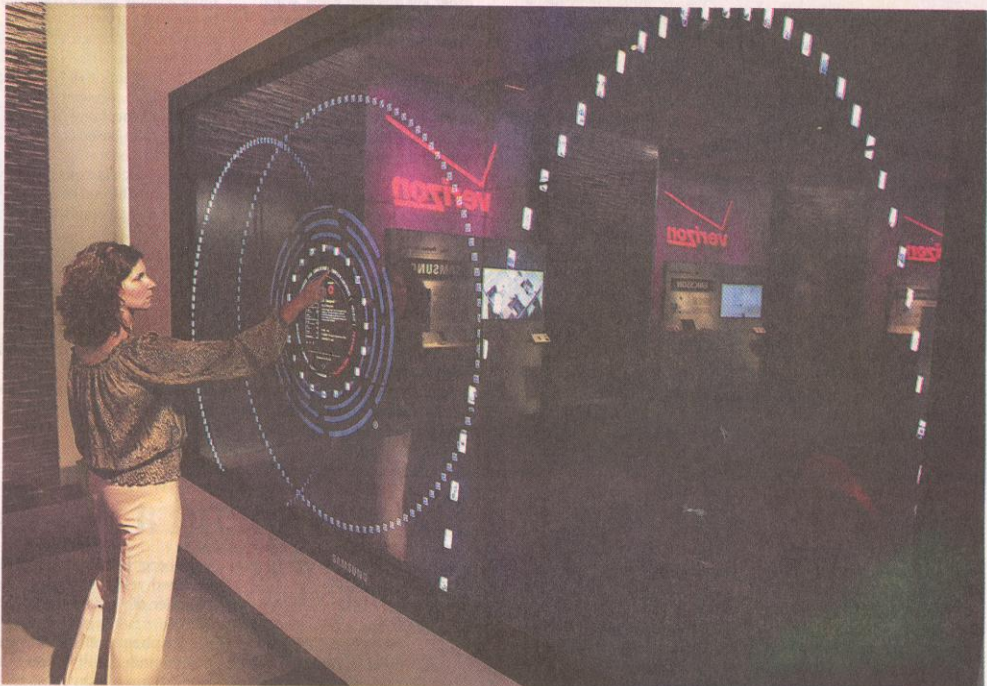
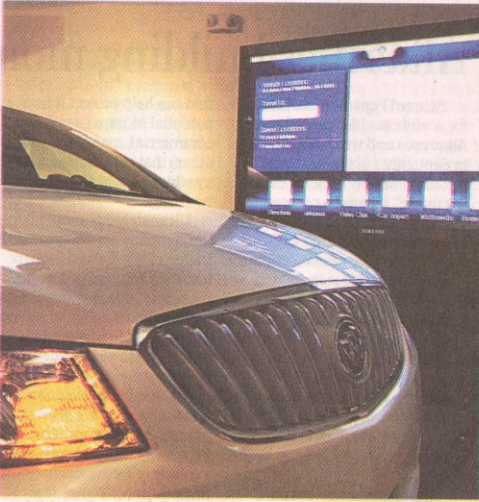
Surging data usage has led several carriers, including Verizon, to cease offering to new customers cellphone plans that allow unlimited data traffic for a single monthly fee.

Phillip Redman, research vice president for research firm Gartner Inc., said the plethora of wireless applications on display

at Verizon's innovation center illustrates another pricing problem.

Carriers will need to offer wireless plans in which consumers pay one price for multiple devices, Redman said.

"I think the wireless carriers would love to charge you a service fee for your washing machine and your TV and everything else," Redman said. "In the end, most people don't want to pay for everything they connect to the network. That's what they've got to figure out."



PHOTOS BY BILL GREENE/GLOBE STAFF

Colleen Sheehan, a public relations representative, demonstrated the app wall at the new innovation center in Waltham. Other displays included a concept car (top left) and TouchTunes, a 4G LTE jukebox with millions of songs.