



bleedingedge

Make your spot hot and profitable

Sharing wi-fi is easy, writes **Charles Wright.**

WHAT inspiring times we have had in the Bleeding Edge cave this week. What with President Barack Obama vowing a new era of responsibility in the US and a new spirit of hope in adversity sweeping the world, we felt it our duty to contribute, by helping to build this nation's essential infrastructure.

These are by no means insignificant decisions, as Telstra discovered recently when it negotiated its way into being dropped from the bidding process for the \$10 billion national broadband network, although perhaps it was a touch easier for Bleeding Edge.

When we decided to contribute to Australia's communications backbone, we didn't have to submit any plans to Canberra or invest substantial funding.

In fact, it seemed only common sense. We were already paying \$69.95 per month for our iiNet ADSL2+ service and, because we weren't using all that bandwidth, it seemed only prudent to defray some of the cost by sharing it.

Nevertheless, by turning the Bleeding Edge cave into a wi-fi hot spot, plying to some nearby backpacker and bed-and-breakfast establishments in St Kilda, we'd be extending the footprint for inexpensive mobile communications coverage — essentially competing against Telstra's NextG and wi-fi networks.

Fortunately, we weren't blazing any unknown trails. A New

Zealand-based company called Tomizone (tomizone.com.au) had done all the hard work and removed the risk. It has built what has been independently rated as the largest hot spot network in Australasia in little more than nine months and established a keen and rapidly growing clientele by establishing a reputation for speed and reliability at competitive rates.

Where BigPond customers would be paying up to \$14 per hour for their hot spot connections, Tomizone clients pay just \$3 an hour or 60MB of data, \$6 for 24 hours or 160MB, and \$30 for seven days or 1.2GB. We'd be paid 50 per cent of that.

We weren't expecting to be able to retire on the proceeds, but all contributions help in tough economic times. We were also eager to extend a network that gives roaming mobile users faster internet speeds at a fraction of the cost of the NextG network in particular, while reducing the load on the phone system. Tomizone has also set up a deal with iiNet, which subsidises its customers with 100MB of free Tomizone usage per month.

It wouldn't cost much to set up our hot spot. Tomizone has been working with hardware vendors including D-Link, Linksys and Belkin, to provide firmware that extends the capabilities of wi-fi routers. We could walk into several retailers and pick up a Tomizone-enabled wireless router and be in business in a matter of minutes. If you owned a D-Link DI-524UP or DIR-300, a Belkin F1P1241EGau or a Linksys WRT54G or WRT54GL you could download the Tomizone firmware from tinyurl.com/77cu3t.

We settled on the D-Link DIR-300, which provides basic wireless capabilities for \$79. The practical range of about 50 to 75

metres was enough for a trial in our particular situation, although we'd probably be looking for more powerful hardware later — possibly one of the D-Link N routers for which Tomizone firmware is being developed.

Because the firmware provides dual SSID capabilities, we would run a private wireless network at the same time as we were offering the Tomizone facilities for paying guests.

Setting up the Tomizone hot spot proved to be simple, using the web-based interface, although in our case we had the added complexity of bridging the existing router. It steps you through the process of establishing your private wireless network and a separate Tomizone network. When you click on the Tomizone activation button, you're quickly taken to the sign-up section of the Tomizone website.

We recommend that, as with any wi-fi installation, you take particular care to change the router's default user name and password, to eliminate the possibility of someone gaining access to your network.

We were impressed with Tomizone from the outset. Once you've set up the router and entered your details as a hot spot, you see your site flagged on Google Maps. And Tomizone quickly developed an application for the Apple iPhone and iPod Touch, which, with a free promotional deal that expired in December, brought thousands of iPhone users on to the Tomizone network.

This month it expects to launch new hot spot networks in India and China, and it has been testing services in Australia's Starbucks Coffee chain, which will probably be joining Bleeding Edge in pushing the "Pay Me" button on the Tomizone site for national infrastructure providers.



TOMIZONE WI-FI NETWORK

