

Where Personal Telco came from

HISTORY:

The Personal Telco Project began in the year 2000, when Adam Shand and a number of other like-minded technology professionals found their options for broadband perversely limited and excessively expensive.

With relatively inexpensive consumer-grade wifi equipment becoming available, they decided that they would try to build their own networks, bypassing the monopolistic and unresponsive incumbent telco operators. They would build their network using wireless equipment, not tied to the expensive and exclusively-controlled wired media. They would operate their networks in their own interests, communicating freely without the limitations and control imposed on them by others.

They began by creating networks for their neighbors to connect to. They continued by helping to build networks for others, so that they could share their connections as well. Their goal, not realized, was to connect everyone in the city, and then the country, and then the world, with each other without relying on the incumbent telecommunications carriers. For a variety of reasons, partly physical, partly from a fearmongering media, partly for lack of publicity, that goal has proved elusive. However, the fundamental problem that spawned the Personal Telco Project is as dire and pressing today as ever.

Today, the networks we have helped build serve nearly 10,000 unique users every month. Tomorrow, with your help, we'll all have the freedom we deserve.

Beyond WiFi

ADVOCACY:

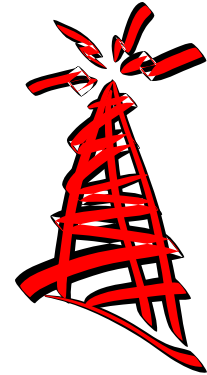
Communications policy in this country has been and remains seriously fouled up. Ownership and control have been concentrating in the hands of fewer and fewer private operators, removing freedom from those of us that use the networks essential for our communications.

In addition to our work building networks to enhance our lives today, the Personal Telco Project believes that our future freedom depends on making our voices heard, on taking control and, if necessary, ownership of essential parts of the network infrastructure.

We believe that the future of our communications lies in high capacity fiber optics to every building in our communities, and that this infrastructure must be managed in the interests of its users and not in the interests of the large rent-seeking corporations intent on wringing every drop of profit through their control. The immense capacity of fiber optics promises to squash bandwidth scarcity, making the kind of sharing we do now with wifi even more attractive and painless.

We believe that the best, fairest and least expensive way to achieve this goal is through public ownership of the last-mile infrastructure. We don't let corporations own and control our streets in their own interests, we shouldn't allow them to control our communications either.

Let's make our voices heard. Let's take back control of our communications infrastructure!



The Personal Telco Project

*a Portland-based
501(c)3 non-profit*

*... to promote and
build public
wireless networks
through
community
support and
education*

[http://www.personaltelco.net/
info@personaltelco.net](http://www.personaltelco.net/info@personaltelco.net)

Utilizing the Personal Telco Project

USING:

We have about 100 wifi networks scattered around Portland (with a few in the suburbs as well). You can identify a Personal Telco network by the SSID (the name that shows up in your network list) of:

www.personaltelco.net

or some close variant. When you see that SSID, you know that you have been invited to use the network. You won't be arrested or accused of stealing just for using it.

Many of these networks use a "captive portal" system. That means, until you accept terms and conditions, you won't be able to connect to the Internet. You accept the terms by attempting to retrieve a web page with your browser. The captive portal redirects your attempt to the splash page, and you click on the "Accept" button.

After that you should be good to go. The splash page usually tells you who you can thank for their generous gift of Free WiFi.

The terms and conditions, which you should read at least once, basically tell you to behave yourself while using the network. Please do not do anything that will get the node host into any trouble. Some activities (like bittorrent and similar applications) can interfere with others equal use of the network. Users may be blocked if their use of the network is found to be abusive.

Otherwise, please enjoy!

Expanding the Personal Telco Project

HOSTING:

The approximately 100 wifi networks in and around Portland exist as part of a gift culture. The networks provide Free WiFi because the node hosts pay the costs and give the result away to their community.

Consider your community. Wouldn't it be a nicer place if you were sharing your internet connection at home or work?

Personal Telco Project volunteers are quite experienced in building public wifi networks. We can help you build your network. We have some equipment available for loan. We are experienced at configuring the network in a way that protects the private parts of your network. We can monitor your network for abuse and deal with it if it arises.

If you'd rather build a public wifi network without our assistance, you can join our effort simply by using our SSID, to let your community know that it's okay to use.

In Portland right now, there are about 2500 wifi networks per square mile. Only a tiny fraction of them are participating in our effort today. Think what a nicer place Portland would be if they were. The way to have more Free WiFi is to give more Free WiFi.

Be the Free WiFi. Be part of the gift culture. We can help.

Improving the Personal Telco Project

VOLUNTEERING:

The Personal Telco Project is a bunch of people hosting free wifi networks, but it also has a core of dedicated geek volunteers. These people work at expanding and improving the network. They work on dealing with outages when they occur, they work on improving access point firmware, to make it more robust and reliable.

This core group of Personal Telco Project volunteers is constantly in flux. Some members leave, to take a job or move on to graduate school. It is essential to the continued success of the Personal Telco Project that new volunteers step up to take the place of those that depart, and to help grow the capacity of the organization.

The Personal Telco Project has a variety of technical challenges and new opportunities all the time. From repurposing the old MetroFi equipment, to innovative firewall rule sets, to building firmware, to learning to weather seal outdoor RF connections, to climbing on roofs (without falling) to install or maintain equipment, to helping to maintain our documentation and core infrastructure.

We are open enough that you can invent your own challenges! Be part of making them happen. Volunteer with the Personal Telco Project!