

S.A. businessman works to advance next-generation cellular technology

Michele Krier and Sandra Lowe Sanchez
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Imagine driving on Interstate 35 to a Longhorns vs. Aggies game. You tune into a channel and get the latest information you want on the Longhorns, from starting line-up to player profiles. On another channel, you can get comparable information on the Aggies.

But this information is not coming from your car radio. It's coming from your cellular phone.

Such "narrow-casting" technology is on its way, thanks in part, to a San Antonio businessman.

George Kauss has partnered with a Steamboat Springs, Colo., inventor and two attorneys in the company Vesuvius Inc. Kauss, chief business officer for the firm, explains that technology behind his company will change the world of media.

"We're calling it the new generation of radio and television stations," he says.

Kauss says he joined Vesuvius after being asked by the company's president, Dan McKenna, who invented the technology. The company will remain based in Steamboat Springs, Kauss says. But the international marketing expert, who has built a consulting business in the United States and Mexico, will continue to provide the firm a "virtual office" in San Antonio.

The technology

Kauss explains that Vesuvius has patented the cellular narrow-casting technology in the United States and is in the process of patenting it worldwide.

The technology will allow people to view video and hear audio from their cellular phone on specific channels. The information is broadcast over the same infrastructure used by cellular phones.

However, as the name of the technology suggests, narrow-casting allows information to be sent to a targeted audience.

"It's infinitely flexible as to what you can broadcast and who you are broadcasting to," Kauss explains.

For example, an Irishman living in the U.S. could view a broadcast from Dublin, he explains.

Similarly, an advertiser wanting to reach the Cuban community in a certain city could broadcast over the cellular infrastructure in Cuban neighborhoods, instead of broadcasting over a Spanish-speaking radio station that had a wider audience.

On the market

Kauss says he expects the technology will begin to debut in 2003. He is in the process of closing on a multimillion-dollar financing package from venture capitalists which he says will help Vesuvius move the technology forward.

He declined to specify the amount.

The funding will help his firm market the technology to cellular phone manufacturers that are interested in it for market development. Kauss explains that this technology can provide tremendous additional revenue service for cellular manufacturers.

In addition, the funding will help Vesuvius approach broadcast providers, such as Clear Channel Worldwide, that will be able to provide the content for the phones.

"We think they'll be very interested in providing the content that the cellular companies are going to need," Kauss says, referring to broadcast firms.

Wide range of experience

Kauss himself is no stranger to exciting ventures. And his track record shows his forte for marketing. A former business partner of Henry Cisneros, Kauss once served as the national marketing director for La Quinta -- a position which took him to Mexico City.

Kauss, who earned his journalism degree from the University of Texas, eventually became Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Tourism under President Reagan. He traveled throughout the world, overseeing 16 foreign offices until the end of the Reagan administration.

"That was a fantastic opportunity," says Kauss. "There's nothing like traveling as an official representative of the USA."

The timing was right for him to enter the NAFTA picture. "I love Mexico and dealing with Mexico. I know the language and the culture, and I wanted to bridge the gap of doing business between the U.S. and Mexico. Using my knowledge and background, I started a consulting business -- Group GJK."

He's worked on a variety of international projects from bringing a \$50 billion company to Mexico to introducing a major financial company to business opportunities in Mexico. "I'm doing what I like to do," says Kauss, "We think we have developed a technology that will be a strong part of the future in telecommunications."