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*"Virtual CTO" Tim Gillen reports on  
current business technology issues*

## **What is Different about Ford's New WiFi?**

When corporate America realized that they could save money by having their sales force work from home rather than occupy expensive office space, the world changed for sales across the country. If you are on the road a great deal for your company, Ford will soon make your job a little easier. In December 2009, Ford announced that they will be turning some select Ford Vehicles into "WiFi hotspots." If you have ever been on the road and needed to send off a quick email to your boss or client, finding a business with open WiFi isn't always so simple. Other car companies such as BMW, Mercedes, GM, and Chrysler all have mobile WiFi for their cars, but Ford has created WiFi with a bit of a twist for their vehicles.

According to Ford's website, SYNC, Ford's voice-activated communications and entertainment system created in collaboration with Microsoft, will be expanding to create in-car connectivity. The first generation SYNC system featured voice-activated calling, music, text messaging, as well as the ability to allow drivers to connect to news, business, and real-time traffic. The new SYNC system will utilize SYNC's current capabilities plus make WiFi available to all of the car's occupants. Ford has stated that they will only install SYNC in select vehicles, but they have not yet specified which models.

Users will be able to plug their USB mobile broadband modem or air card into the USB port provided in their vehicle. Using WPA2 or WiFi Protected Access 2 as the default security, Ford states that SYNC will be very secure. The user will be asked to enter randomly chosen passwords in order to be allowed access. Each device must be given permission by the driver in order to connect, which will prevent others outside of the car from connecting without permission.

Ford's SYNC system has some distinct advantages over the other car company's systems. Most other systems require additional hardware to be installed and then a contract with a third party, but Ford's SYNC system is installed in the factory. Another unique feature of the SYNC system is that the business traveler will be able to plug in their business air card right into SYNC's USB port while other systems require an additional monthly service fee. These features make WiFi not only more convenient but also more affordable.

Ford has also made their SYNC system upgradeable. This will allow for software updates in order for the system to keep up with current technological advancements, as well as allow the system to adapt to newer devices. Because technology is changing so quickly, other WiFi equipped-vehicles risk being quickly out of date. This means the systems would need replacement, which could be costly, in order to maintain the pace of current technology.

Ford has been diligently working to create marketable cars with the latest technology that are within the mainstream driver's budget. With this latest addition, Ford just made in-car connectivity more flexible, as well as more affordable.



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