WayTooEarly

I work with companies at two stages, too early and way too early. This weblog is about working at this early point in a company or technology's life cycle.

Look Ma, No Wires

There was one new technology that I saw at CES that really does have promise for the future - wireless power. Though it's been talked about for years, and many schemes have been tried, there are now some truly revolutionary methods for transmitting enough power not only to charge cell phones or iPods, but also to run big PCs and desk lighting. Of course, all the power on Earth owes it's debt to old Sol, our sun which transmits it's power to the earth in visible and infrared ranges. And there are some products that use that directly. The Solio hybrid energy chargers are solar cells that charge an internal lithium battery, which then feeds USB connectors (with the iGo tip system), so that you can keep your phones, etc. charged up directly from the sun. One of the products has a clip to go on your backpack, another fans out 3 cells to get even more power.

Bt for a real look at the future, you should see what Powermat, eCoupled and Powercast are doing. Powercast is using RF technology to send the power, while Powermat and eCoupled are using inductive techniques. Powermat is based on the RFID tags and some very clever drive technology and seemed the best of the lot to me. In addition, there is Wipower and some other folks working in this very hot area. Some of the key issues are how much power at what distance. Milliwatts at Meters is Powercast's view, while Powermat seems to be able to have much higher power loads with devices placed on their mats (which are only a few millimeters from the device they're powering).

Here's a light just stuck (magnetically) on the wall, drawing power from the wall surface mat.

One of the nice side benefits to Powermat is that of energy conservation. Since you don't have all those "vampire" power charges plugged in, you're not wasting nearly as much power. And the Powermat system can sense how much power is needed and deliver it on demand, resulting in what could be significant savings. It will certainly be nice when I can just lay out the powermat, plug it in, and then drop my PC, cellphones, iPOds, cameras, and a small desk lamp, and know that I've saved the charger weight, the tangle of cables (which drives my wife nuts), and be saving power as well.

I'm hoping to be able to make my desks at home and office Powermats in the next year, and lighten my charger load (physically and electrically).