



DARREN HANDSCHUH/The Okanagan Saturday

Signalink Technologies expects a huge market for its plug-in fire alarm, says CEO Ed Alfke, left, and president Andre Cosquer.

## Linked for sales success

### MacNaull

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Signalink Technologies of Kelowna is almost ready to go to market with its revolutionary Fire-Link alarm.

"This is a whole new way of installing fire alarms," said CEO Ed Alfke.

"The potential market is gigantic and we expect our product to be worldwide in five years."

It's now mandatory for all condominium, apartment and hotel units in North America to have their own fire alarm, rather than the central hallway alarm that had been the norm.

For existing buildings, that poses the costly problem of having to run wires and punch holes in walls to install the traditional technology of wired alarms.

Signalink offers a much less expensive and effective alternative with the \$300 Fire-Link alarm that fits into a standard electrical outlet.

The unit also has a battery backup if the power goes out.

With the technology fine tuned after five years of research and development, Fire-Link is ready to hit the market early next year with distribution through 1,000 dealers in Canada. Sales through another 13,000 dealers in the U.S. will follow.

"This is something that will get very large, very quickly," Alfke said.

"I knew this company had something extraordinary. That's why I am an angel investor in it and I came out of retirement to be CEO."

Kevin Letan of Wolverton Securities has also helped Signalink raise \$500,000 with a 35-cent-a-share private placement.

The goal is another \$1 million with the current 45-cent-a-share effort.

Signalink's head office in Kelowna is expected to grow from the current six employees to 24 next year.

However, manufacturing will be done in Ontario by Mircom, Canada's largest distributor of alarms.

### Chambers on a roll

Nothing says economic health like a growing chamber of commerce.

And the Okanagan's three biggest cities have vibrant, expanding chambers.

Kelowna, the Valley's biggest city, has the largest chamber with a membership of 1,555; Penticton's chamber has 704 members; and the Vernon chamber is 613 strong.

Most members are small business, which is an important point to make as Small Business Week wraps up today in the Okanagan and nationally.

The chamber is often the first contact when business and the public want to know something about a community, things like its strengths, demographics, economic engines, issues and challenges.

As such, chambers have two distinct functions — the pro-business advocate and membership-service group.

As an advocate, chambers lobby for changes to benefit business and society.

For members, chambers offer services ranging from group health coverage and discounts on long-distance calling and courier services to networking and learning opportunities at guest speaker luncheons, seminars and receptions.

New members of the Penticton chamber include Classic Guitars, Windward Software, Pantry restaurant, William Leggett's Rock N Roll School, Paw Prints Studio and Gallery, London Drugs, Kevin Lauer and Forxia Industries.

New to the Vernon chamber are Aspenware Inc., Denture Clinic, auto body equipment and paint supplier D and E Distributors, Appellation Designs, AllCanadianEscapes.com, Aberdeen Plumbing and Heating, Rocky Mountain Enterprises, PropertyGuys.com, Okanagan Integrated Network Services, Senatic Wave Enterprises, R and C Media Team and The Lodge in Cherryville.

### Small-biz service

The provincial government is starting to think like business and institute customer-service promises.

This week, the Ministry of Small Business and Revenue, headed by Okanagan Westside MLA Rick Thorpe, launched phase two of its Taxpayer Fairness and Service Code, outlining new service standards.

For instance, for both the public and businesses, general sales tax e-mail inquiries will be answered within two business days.

Complex inquiries and rulings could take up to 20 business days.

Sales and hotel tax registrations will be done within two business days; sales and hotel tax account clearances within five business days.

Sales, hotel, fuel or tobacco tax refunds will be within 30 calendar days.

The ministry took input from the B.C. Chamber of Commerce, Retail Merchants Association, Retail Canada and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business to come up with the new code.

"Phase 2 of the code shows that Rick Thorpe and his ministry are serious about addressing the needs

of small business and improving customer service," said Laura Jones of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

"We are committed to taxpayers' rights and maintaining our reputation as a centre of customer service excellence," said Thorpe.

"That's why we have developed a clear set of service standards, so customers will know exactly what to expect when dealing with our government."

### Upcoming . . .

■ The new Okanagan College is holding community sessions to get input on what type of courses and programs it should be offering.

The first three are at the Kelowna KLO Road campus Monday, 4-5:30 p.m. in portable 4; Wednesday, 7:30-9 a.m. at Infusions restaurant and Wednesday, 4-5:30 p.m. in portable 4.

■ The Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission offers its Seven Steps to a Profitable Marketing Plan seminar Tuesday noon to 1:30 p.m. at Lake Country Municipal Hall.

Free to attend and lunch will be provided.

RSVP to 766-5650.

■ Find out if you can get government funding or tax relief for research and development projects at upcoming Okanagan Science and Technology Council workshops.

The sessions will outline the federal Scientific Research and Experimental Development Program and the National Research Council's Industrial Research Assistance Plan.

They start in Kelowna Wednesday, 8:30-10:30 a.m. in the boardroom of the Landmark III building.

They continue in Vernon, also Wednesday, 1:30-3:30 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Express.

And on Thursday, the workshop is 9:30-11:30 a.m. at the Ramada Inn in Penticton.

Register online — \$10 for council members, \$15 for non-members — at [www.ostec.ca/events.php](http://www.ostec.ca/events.php).

■ Mayor Walter Gray is the speaker at the next Urban Development Institute luncheon Thursday at the Coast Capri Hotel.

Tickets at \$25 for members; \$35 for non-members, by calling 717-3588.

■ The next Penticton Chamber of Commerce Business After Business networking and social mixer is Thursday, 5-7 p.m. at the OSNS Child Development Centre on Carmi Avenue.

Free to attend.

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